

INDEPENDENT STUDY

Educational Opportunities

***Note: The following is optional. Ed. Code 51745 lists educational opportunities that may be provided through independent study. See the California Department of Education's (CDE) Independent Study Operations Manual for additional examples. The district may revise or expand items #1-5 below to reflect district practice. ***

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

(cf. 6143 - Courses of Study)

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

(cf. 5112.3 - Student Leave of Absence)

5. Volunteer community service activities that support and strengthen student achievement

(cf. 0420.4 - Charter Schools)

(cf. 6142.4 - Service Learning/Community Service Classes)

(cf. 6181 - Alternative Schools/Programs of Choice)

In addition, when requested by a parent/guardian due to an emergency, vacation, 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.

(cf. 5113 - Absences and Excuses)

***Note: The following paragraph is for use by districts maintaining high schools. Education Code 51745 requires that no course required for high school graduation may be offered solely through independent study, as provided below. However, pursuant to 5 CCR 11705, for this purpose a charter school is deemed an "alternative school" and thus, according to the CDE, is allowed to offer courses required for graduation solely through independent study; see AR 0420.4 - Charter Schools. ***

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

(cf. 6146.1 - High School Graduation Requirements)

Equivalency

The district's independent study option shall be substantially equivalent in quality and quantity to classroom instruction to enable participating students 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 and shall have equal rights and privileges. (5 CCR 11700, 11701.5)

(cf. 0410 - Nondiscrimination in District Programs and Activities)

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 for Independent Study

***Note: The following optional paragraph is based on recommendations in the CDE's Independent Study Operations Manual and may be revised to reflect district practice. ***

Provided that experienced certificated staff is 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. For an elementary student, the Superintendent or designee may consider the parent/guardian's level of commitment to assist the student.

A student participating in independent study must be a resident of the 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)

(cf. 5111.12 - Residency Based on Parent/Guardian Employment)

For a student with disabilities, as defined in Education Code 56026, participation in independent study shall be approved only if his/her individualized education program specifically provides for such participation. (Education Code 51745)

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(cf. 6159 - Individualized Education Program)

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

(cf. 6183 - Home and Hospital Instruction)

***Note: Education Code 46300.1 provides that the district may not receive apportionments pursuant to Education Code 42238 for independent study for students age 21 or older, or for students 19 or older who have not been continuously enrolled in grades K-12 since their 18th birthday. However, pursuant to Education Code 46300.4, these students may be eligible for independent study through the adult education program; see BP/AR 6200 - Adult Education. ***

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 the Governing Board. (Education Code 46300.1, 46300.4)

(cf. 6200 - Adult Education)

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 eligible for apportionment credit for independent study. (Education Code 51745)

(cf. 5146 - Married/Pregnant/Parenting Students)

(cf. 6184 - Continuation Education)

Written Agreements

***Note: Education Code 51747 mandates that, in order for the district to receive apportionments for independent study, the district must adopt and implement policy providing for a written independent study agreement which contains the components listed in the following section. Districts should ensure that its written agreements contain all of the components specified below. Because apportionments are provided only for independent study of five or more consecutive school days pursuant to Education Code 46300, written agreements are required only in such instances. ***

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)

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

The independent study agreement for each participating student also shall include, but not be limited to, all of the following: (Education Code 51747; 5 CCR 11700)

1. The manner, time, frequency, 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

***Note: Pursuant to Education Code 51747, the written agreement must contain statements reflecting Board policy pertaining to (1) the maximum length of time, by grade level and type of program, which may elapse between the time an independent study assignment is made and the date by which the student must complete the assignment and (2) the number of missed assignments allowed before an evaluation would be required to determine whether it is in a student's best interest to remain in independent study. The accompanying Board policy should contain the Board's specific determinations and those determinations must be included in the district's master written agreement. ***

4. A statement of the Board's policy detailing 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

***Note: Education Code 51747 provides that the written agreement must include the duration of the agreement within the limits described in item #5 below. Districts that operate on a trimester system should limit the terms of an independent study agreement to one trimester. ***

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

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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

(cf. 5144.1 - Suspension and Expulsion/Due Process)

***Note: Education Code 46300.7 states that no apportionments shall be received for a student in independent study unless the district receives written permission from the parent/guardian, before the independent study begins, specifying the actual dates of participation, methods of study and evaluation, and resources to be made available for the student's independent study. Since all of these components are included in the written agreement which the parent/guardian must sign, the parent/guardian's signature on the agreement satisfies the requirement to obtain his/her written permission. ***

Before the student begins the independent study, the 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 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)

Monitoring Student Progress

***Note: The following optional section may be revised to reflect district practice. According to the CDE's Independent Study Operations Manual, the terms "tardiness" and "truancy" do not apply to independent study students. ***

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 and/or supervising teacher 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

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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 precipitating 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 a regular school program.

