

## **INDEPENDENT STUDY**

### **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.
4. Continuing and special study during travel.
5. Volunteer community service activities that support and strengthen student achievement.

In addition, when requested by the 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.

No course required for high school graduation shall be offered exclusively through independent study.

### **Equivalency**

The district's independent study option shall be substantially equivalent in quality and quantity to classroom instruction, thus enabling students participating in independent study 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.

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.

Eligibility for Independent Study

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 school 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 Superintendent or designee may consider the parent/guardian's level of commitment to assist the student.

Parents/guardians of students who are interested in independent study should contact the principal or designee. Approval for participation shall be based on the following criteria:

1. Evidence that the student will work independently to complete the program; and
2. Availability of experienced certificated staff with adequate time to effectively supervise the student;

A student's participation in independent study shall be voluntary.

Students participating in independent study must be residents of the Los Angeles 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.

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.

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

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.

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 at any given time.

### Types of Independent Programs

For the purpose of clarity and common terminology, the Board recognizes three types of Independent Study:

#### **1. Site-Based Independent Study**

This is a short term independent study contract that is organized, facilitated, and accounted for by the student's school site. The student remains enrolled at their school and the typical duration of the independent study contract is 5 to 21 days per occurrence.

#### **2. District-Based Independent Study (Mt. Park School)**

This is a long term or permanent independent study contract that is organized, facilitated, and accounted for the MUSD Independent Study School of Mountain Park (Mt. Park). The student is checked out of their school of origin and enrolls into the Mt. Park School where they receive their curriculum and instruction. The typical duration of the independent study contract is 4 weeks to full-time.

The Superintendent or designee will encourage parent/guardians desiring to teach their children at home to have their children participate in the District-Based Independent study program (Mountain Park). Such participation allows continued contact and cooperation between the school system and the home-based student.

#### **3. Home/Medical-Based Independent Study**

This is a variable independent study contract that is organized and facilitated through the Pupil Personnel Services Department for unique situations where students may not be able to attend a comprehensive site nor the district-based programs, because of a variety of reasons that might include (but not limited to):

- a. Students who are in the hospital
- b. Students who are home-bound
- c. Students who are placed through the IEP process
- d. Students who are unable to attend a school site and/or district educational facility

### Site-Based Independent Study Program

To foster each participating student's success in Site-Based Independent Study Program, the Board establishes the following maximum lengths of time which may elapse between the date students return to school and the date by which the student must complete the assigned work, which will be one week for students in grades K-12, including continuation.

### District-Based and Home/Medical-Based Independent Study Programs

In relation to these two Independent Study Programs, the specific circumstances will guide the establishment of the student contract that includes maximum lengths of time and due dates.

### Written Agreements

A written agreement shall be developed for each student participating in independent study for five 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 written independent study agreement for each participating student also shall include, but not be limited to, all of the following:

1. The manner, frequency, time, 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;
4. A statement of the Board's independent study 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 semester or one-half year if the school is on a year-round calendar;
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; and
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.

The agreement also may include a schedule for achieving objectives and completing the agreement and a schedule of conferences between the student and supervising teacher.

The curriculum and methods of study specified in the written agreement shall be consistent with Board policy, administrative regulations and procedures for curriculum and instruction.

Before the student begins the independent study, each 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 designated as responsible for the general supervision of independent study, and all persons who have direct responsibility for providing assistance to the student.

The agreement shall state that the parent/guardian's signature confirms his/her permission for the student's independent study as specified in the agreement.

#### Monitoring Student Progress Rights and Responsibilities

Students participating in independent study shall have the right, continuously, to enter or return to the regular classroom mode of instruction, including upon termination of the agreement.

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. Phone call;
2. A letter to the student and/or parent/guardian;
3. A meeting between the student and the teacher and/or counselor;
4. A meeting between the student and the independent study administrator, including the parent/guardian if appropriate;
5. An increase in the amount of time the student works under direct supervision.

For the purpose of the District-Based Independent Program, if any participating student fails to complete three consecutive independent study assignments in a period of 15 school days, or misses two appointments with his/her supervising teacher without valid reasons, an evaluation shall be conducted to determine whether it is in the student's best interest to remain in independent study.

When the student has missed the number of assignments specified in Board policy and/or the written independent study 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 classroom or alternative instructional program.

#### Responsibilities of Independent Study

Each student's independent study shall be coordinated, evaluated, and carried out under the general supervision of a certificated employee. 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 process.

3. Develop and manage the budget for independent study
4. Authorize the selection of staff to be assigned to supervise independent study.
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.
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 necessary records and reports.
11. Establish and maintain in a systematic manner all records required by law, Board policy and administrative regulation.
12. Monitor student participation in independent study so that the district stays within prescribed limits and income to the district is maximized.
13. Obtain and maintain current information and skills required for the operation of an independent study strategy that meets established standards for the district's educational programs.
14. Prepare and submit reports when required by the Board or Superintendent.

#### Supervising 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.

The principal may recommend, the 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. Based on the type of independent study program the teacher may be the student's regular classroom teacher, particularly for elementary students, or a completely different teacher based on situation and availability.

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.

The responsibilities of the supervising teacher supervising independent study 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 all lesson plans and assignments.
4. Maintain any other required records of student assignments showing the date the assignment is given and the date the assignment is due and files on a current basis.
5. Provide direct instruction and counsel as necessary for individual student success.
6. Regularly meet with the student to discuss the student's progress
7. Personally judge the time value of assigned work or work products completed and submitted by the student.
8. Assess all student work and determine and assign grades or other approved measures of achievement
9. Select and save with each agreement representative samples of the student's completed and evaluated assignments for each subject on not less than a monthly basis, preferably biweekly, and 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.

11. Maintain any other required records and files on a current basis.
12. Sign and complete the agreement when the student has reached his/her objectives or the agreement is terminated.
13. Maintain a daily or hourly attendance register in accordance with item #4 in the section on "Records" below.

### Records

For audit purposes, the Superintendent or designee shall ensure that records are maintained for audit purposes. These records shall include, but not be limited to: the following records:

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.

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/program shall maintain records for the students at that school/program.

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.

Revised: April 20, 2011  
(Adopted: September 24, 2008  
(Replaces: AR 6158 Independent Study Program)  
(Revised: September 2000)  
(Revised: March 1997)  
(Revised: February 1994)  
(Adopted: August 1990)