

Education Code 51745-51749.6 authorizes districts to establish independent study programs to meet the educational needs of students. Independent study may be offered as a program within a school, or as an alternative school of choice pursuant to Education Code 58500-58512. (See Administrative Regulation 6158.)

The Governing Board 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 during the 2021-22 school year. Independent study shall be offered to meet educational needs of pupils, including but not limited to individualized study for a pupil whose health would be put at risk by in-person instruction, as determined by the parent or guardian of the pupil.

(cf. 6011 - Academic Standards)

(cf. 6143 - Courses of Study)

(cf. 6172 - Gifted and Talented Student Program)

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 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. In the event that a student/family decides to dis-enroll from Independent Study to return to the general school program, the District will enroll the student within 5 days in a traditional classroom. While every attempt will be made to return the student to their home school, final placement determinations will be based on space available. This provision shall not apply to students that participate in an independent study program for fewer than 15 school days in a schoolyear.

(Education Code 51747; 5 CCR 11700)

Parents/guardians of students who are interested in independent study shall contact the Superintendent or designee. The Superintendent or designee 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 setting.

Upon the request of the parent or guardian of a pupil, the District shall conduct a phone, video conference, or in-person pupil-parent-educator conference or other school meeting during which the pupil, parent or guardian, and, if requested by the pupil or parent, an education advocate, may ask questions about the educational options, including which curriculum offerings and nonacademic supports that will be available to the pupil in independent study, before making the decision about enrollment or disenrollment in the various options for learning.

Pursuant to Education Code 46300, the attendance of students participating in independent study for five or more consecutive school days will be included in computing average daily attendance for apportionment purposes.

Student Interaction

For pupils in TK through grade 3, students will receive daily synchronous virtual instruction.

For pupils in grades 4 to 8, students will receive daily live interaction and at least weekly synchronous instruction.

Students will be expected to meet weekly in-person with their supervising teacher or other district staff for the purpose of, but not limited to, wellness monitoring, material distribution, related services, provision of services or instruction, or progress monitoring.

This provision shall not apply to students that participate in an independent study program for fewer than 15 school days in a school year.

Written Agreements

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that a written master agreement and, as appropriate, a learning agreement for students participating in course-based independent study exist for each participating student as prescribed by law. (Education Code 51747, 51749.5)

The master 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. 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 master agreement shall specify the level of "Satisfactory Educational Progress" and the number of missed assignments that will be allowed before an evaluation will be conducted to determine whether it is in a student's best interest to remain in independent study. 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.

"Satisfactory educational progress" shall be determined based on all of the following indicators:

The pupil's achievement and engagement in the independent study program, as indicated by the pupil's performance on applicable pupil-level measures of pupil achievement and pupil engagement (assessments, attendance, graduation rates, etc.).

The completion of assignments, assessments, or other indicators that evidence that the pupil is working on assignments.

Learning required concepts, as determined by the supervising teacher.

Progressing toward successful completion of the course of study or individual course, as determined by the supervising teacher.

Re-engagement strategies for all pupils 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 written agreement. shall include, but are not necessarily limited to, all of the following:

Verification of current contact information for each enrolled pupil.

Notification to parents or guardians of lack of participation within one school day of the absence or lack of participation.

A plan for outreach from the school to determine pupil needs, including connection with health and social services as necessary.

The above provision shall not apply to students that participate in an independent study program for fewer than 15 school days in a schoolyear.

A clear standard for requiring a pupil-parent-educator conference to review a pupil's written agreement, and reconsider the Independent Study program's impact on the pupil's achievement and well-being, consistent with satisfactory educational progress and timely completion of assignments.

Student-Teacher Conferences

Supervising teachers should 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.

Students will be expected to meet weekly in-person with their supervising teacher or other district staff for the purpose of, but not limited to, wellness monitoring, material distribution, related services, provision of services or instruction, or progress monitoring.

Missing appointments with the supervising teacher without valid reasons may trigger an evaluation to determine whether the student should remain in independent study.

Reports

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.

(cf. 0500 - Accountability)

(cf. 5121 - Grades/Evaluation of Student Achievement)

(cf. 6162.5 - Student Assessment)

(cf. 6162.51 - State Academic Achievement Tests)

Legal Reference:

EDUCATION CODE

17289 Exemption for facilities

41976.2 Independent study programs; adult education funding

42238 Revenue limits

42238.05 Local control funding formula; average daily attendance

44865 Qualifications for home teachers and teachers in special classes and schools

46200-46208 Instructional day and year

46300-46307.1 Methods of computing average daily attendance

47612.5 Independent study in charter schools

48204 Residency

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

49011 Student fees

51225.3 Requirements for high school graduation

51745-51749.6 Independent study programs

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

UNITED STATES CODE, TITLE 20

6301 Highly qualified teachers

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

Elements of Exemplary Independent Study

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>