

CLASSIFICATION: Instruction**ADOPTED: 4/28/82****REVISED: 9/8/21****SUBJECT: Independent Study****PAGE: 1 of 11**

The primary objective of alternative schools is to provide a means for students to resume the course of their education and graduate from high school prepared for college, career, and responsible citizenship. It is the intention of the County Board of Education and the county superintendent of schools to make available independent study as a continuously voluntary, optional alternative instructional strategy for students enrolled in transitional kindergarten through 12 in schools and programs operated by the county superintendent of schools. Independent study may be offered to help students recover credits and transition back to their traditional schools.

Students participating in independent study shall have the continuing option of entering or returning to a classroom-based instructional program.

The independent study curriculum shall be substantially equivalent in quality and quantity to classroom-based instruction. Students enrolled in independent study shall have the same access to existing services and resources and the same rights and privileges as all other students. No funds or other things of value shall be provided to independent study students or their parents/guardians that are not provided to students in the classroom-based instructional program or to their parents/guardians.

The county superintendent of schools or designee is responsible for administering independent study in a manner that ensures its quality and compliance with State law and regulations and the guidelines presented in this administrative regulation.

Educational Opportunities

Educational opportunities offered through independent study may include, but are not limited to:

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

CLASSIFICATION: Instruction**ADOPTED: 4/28/82****REVISED: 9/8/21****SUBJECT: Independent Study****PAGE: 2 of 11**

4. Continuing and special study during travel
5. Volunteer community service activities and leadership opportunities that support and strengthen student achievement
6. Individualized study for a student whose health would be put at risk by an in-person instruction, as determined by the parent or guardian of the student.

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 their regular classes.

For the 2021–22 school year only, SDCOE shall notify parents and guardians of their options to enroll their child in in-person instruction or independent study through its annual notice, sent to all parents/guardians and posted on SDCOE’s website. Upon the request of the parent/guardian of a student, SDCOE shall arrange a conference to discuss curriculum offerings and nonacademic supports available to the student in independent study.

Equivalency

The independent study option shall provide students with content aligned to grade level standards at a level of quality and intellectual challenge substantially equivalent in quality and quantity to in-person instruction so as to enable participating students to complete SDCOE’s adopted course of study within the customary timeframe. 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.

Students enrolled in independent study shall be provided with specific resources, including materials and personnel, necessary for independent study. These resources shall include confirming, providing, or ensuring access to the connectivity and devices adequate to participate in the educational program and complete assigned work.

Independent study students and their parents/guardians shall not be provided with other funds or items of value that are not provided for other students and their parents/guardians.

CLASSIFICATION: Instruction**ADOPTED: 4/28/82****REVISED: 9/8/21****SUBJECT: Independent Study****PAGE: 3 of 11**

Eligibility for Independent Study

The county superintendent of schools 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 program 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. For an elementary student, the county superintendent of schools 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.

For a student with disabilities, as defined in Education Code section 56026, participation in independent study shall be approved only if their individualized education program specifically provides for such participation.

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

Enrollment, Disenrollment, and Reenrollment

Prior to enrollment and upon request, SDCOE parent/guardians have the right to request a pupil-parent-educator conference. Before the first day of instruction, the independent study master agreement must be signed by the supervising certificated teacher, student, and parent/guardian or caregiver of the student, if the student is under age 18 years.

SDCOE shall conduct an investigation to determine whether it is in a student's best interest to remain in independent study whenever the student is determined to be failing to make satisfactory educational progress, as determined by their achievement and engagement in the independent study program, completion of assignments, assessments or other indicators of student participation/work, acquisition of concept

CLASSIFICATION: Instruction**ADOPTED: 4/28/82****REVISED: 9/8/21****SUBJECT: Independent Study****PAGE: 4 of 11**

knowledge, and progress towards successful completion of required course(s) of study, and/or 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 suggest otherwise. Such evaluation is intended as one component of the tiered re-engagement strategies applicable to 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 the students' written agreement. If previous interventions were unsuccessful students will be referred back to seat-based program after consultation with parent/guardian.

