



INDEPENDENT STUDY

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY DESIGN

Overview

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 may be offered to students by a school under the supervision of the principal (or designee) and/or from district-designated locations which meet the requirements of law.

Independent study shall offer a means of individualizing the educational plan to serve students who desire an alternative educational experience, whose health or other personal circumstances make classroom attendance difficult, who are unable to access courses due to scheduling problems, and/or who need to make up credits or fill gaps in their learning, enabling students to reach curriculum objectives, meet college and career goals, and fulfill graduation requirements. 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, a program or class within a comprehensive school, an alternative school or program of choice, a home-based format, a home-hospital program, or online coursework.

~~Educational opportunities offered through independent study may include, but shall not be limited to:~~

- ~~1. Special assignments extending the content of the 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.~~
- ~~4. Continuing and special study during travel.~~
- ~~5. Volunteer community service activities that support and strengthen student achievement.~~

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.

Short term independent study contracts are to be requested a minimum of five

school days prior to the first day of the agreed upon contract.

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

All course work offered to adults through independent study shall meet the requirements for a high school diploma.

The duration of any Independent Study Agreement shall not exceed ~~90 school days (the equivalent of one semester)~~ **one school year** from the date the agreement was signed by all parties.

The elapsed time between the issuance of an independent study assignment and the due date shall not exceed 20 school days. The Superintendent or designee may approve an extension of time pursuant to a written request from the student and parent/guardian.

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). ***For course-based certification, courses are to be annually certified by the governing board that the courses are of the same rigor and educational quality as classroom-based courses, and are aligned to all relevant state and local content standards. Courses are taught under the general supervision of an appropriately certified teacher.***

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)

STUDENT PARTICIPATION

Provided that experienced certificated staff are 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. 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 assessment and/or differentiated materials, to enable the student to be successful. For an elementary student, the Superintendent or designee may consider the parent/guardian's level of commitment to assist the student.

Student participation in independent study shall be voluntary and based on the following criteria:

1. An acceptable reason for requesting independent study.
2. Evidence that the student can ~~work independently~~ **meet the expectations of the independent study program.**

3. ~~Indication that the student will work to complete the assignments and meet necessary appointments and due dates.~~
4. Availability of teachers with appropriate qualifications and adequate time to supervise the student effectively.
5. Written parent permission to participate in independent study.

Students will be evaluated to determine whether it is in their best interest to remain in independent study when any of the following conditions exist:

1. *The student* fails to complete ~~four~~ *three* independent study assignments;
2. *The student* misses ~~four~~ *three* scheduled meetings with the supervising teacher;
3. *The student* falls behind 60 or more hours in independent study assignments to be completed.

A written record of the findings of any evaluation shall be maintained in the student's permanent record.

Eligibility for Independent Study

A student participating in independent study must be ~~a resident of the county or an adjacent county~~ *eligible to enroll in Irvine Unified School District, and meet the established applicable age requirements.* ~~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)~~

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)

A temporarily disabled student shall not receive individual instruction pursuant to Education Code 48206.3 by means of independent study, *and may be referred to the home-hospital program if eligible.* (Education Code 51745)

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)

WRITTEN AGREEMENTS

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) *The maximum duration of a written independent study agreement shall be one school year (Ed Code 51474).*

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 programs. 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 dates an assignment is made and when it is due, up to the termination date of the agreement.

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. Course information, including 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.
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.
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 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.

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

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. *This includes, but is not limited to, applicable statewide accountability measures, the completion of assignments, examinations, or other indicators that the*

student is working on assignments, progression towards mastery of the learning targets, and progression towards course completion. The following supportive strategies may be used:

1. A letter *or digital communication* to the student and/or parent/guardian
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.

Additional responsibilities of the supervising teacher, aside from regular Irvine Unified School District teacher contract responsibilities, 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, and *proctor examinations.*
3. Design lesson plans and make assignments. *Contribute to course development of online or offline content.*
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. Monitor student progress and regularly meet with the student to discuss such progress (see "Monitoring Student 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. *For traditional independent study models,* 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~~ *academic progress. Maintain an accurate gradebook and communicate progress with students and parents.*
9. *For traditional independent study models,* select and save representative samples of the student's completed and evaluated assignments *from each subject area,*

demonstrating progress towards the learning targets. The Superintendent or designee shall determine best practices for the collection of work samples. The instructor is not required to sign and date the work products (Ed Code 51745.5).

10. Maintain a ~~daily or hourly~~ *daily, hourly, or weekly* attendance register, *as appropriate to the program*, in accordance with item #4 in the section on "Records" below.

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

12. *Sign off on the Independent Study Agreement when the student has completed his/her educational objectives or the agreement is terminated.*

13. *At the completion or termination of an Independent Study Agreement, conduct a final evaluation of student performance. Submit both the signed off agreement and representative work sample(s) to student attendance/records personnel at the local school site.*

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 regulations, and 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 *Independent Study* agreements, *and, for traditional independent study students*, ~~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. *For traditional independent study students*, ~~A daily or hourly~~ *a daily, hourly, or weekly* 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 *a time values of student work products*, *as* judged by a certificated teacher, and reviewed by the supervising teacher if they are two different persons.

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.

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)

Adopted: October 2, 1990

Revised: October 2, 2012

Revised:

References:

Education Codes

39141.9

46300.4 48206.3

51745-51749.5

56026

SB-858 Education Finance: Education Omnibus Trailer Bill (2013-2014)

Policy