Responsibilities of Independent Study Administrator

***Note: The following optional section may be revised to reflect district practice. ***

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. 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
3. Develop and manage the budget for independent study
4. Authorize the selection of certificated staff to be assigned as independent study teachers
5. Supervise any staff assigned to independent study functions who are not regularly supervised by another administrator
6. Approve or deny the participation of students requesting independent study
7. Facilitate the completion of written independent study agreements
8. Assure a smooth transition for students into and out of the independent study mode of instruction

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9. 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
10. Complete or coordinate the preparation of all records and reports required by law, Board policy, or administrative regulation

Assignment and Responsibilities of Independent Study Teachers

***Note: The following optional section may be revised to reflect district practice. ***

***Note: Because the federal No Child Left Behind Act (20 USC 6319, 7801; 34 CFR 200.55-200.57; 5 CCR 6100-6126) requires teachers to demonstrate subject matter competency for each core academic subject they teach, many middle and high school independent study programs assign subject matter specialists to oversee student work related to their subject, while assigning supervising teachers to oversee matters of attendance, work samples, parent/guardian communications, and other duties of "homeroom" teachers. Districts that implement such a model may revise the following section to specify the duties of both supervising teachers and subject matter specialists assigned to work with independent study 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)

(cf. 4112.2 - Certification)

(cf. 4112.24 - Teacher Qualifications Under the No Child Left Behind)

The principal and independent study administrator may recommend and the Superintendent shall approve the assignment of teachers to directly supervise independent study and/or work with students on specific subject matter. The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that independent study teachers have access to professional development and support comparable to classroom-based teachers.

(cf. 4131 - Staff Development)

***Note: The following paragraph is optional. Pursuant to Education Code 51745.6, the equivalency of teacher-student ratios described below is a necessary condition for the district to receive apportionments for independent study. The district may exceed these ratios, but those additional units of independent study average daily attendance would not be funded. ***

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The ratio of student average daily attendance to full-time equivalent certificated employees responsible for independent study shall not exceed the equivalent ratio for all other education programs in the district. (Education Code 51745.6)

The responsibilities of the supervising teacher shall be 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
3. Design lesson plans and make assignments
4. Maintain records of student assignments showing the date the assignment is given and the date the assignment is due
5. Provide direct instruction and counsel as necessary for individual student success
6. Regularly meet with the student to discuss the student's progress

***Note: Pursuant to Education Code 51747.5, the district may only claim apportionment credit for independent study based on the time value of student work products as personally judged in each instance by a certificated teacher. ***

7. Judge the time value of assigned work or work products completed and submitted by the student
8. Assess student work and determine and assign grades or other approved measures of achievement

***Note: The CDE recommends that the district establish a consistent standard for the frequency of collecting work samples for each subject (e.g., two samples per subject per semester) and specify whether all work samples must be from a particular timeframe. The district should modify item #9 below to reflect district practice. ***

9. Select and save representative samples of the student's completed and evaluated assignments for each subject, signed or initialed and dated in accordance with item #3 in the section on "Records" below
10. Maintain a daily or hourly attendance register in accordance with item #4 in the section on "Records" below

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11. Maintain any other required records and files on a current basis

Records

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that records are maintained for audit purposes. 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, by grade level, program, and school, who have participated in independent study. This listing shall identify units of the curriculum attempted and units of the curriculum completed by students in grades K-8 and identify 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 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 work products judged by a certificated teacher, and reviewed by the supervising teacher if they are two different persons.

(cf. 3580 - District Records)

***Note: The following paragraphs are optional. According to the CDE's Independent Study Operations Manual, the above auditable records should be maintained for three years as provided below. ***

The above records shall be maintained for three years, excluding the current fiscal year.

The Superintendent or designee also shall maintain a record of grades and other evaluations issued to each student for independent study assignments.

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

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***Note: Education Code 51747 requires that the results of evaluations conducted after students have missed the number of assignments specified by the Board (see the accompanying Board policy and the "Monitoring Student Progress" section above) must be maintained as a mandatory interim student record. See AR 5125 - Student Records for requirements pertaining to the maintenance of mandatory interim student records. ***

A written record of the findings of any evaluation conducted after the student has missed the number of assignments specified in Board policy 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)

(cf. 5125 - Student Records)