Master Agreement

A written agreement shall be developed and implemented for each student participating in independent study for three or more consecutive school days.

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:

1. The manner, time, frequency, and place for submitting the student's assignments and for reporting his/her progress, and for communicating with a student's parent or guardian regarding a 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, including materials and personnel, that will be made available to the student, which shall include confirmation or provision of access to the connectivity and devices adequate to participate in the educational program and complete assigned work
4. A statement of the County Board of Education's policy detailing the maximum length of time allowed between an assignment and its completion and the number of missed assignments, and the level of satisfactory educational progress, by grade level and type of program required before an evaluation of

CLASSIFICATION: Instruction**ADOPTED: 4/28/82****REVISED: 9/8/21****SUBJECT: Independent Study****PAGE: 5 of 11**

whether or not the student should be allowed to continue in independent study is initiated

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 school year
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 detailing the academic and other supports that will be provided to address the needs of students who are not performing at grade level, or need support in other areas, such as English learners, individuals with exceptional needs in order to be consistent with the student's individualized education program or plan pursuant to Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 USC 794), students in foster care or experiencing homelessness, and students requiring mental health supports
8. 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. Prior to the first day of instruction, 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 instruction and/or assistance to the student

For the 2021-2022 school year only, SDCOE shall have 30 days from the first day of instruction to receive a signed written agreement from all required parties. However, all requirements of independent study must be complied with starting on the first day of instruction.

CLASSIFICATION: Instruction**ADOPTED: 4/28/82****REVISED: 9/8/21****SUBJECT: Independent Study****PAGE: 6 of 11**

The parent/guardian's signature on the agreement, including an electronic signature, shall constitute permission for the student to receive instruction through independent study.

The signed, dated agreement shall be maintained in the student's education file and may also be maintained electronically.

Monitoring Student Progress

The independent study administrator and/or supervising teacher shall promptly and directly address any failure by the student to meet the terms of their written agreement. For all students not generating attendance for more than three schooldays or 60 percent of the instructional days in a school week or who are in violation of their written agreement, tiered re-engagement strategies, including but not limited to all of the following, shall be implemented as follows:

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. An evaluation meeting between the student, parent/guardian, and the independent study administrator, and teacher, including the student's counselor, as appropriate
4. A plan for outreach from the school to determine student needs, including connection with health and social services as necessary
5. An increase in the amount of time the student works under direct supervision

Because excessive leniency in the duration of independent study assignments may result in a student falling behind their peers and increase the risk of dropping out of school, independent study assignments shall be no more than two weeks for all grade levels and types of program. The maximum amount of time that may elapse for the

CLASSIFICATION: Instruction**ADOPTED: 4/28/82****REVISED: 9/8/21****SUBJECT: Independent Study****PAGE: 7 of 11**

completion of an assignment is six months, or no more than one semester. However, when necessary, based on the specific circumstances of the student's approved program, the county superintendent of schools or designee may allow for a longer period of time between the dates an assignment is made and when it is due, up to the termination date of the agreement.

When student attendance, participation, and/or the student's level of educational progress requires or the student has missed the number of assignments specified in the written agreement, the county superintendent of schools or designee shall conduct an evaluation to determine whether it is in the best interests of the student to remain in independent study, or whether the student should return to the regular school program or other alternative program.

A student shall be considered as making satisfactory educational progress if

1. Students are graded in relation to objective grade level academic content standards, not in relation to local classroom performance levels. Mastery is determined in relation to the grade level academic content standards for specific subjects.
2. Grades are based on impartial, consistent observation of the quality of the student's work and his/her mastery of instructional objectives and course content.
3. Mastery is assessed using a variety of methods including but not limited to assignments, projects, presentations, and other evaluations of student learning outcomes relative to academic content standards.
4. Academic grades are based primarily on academic performance and reflect the student's current level of mastery in the subject

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.

CLASSIFICATION: Instruction**ADOPTED: 4/28/82****REVISED: 9/8/21****SUBJECT: Independent Study****PAGE: 8 of 11**

Daily participation shall be documented for each student on each school day, in whole or in part, for which independent study is provided, and require a student who does not participate in independent study on a school day to be documented as non-participatory for that school day.

