

Instruction**Independent Study**

The Board of Trustees authorizes independent study as an optional alternative instructional strategy by which students in grades TK-8 may reach curriculum objectives. Independent study offers a means of individualizing the educational plan for students whose needs may be met best through study outside of the regular classroom setting.

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that students participating in independent study are provided with content aligned to grade level standards at a level of quality and intellectual challenge substantially equivalent to in person instruction. (Education Code 51747)

The Superintendent or designee 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 master agreement exists for each participating student as prescribed by law. (Education Code 51747, 51749.5)

For the 2021–22 school year only, the district shall obtain a signed written agreement for long-term independent study (the Virtual Academy) no later than 30 days after the first day of instruction. A written agreement shall be developed and implemented for each student participating in independent study for three or more consecutive school days. (Education Code 46300, 51747; 5 CCR 11703) 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 are not limited to, all of the following: (Education Code 51747; 5 CCR 11700, 11702)

1. The frequency, time, place and manner for submitting the student's assignments, reporting the student's academic progress, and communicating with a student's parent/guardian regarding the student's academic 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 that will be made available to the student, including materials and personnel, and access to Internet connectivity and devices adequate to participate in the educational program and complete assigned work

The district shall provide written notice to the parents/guardians of all enrolled students of the option to enroll their child in in-person instruction or independent study during the 2021-22 school year. This notice shall be posted on the district's web site, and shall include, at a minimum, information about the right to request a student-parent educator conference before enrollment, student rights regarding procedures for enrolling, dis-enrolling, and reenrolling in independent study, and the instructional time, including synchronous and asynchronous learning, that a student will have access to as part of independent study. (Education Code 51747)

Upon the request of the parent/guardian of a student, before making a decision about enrolling or dis-enrolling in long-term independent study (the Virtual Academy) and entering into a written agreement to do so, the district shall conduct a telephone, videoconference, or in-person student-parent-educator conference or other meeting during which the student, parent/guardian, or their advocate may ask questions about the educational options, including which curriculum offerings and nonacademic supports will be available to the student in long-term independent study (the Virtual Academy). (Education Code 51747)

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, and an online course. A student's participation in independent study shall be voluntary. (Education Code 51747, 51749.5) The minimum period of time for any independent study option shall be three consecutive school days.

Independent study for each student shall be under the general supervision of a district employee who possesses a valid certification document pursuant to Education Code 44865 or an emergency credential pursuant to Education Code 44300. Students' independent study shall be coordinated, evaluated, and documented, as prescribed by law and reflected in the accompanying administrative regulation. (Education Code 51747.5)

Because excessive leniency in the duration of independent study assignments may result in a student falling behind peers and increase the risk of dropping out of school, independent study assignments shall be completed no more than one week after assigned 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.

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that procedures for tiered reengagement strategies are used for all students who are not generating attendance for more than three school days or 60 percent of the instructional days in a school week, or who are in violation of their written agreement. This requirement only applies to students participating in long-term independent study (the Virtual Academy) for 15 school days or more. The procedures shall include, but are not necessarily limited to, all of the following: (Education Code 51747)

1. Verification of current contact information for each enrolled student
2. Notification to parents/guardians of lack of participation within one school day of the absence or lack of participation
3. A plan for outreach from the school to determine student needs, including connection with health and social services as necessary
4. A clear standard for requiring a student-parent-educator conference to review a student's written agreement and reconsider the independent study program's impact on the student's achievement and well-being

An evaluation shall be conducted to determine whether it is in a student's best interest to remain in long-term independent study (the Virtual Academy) whenever the student fails to make satisfactory educational progress and/or misses three assignments. Satisfactory educational progress shall be determined based on all of the following indicators: (Education Code 51747)

1. The student's achievement and engagement in the independent study program, as indicated by the student's performance on applicable student-level measures of student achievement and engagement specified in Education Code 52060
2. The completion of assignments, assessments, or other indicators that evidence that the student is working on assignments
3. Learning required concepts, as determined by the supervising teacher
4. Progress towards successful completion of the course of study or individual course, as determined by the supervising teacher

For the 2021-22 school year, the district shall offer independent study, as specified in Education Code 51745, to meet the educational needs of students unless the district has obtained a waiver. (Education Code 51745) For the 2022-23 school year and thereafter, the Superintendent or designee may continue to offer and approve independent study for an individual student 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 the student would in the regular classroom setting.

Instruction

Independent Study (continued)

Home Schooling Through Independent Study

The Superintendent or designee encourages parents/guardians desiring to teach their children at home to enroll their children in independent study. Such enrollment allows continued contact and cooperation between the school system and home-based student.

Legal Reference:

EDUCATION CODE

17289 Exemption for building

44865 Qualifications for home teachers and teachers in special classes and schools; consent to assignment

46300-46300.6 Methods of computing ADA

48220 Classes of children exempted

48340 Improvement of pupil attendance

48915 Expulsion; particular circumstances

48917 Suspension of expulsion order

51225.3 Requirements for high school graduation

51745-51749.3 Independent study programs

52000 Improvement of elementary and secondary education: legislative intent

52015 School improvement plans: components of plan

52017 Secondary schools: additional plan components

56026 Individual with exceptional needs

FAMILY CODE

6550 Authorization affidavits

CODE OF REGULATIONS, TITLE 5

11700-11703 Independent study

Policy Adopted: March 23, 1987

Policy Revised: January 10, 2005; September 26, 2005; February 27, 2006;

August 9, 2021