

**INDEPENDENT STUDY****Educational Opportunities**

The Board of Education authorizes independent study as an optional alternative instructional strategy for eligible students whose needs may be best met through study outside of the regular classroom setting. Independent study may be offered to students by a school under the supervision of the principal or designee and/or from district-designated locations which meet the requirements of law.

Independent study shall offer a means of individualizing the education plan to serve students who desire an alternative educational experience, whose health or other personal circumstances make classroom attendance difficult and/or to make up credits or fill gaps in their learning, enabling student to reach curriculum objectives, meet college and career goals, and fulfill graduation requirements. As necessary to meet student needs, independent study may be offered on a long-term basis or on a short-term basis in conjunction with part or full-time classroom study.

The Superintendent or designee may provide a variety of educational opportunities offered through independent study may include, but are not limited to: (Education Code 51745)

1. Special assignments extending the content of regular courses of instruction
2. Individualized study in a particular area of interest or in a subject not currently available in the regular school curriculum
3. Individualized alternative education designed to teach the knowledge and skills of the core curriculum, but not provided as an alternative curriculum
4. Continuing and special study during travel
5. Volunteer community service activities that support and strengthen student achievement

In addition, when requested by the parent/guardian due to emergencies, vacation, arts or competitive performances or illness, independent study may be used on a short-term basis to ensure that the student is able to maintain academic progress in his/her regular classes. Short-term independent study shall be offered at least five (5) consecutive school days and no more than twenty (20) consecutive school days.

No course required for high school graduation shall be offered exclusively through independent study. (Education Code 51745)

**Equivalency**

The district's independent study option shall be substantially equivalent in quality and quantity to classroom instruction, thus enabling students participating in independent study to complete the district's adopted course of study within the customary time frame. Students in independent study shall have access to the same services and resources that are available to other students in the school. (5 CCR 11700, 11701.5)

The district shall not provide independent study students and their parents/guardians with funds or items of value that are not provided for other students and their parents/guardians. (Education Code 46300.6, 51747.3)

### **Eligibility and Approval for Independent Study**

Provided that experienced certificated staff are available to effectively supervise students in independent study, the Superintendent or designee may approve the participation of a student who demonstrates the motivation, commitment, organizational skills, and academic skills necessary to work independently. A student whose academic performance is not at grade level may participate in independent study only if the school is able to provide appropriate support, such as supplemental instruction, tutoring, counseling, ongoing diagnostic assessments, and/or differentiated materials, to enable the student to be successful. The Superintendent or designee may consider students' record of attendance and tardiness when deciding whether to approve independent study. For an elementary student, the Superintendent or designee may consider the parent/guardian's level of commitment to assist the student.

A student's participation in independent study shall be voluntary. (Education Code 51747)

Students participating in independent study must be residents of the local county or an adjacent county. Full-time independent study shall not be available to students whose district residency status is based on their parent/guardian's employment within district boundaries pursuant to Education Code 48204. (Education Code 46300.2, 51747.3)

For a student with disabilities, as defined in Education Code 56026, shall not participate in independent study unless his/her individualized education program specifically provides for such participation. (Education Code 51745)

A temporarily disabled student shall not receive individual instruction pursuant to Education Code 48206.3 by means of independent study. (Education Code 51745)

Students age 21 or older, and students age 19 or older who have not been continuously enrolled in school since their 18th birthday, may participate in independent study only through the adult education program for the purpose of enrolling in courses required for a high school diploma by Education Code 51225.3 or by the Board of Education. (Education Code 46300.1, 46300.4)

No more than 10 percent of the students enrolled in a continuation high school or opportunity school or program, not including pregnant and parenting students who are primary caregivers for one or more of their children, shall be in independent study at any given time. (Education Code 51745)

### **Written Agreements**

A written agreement shall be developed and implemented for each student participating in independent study for five or more consecutive school days. (Education Code 46300, 51747)

The agreement shall include general student data, including the student's name, address, grade level, birth date, school of enrollment, and program placement.