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.

Responsibilities of Independent Study Administrator

The responsibilities of the independent study administrator include, but are not limited to:

1. 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
2. Approving or denying the participation of students requesting independent study
3. Facilitating the completion of written independent study agreements
4. Ensuring a smooth transition for students into and out of the independent study mode of instruction
5. Approving all credits earned through independent study
6. Completing or coordinating the preparation of all records and reports required by law, board policy, or administrative regulation.

Assignment and Responsibilities of Independent Study Teachers

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. Supervising teachers shall prepare a weekly teaching plan, which includes the daily or weekly instruction as outlined in board policy. The ratio of student average daily attendance for independent study students age 18 years or

CLASSIFICATION: Instruction**ADOPTED: 4/28/82****REVISED: 9/8/21****SUBJECT: Independent Study****PAGE: 9 of 11**

younger to full-time equivalent certificated employees responsible for independent study shall not exceed the equivalent ratio for all other education programs under the jurisdiction of the county superintendent of schools, unless a new higher or lower ratio for all other educational programs offered is negotiated in a collective bargaining agreement or SDCOE enters into a memorandum of understanding that indicates an existing collective bargaining agreement contains an alternative ratio.

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

1. Completing designated portions of the written independent study agreement
2. Supervising and approving coursework and assignments
3. Maintaining records of student assignments showing the date the assignment is given and the date the assignment is due
4. Maintaining a daily or hourly attendance register in accordance with item #4 in the section on "Records" below
5. Providing direct instruction and counsel as necessary for individual student success
6. Regularly meeting with the student to discuss the student's progress
7. Determining the time value of assigned work or work products completed and submitted by the student
8. Assessing student work and assigning grades or other approved measures of achievement

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

CLASSIFICATION: Instruction**ADOPTED: 4/28/82****REVISED: 9/8/21****SUBJECT: Independent Study****PAGE: 10 of 11**

Records

The county superintendent of schools or designee shall ensure that records are maintained for audit purposes. These records shall include, but not be limited to:

1. Copies of the board policy, administrative regulation, and procedures related to independent study.
2. A list of independent study teachers and their assignments.
3. A list of students by grade level, program, and school, who have participated in independent study, along with the units of curriculum attempted and completed by students in grades K-8.
4. An attendance register separate from that used for classroom-based attendance and maintained on a current basis as time values of student work products are personally judged by a certificated teacher and reviewed by the supervising teacher, if they are two different individuals.
5. Files for each student that include the following:
 - a. Signed independent study written agreement(s) identifying units of the elementary curriculum undertaken and completed or high school course credits attempted and awarded. The agreement may be maintained electronically.
 - b. Student assignment and work record(s).
 - c. Representative samples of original, completed student work.
 - d. Teacher records of apportionment/attendance, credits, grades, and other evaluations of independent study assignments and student achievement.
 - e. Any evaluations conducted to assess the student's continued participation in the independent study option. If the student transfers to another

CLASSIFICATION: Instruction

ADOPTED: 4/28/82

REVISED: 9/8/21

SUBJECT: Independent Study

PAGE: 11 of 11

California public school, evaluations shall be forwarded to that school

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

Board Policy: 1312, 6158, 6141

Administrative Regulation: 1312.4, 5125, 6161, 6146

Derivation: Former Administrative Regulation, Adopted 4/28/82, Amended 10/18/94. Renamed, Amended, and Renumbered 6158, 11/8/95. Amended 3/24/03, 7/6/12, 6/11/15, 9/8/21.

Legal References: Education Code

1983, 48204, 44809, 44865, 46300 et seq., 48206.3, 48915, 48917, 51745 - 51749.3, 56026

California Code of Regulations, Title 5

432, 11700 – 11703, 16023 – 16028, 19819

Court Decisions

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

Management Resources: California Consortium for Independent Study: <http://www.ccis.org>
Compliance Manual 2014-2015, California Consortium for Independent Study, 2014