

**INDEPENDENT STUDY**

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 shall offer a means of individualizing the educational plan to serve students who desire a more challenging educational experience, whose health or other personal circumstances make classroom attendance difficult, who are unable to access course(s) due to scheduling problems, and/or need to make up credits or fill gaps in their learning. As necessary to meet student needs, independent study may be offered on a full-time basis or on a part-time basis in conjunction with part- or full-time classroom study.

The Superintendent or designee may provide a variety of independent study opportunities, including, but not limited to, through a program or class within a comprehensive school, an alternative school or program of choice, a charter school, a home-based format, and an online course.

A student's participation in independent study shall be voluntary. Students participating in independent study shall have the right, at any time, to enter or return to the regular classroom mode of instruction. (Education Code 51747; 5 CCR 11700)

Parents/guardians of students who are interested in independent study shall contact the school principal. The school principal shall approve independent study for an individual student only upon determining that the student is prepared to meet the district's requirements for independent study and is likely to succeed in independent study as well as or better than he/she would in the regular classroom.

The minimum period of time for any independent study option shall be five consecutive school days.

Additionally, the Board desires to ensure that students are also physically fit and lead active lives and wishes to support students with expanded opportunities for access to alternative ways of meeting the physical education requirements. Education Codes 51210 and 51210.1 mandate not less than 200 minutes each 10 school days in grades 6-8; and not less than 400 minutes each 10 school days in grades 9 - 12 (for a total of 2 years).

The district's independent study option shall be substantially equivalent in quality and quantity to classroom instruction, thus enabling students enrolled 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 as are available to other students in the school.

The Superintendent or designee and/or committee shall determine that the prospective independent study student understands and is prepared to meet the district's requirements for independent study. Independent study entails a commitment by both the parent/guardian and the student. As the student gets older, he/she assumes a greater portion of the responsibility involved. Independent study may be offered only to students who can achieve in this program as well as or better than they would in the regular classroom.

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that a written independent study agreement and, as appropriate, a learning agreement for student participating in course-based independent study exist for each student as prescribed by law. (Education Code 51747)

The Board recognizes that independent study may be used as an option to encourage students to remain in school. Teachers should carefully set the duration of independent study assignments, within the limits specified by the Board in order to help identify students falling behind in their work or in danger of failing or dropping out of school.

The written agreement shall specify the length of time in which each independent study assignment must be completed. Because excessive leniency in the duration of independent study assignments may result in a student falling behind his/her peers and increase the risk of dropping out of school, independent study assignments shall be no more than one week for all grade levels and types of program. However, when necessary based on the specific circumstances of the student's approved program, the Superintendent or designee may allow for a longer period of time between the date an assignment is made and when it is due, up to the termination date of the agreement.

An evaluation shall be conducted to determine whether it is in a student's best interest to remain in independent study whenever the student misses three assignments, unless the student's written agreement specifies a lower or higher number of missed assignments based on the nature of the assignments, the total number of assignments, and/or other unique circumstances.

### **Student-Teacher Conferences**

Supervising teachers should establish an appropriate schedule, within the limits specified above, and establish an appropriate schedule for student-teacher conferences in order to help identify students falling behind in their work or in danger of failing or dropping out of school. Teachers are expected to monitor student progress and work closely with each student to determine the amount and type of contact needed for the student to be successful in the program. Except in unusual circumstances, it is expected that the supervising teacher will meet with each participating student at least once a week to discuss the student's progress.

When any student fails to complete consecutive independent study assignments, in a period of 15 school days, or misses two appointments with his/her supervising teacher without valid reasons, the Superintendent or designee shall conduct an evaluation to determine whether it is in the student's best interest to remain in independent study. Evaluation findings shall be kept in the student's permanent record.

The Superintendent or designee shall annually report to the Board the number of students participating in independent study, the average daily attendance (ADA) generated for apportionment purposes, the quality of these students' work as measured by standard indicators, and the number and proportion of independent study students who graduate or successfully complete independent study.

### **Home-Based Independent Study**

The Superintendent or designees shall encourage parents/guardians desiring to teach their children at home to have their children participate in independent study. Such participation allows continued contact and cooperation between the school system and the home-based student.

Students participating in Home-Based Independent Study shall be enrolled in the District's independent study program through their home school. Students who complete all requirements for high school graduation shall graduate from their home school.

### **Program Evaluation**

The Superintendent or designee shall annually report to the Board the number of district

students participating in independent study, the average daily attendance generated for apportionment purposes, student performance as measured by standard indicators and in comparison to students in classroom-based instruction, and the number and proportion of independent study students who graduate or successfully complete independent study. Based on the program evaluation, the Board and Superintendent shall determine areas for program improvement as needed.

Legal Reference:

**EDUCATION CODE**

17289 Exemption for facilities  
41976.2 Independent study programs; adult education funding  
42238 Revenue limits  
44865 Qualifications for home teachers and teachers in special classes and schools  
46300-46307.1 Methods of computing average daily attendance  
47612.5 Independent study in charter schools  
48204 Residency based on parent employment  
48206.3 Home or hospital instruction; students with temporary disabilities  
48220 Classes of children exempted  
48340 Improvement of pupil attendance  
48915 Expulsion; particular circumstances  
48916.1 Educational program requirements for expelled students  
48917 Suspension of expulsion order  
51225.3 Requirements for high school graduation  
51745-51749.3 Independent study programs  
52206 Gifted and talented education; use of independent study to augment program  
52522 Adult education alternative instructional delivery  
52523 Adult education as supplement to high school curriculum; criteria  
56026 Individuals with exceptional needs  
58500-58512 Alternative schools and programs of choice

**FAMILY CODE**

6550 Authorization affidavits

**CODE OF REGULATIONS, TITLE 5**

11700-11703 Independent study

19819 State audit compliance

**COURT DECISIONS**

*Modesto City Schools v. Education Audits Appeal Panel, (2004) 123 Cal.App.4th 1365*

**EDUCATION AUDIT APPEALS PANEL DECISIONS**

*Lucerne Valley Unified School District, Case No. 03-02 (2005)*

Management Resources:

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PUBLICATIONS**

*Independent Study Operations Manual, 2000 Edition*

*Elements of Exemplary Independent Study*

*Approaches to Satisfying No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 Teacher Requirements for Independent Study in Secondary Schools, January 28, 2010*

**WEB SITES**

California Consortium for Independent Study: <http://www.ccis.org>

California Department of Education, Independent Study: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/eo/is>

Education Audit Appeals Panel: <http://www.eaap.ca.gov>

**Policy SANTA MONICA-MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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