The written independent study agreement for each participating student shall include, but not be limited to, all of the following: (Education Code 51747)

1. The manner, frequency, time and place for submitting the student's assignments and for reporting his/her progress

2. The objectives and methods of study for the student's work, and the methods used to evaluate that work
3. The specific resources, including materials and personnel that will be made available to the student
4. The Board's independent study policy describing the maximum length of time allowed between an assignment and its completion and the number of missed assignments which will trigger an evaluation of whether the student should be allowed to continue in independent study
5. The duration of the independent study agreement, including the beginning and ending dates for the student's participation in independent study under the agreement, with a maximum of one semester, or one-half year if the school is on a year-round calendar
6. A statement of the number of course credits or, for an elementary student, other measures of academic accomplishment appropriate to the agreement, to be earned by the student upon completion
7. A statement that independent study is an optional educational alternative in which no student may be required to participate
8. In the case of a suspended or expelled student who is referred or assigned to any school, class or program pursuant to Education Code 48915 or 48917, a statement that instruction may be provided through independent study only if the student is offered the alternative of classroom instruction
9. Signatures of the student, the parent/guardian or caregiver of the student if the student is under age 18 years, the certificated employee responsible for the general supervision of independent study, and all persons who have direct responsibility for providing assistance to the student

The agreement also may include a schedule for achieving objectives and completing the agreement and a schedule of conferences between the student and supervising teacher.

The curriculum and methods of study specified in the written agreement shall be consistent with Board policy, administrative regulations and procedures for curriculum and instruction. (5 CCR 11702)

Before beginning the independent study, each written agreement shall be signed and dated by the student, the parent/guardian or caregiver of the student if the student is under age 18, the certificated employee designated as responsible for the general supervision of independent study, and all persons who have direct responsibility for providing assistance to the student. (Education Code 51747; 5 CCR 11702)

The agreement shall state that the parent/guardian's signature confirms his/her permission for the student's independent study as specified in the agreement.

The district may offer a course-based (long-term) independent study program for students in grades 6 -12 subject to the following requirements: (Education Code 51749.5)

1. Courses shall be taught under the general supervision of certificated employees who hold the appropriate subject matter credential and are employed by the district or by another district, charter school, or county office of education with which the district has a memorandum of understanding to provide the instruction.

2. Courses shall be annually certified by Board resolution to be of the same rigor and educational quality as equivalent classroom-based courses and shall be aligned to all relevant local and state content standards. This certification shall, at a minimum, include the duration, number of equivalent daily instructional minutes for each school day that student is enrolled, number of equivalent total instructional minutes, and number of course credits for each course, consistent with that of equivalent classroom-based courses.
3. Students enrolled in these courses shall meet the applicable age requirements established pursuant to Education Code 46300.1 and 46300.4 and the applicable residency and enrollment requirements established pursuant to Education Code 46300.2, 48204, and 51747.3.
4. Teachers shall communicate with each student in person, by telephone, or by any other live visual or audio connection at least twice per calendar month to assess whether the student is making satisfactory educational progress. For this purpose, satisfactory educational progress includes, but is not limited to, applicable statewide accountability measures and the completion of assignments, examinations, or other indicators that the student is working on assignments, learning required concepts, and progressing toward successful completion of the course, as determined by the teacher providing instruction.

Written or computer-based evidence of satisfactory educational progress shall be retained for each course and student, including, at a minimum, a grade book or summary document that lists all assignments, examinations, and associated grades for each course.

If satisfactory educational progress is not being made, the teacher shall notify the student and, if the student is under age 18 years, his/her parent/guardian. The teacher shall conduct an evaluation to determine whether it is in the student's best interest to remain in the course or whether he/she should be referred to an alternative program, which may include, but is not limited to, a regular school program. A written record of the evaluation findings shall be a mandatory interim student record maintained for three years from the date of the evaluation. If the student transfers to another California public school, the record shall be forwarded to that school.

5. Examinations may be administered by a proctor.
6. Statewide testing results shall be reported and assigned to the school at which the student is enrolled and shall be included in the aggregate results of the district. Test results also shall be disaggregated for purposes of comparisons with the test results of students enrolled in classroom-based courses.
7. A student shall not be required to enroll in courses included in this program.
8. The student-teacher ratio in the courses in this program shall meet the requirements of Education Code 51745.6.
9. For each student, the combined equivalent daily instructional minutes for courses in this program and all other courses shall meet applicable minimum instructional day requirements, and the student shall be offered the minimum annual total equivalent instructional minutes pursuant to Education Code 46200-46208.
10. Courses required for high school graduation or for admission to the University of California or California State University shall not be offered exclusively through independent study.

11. A student participating in this program shall not be assessed a fee that is prohibited by Education Code 49011.
12. A student shall not be prohibited from participating in independent study solely on the basis that he/she does not have the materials, equipment, or Internet access necessary to participate in the course.

Before enrolling a student in a course within this program, the Superintendent or designee shall provide the student and, if the student is under age 18 years, his/her parent/guardian with a written learning agreement that includes all of the following: (Education Code 51749.6)

1. A summary of the district's policies and procedures related to this program
2. The duration of the enrolled course(s) and the number of course credits for each enrolled course, consistent with the Board certifications made pursuant to item #2 above
3. The duration of the learning agreement, which shall not exceed a school year or span multiple school years
4. The learning objectives and expectations for each course, including, but not limited to, a description of how satisfactory educational progress is measured and when a student evaluation is required to determine whether the student should remain in the course or be referred to an alternative program, which may include, but is not limited to, a regular school program
5. The specific resources, including materials and personnel that will be made available to the student
6. A statement that the student is not required to enroll in courses in this program
7. Signatures of the student, the student's parent/guardian if the student is under age 18 years, and all teachers providing instruction

The student's or parent/guardian's signature shall constitute permission for the student to receive instruction through independent study. (Education Code 51749.6)

The Superintendent or designee shall retain a physical or electronic copy of the signed learning agreement for at least three years and as appropriate for auditing purposes. (Education Code 51749.6)

### **Student Rights and Responsibilities**

Students participating in independent study shall have the right, continuously, to enter or return to the regular classroom mode of instruction, including upon termination of the agreement.

### **Monitoring Student Progress**

Independent study students who are late, miss scheduled conferences or do not submit assigned work on time shall not be reported as tardy or truant. However, the independent study administrator shall promptly and directly address any failure by the student to meet the terms of his/her written agreement. The following supportive strategies may be used:

1. A letter to the student and/or parent/guardian

2. A meeting between the student and the teacher and/or counselor
3. A meeting between the student and the independent study administrator, including the parent/guardian if appropriate
4. An increase in the amount of time the student works under direct supervision

When the student has missed the number of assignments specified in the written agreement as requiring an evaluation, the Superintendent or designee shall conduct an evaluation to determine whether or not independent study is appropriate for the student. This evaluation may result in termination of the independent study agreement and the student's return to the regular classroom program or other alternative program.

A written record of the findings of any such evaluation shall be treated as a mandatory interim student record which shall be maintained for three years from the date of the evaluation.  
(Education Code 51747)

### **Responsibilities of Independent Study Administrator**

Each student's independent study shall be coordinated, evaluated and carried out under the general supervision of a certificated employee. (Education Code 51747.5)

The responsibilities of the independent study administrator shall be to:

1. Ensure that the district's independent study option is operated in accordance with law, Board policy and administrative regulation and is substantially equal in quality and quantity to the classroom instruction
2. Recommending certificated staff to be assigned as independent study teachers and supervising staff assigned to independent study functions who are not regularly supervised by another administrator
3. Obtain and maintain current information and skills required for the operation of an independent study program that meets established standards for the district's educational programs
4. Approve or deny the participation of students requesting independent study
5. Facilitate the completion of written independent study agreements
6. Approve all credits earned through independent study and forward the information to the appropriate staff so that the information becomes part of the student's record
7. Authorize the selection of staff to be assigned to supervise independent study
8. Supervise any staff assigned to independent study functions who are not regularly supervised by another administrator
9. Complete or coordinate the preparation of all necessary records and reports
10. Establish and maintain in a systematic manner all records required by law, Board policy and administrative regulation

11. Monitor student participation in independent study so that the district stays within prescribed limits and income to the district is maximized
12. Develop and manage the budget for independent study
13. Obtain and maintain current information and skills required for the operation of an independent study strategy that meets established standards for the district's educational programs
14. Assure a smooth transition into and out of the independent study mode of instruction
15. Prepare and submit reports as required by the Board or Superintendent

### **Assignment and Responsibilities of Independent Study Teachers**

The principal may recommend and the independent study administrator shall approve the assignment of teachers to directly supervise independent study. The teacher may be the student's regular classroom teacher, particularly for elementary students.

Each student's independent study shall be coordinated, evaluated, and carried out under the general supervision of a certificated employee who consents to the assignment. (Education Code 44865, 51747.5; 5 CCR 11700)

The ratio of student average daily attendance for independent study students age 18 years or younger to full-time equivalent certificated employees responsible for independent study shall not exceed the equivalent ratio for all other education programs in the district, unless a new higher or lower ratio for all other educational programs offered is negotiated in a collective bargaining agreement or the district enters into a memorandum of understanding that indicates an existing collective bargaining agreement contains an alternative ratio. (Education Code 51745.6)

The responsibilities of the supervising teacher shall include, but are not limited to::

1. Complete designated portions of the written independent study agreement and add additional information to the written agreement when appropriate
2. Supervise and approve coursework and assignments
3. Design all lesson plans and assignments
4. Assess all student work and determine and assign grades or other approved measures of achievement
5. Personally judge the time value of assigned work or work products completed and submitted by the student
6. Select and save with each agreement representative samples of the student's completed and evaluated assignments on not less than a monthly basis, preferably biweekly, and signed or initialed and dated in accordance with item #3 in the section on "Records" below
7. Sign and complete the agreement when the student has reached his/her objectives or the agreement is terminated

8. Maintain a daily or hourly attendance register in accordance with item #4 in the section on "Records" below
9. Maintain records of student assignment showing the date the assignment is given and the date the assignment is due
10. Determine the time value of assigned work or work products completed and submitted by the student
11. Providing direct instruction and counsel as necessary for individual student success
12. Assess student work and assigning grades or other approved measures of achievement

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that independent study teachers have access to professional development and support comparable to classroom-based teachers.

### **Records**

For audit purposes, the Superintendent or designee shall maintain the following records. These records shall include, but not be limited to: (Education Code 51748; 5 CCR 11703)

1. A copy of the Board policy, administrative regulation, and other procedures related to independent study
2. A separate listing of the students and adult education students, by grade level, program and school, who have participated in independent study, identifying units of the curriculum attempted and units of the curriculum completed by students in grades K-8 and identifying course credits attempted by and awarded to students in grades 9-12 and in adult education, as specified in their written agreements
3. A file of all agreements, with representative samples of each student's or adult education student's work products bearing the supervising teacher's signed or initialed and dated notations indicating that he/she has personally evaluated the work or that he/she has personally reviewed the evaluations made by another certificated teacher
4. A daily or hourly attendance register, as appropriate to the program in which the students are participating, separate from classroom attendance records, and maintained on a current basis as time values of student or adult education work products are personally judged by a certificated teacher, and reviewed by the supervising teacher if they are two different persons

The Superintendent or designee also shall maintain a record of grades and other evaluations issued to each student for independent study assignments for three years excluding the current fiscal year.

Each school shall maintain records for the students at that school.

The signed, dated agreement, any supplemental agreement, assignment records, work samples, and attendance records shall be treated as a mandatory interim student record which shall be maintained on file electronically. (Education Code 51747)

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**SANTA MONICA-MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**Santa Monica, California**