

Series 6000 – Instruction

SP 6158

**TITLE: Independent Study Program**

Approved by: <u><i>Rob Gregor</i></u> <i>Rob Gregor, Superintendent of Schools</i>	Series: <b>Instruction</b> Version: <b>5</b> Effective Date: <b>8/9/2024</b> Previous Policy Date: <b>5/1/2024</b> Revised By: <b>Legal Counsel</b> Policy Number: <b>SP 6158</b>
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The Yuba County Office of Education (YCOE) recognizes its responsibility to educate all pupils in the public school system and, therefore, authorizes independent study as an optional alternative instructional strategy for eligible students enrolled in YCOE programs whose needs may be best met through study outside of the regular classroom setting.

Independent study shall offer a means of individualizing the educational plan to serve students who desire a more challenging 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. Independent study may be offered full- or part-time in conjunction with part- or full-time classroom study as a necessary alternative to meet student needs.

The County Superintendent or designee may provide various independent study opportunities with limited exceptions, 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.

Student 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.

Each student's independent study shall be under the general supervision of a County Office employee with 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.

The minimum period for any independent study option shall be one school day.

**General Independent Study Requirements**

The County 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 YCOE'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.

The minimum instructional minutes for students participating in independent study shall be the same as required for their peers at the school receiving in-person instruction, except as otherwise permitted by law.

Because excessive leniency in the duration of independent study assignments may result in a student falling behind his/her peers and increasing the risk of dropping out of school, independent study assignments shall be completed no more than 20 days after being assigned for all grade levels and types of programs. However, when necessary, based on the specific circumstances of the student's approved program, the County Superintendent or designee may allow for a longer period between the date an assignment is made and when it is due, up to the termination date of the agreement.

An evaluation shall be conducted to determine whether it is in a student's best interest to remain in independent study whenever the student fails to make satisfactory educational progress and/or misses three assignments. Satisfactory educational progress shall be determined based on all the following indicators:

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

The County Superintendent or designee shall ensure that students participating in independent study are provided with content aligned to grade-level standards at a quality and intellectual challenge substantially equivalent to in-person instruction. For high schools, this shall include access to all courses offered by the school for graduation and approved by the University of California or the California State University as creditable under the A–G admissions criteria.

The County Superintendent or designee shall ensure that students participating in independent study for more than 16 school days receive the following throughout the school year:

1. For students in grades transitional kindergarten, kindergarten, and grades 1 to 3, opportunities for daily synchronous instruction
2. For students in grades 4-8, opportunities for both daily live interaction and at least weekly synchronous instruction

3. For students in grades 9-12, opportunities for at least weekly synchronous instruction

The County Superintendent or designee shall ensure that procedures for tiered re-engagement strategies are used for all students participating in an independent study program for more than 16 school days who:

1. Are not generating attendance for more than 10 percent of the required minimum instructional time over four continuous weeks of the school's approved instructional calendar
2. Are found to be not participatory in synchronous instructional offerings pursuant to Education Code section 51747.5 for more than 50 percent of the scheduled days of synchronous instruction in a school month as applicable by grade span
3. Are in violation of their written agreement pursuant to Section 51747(g)

The procedures shall include, but are not necessarily limited to, all the following:

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

The County Superintendent or designee shall develop a plan to transition students whose families wish to return to in-person instruction from independent study expeditiously and, in no case, later than five instructional days. This requirement does not apply to students participating in an independent study program for fewer than 16 school days in a school year.

### **Master Agreement**

The County Superintendent or designee shall ensure that a written master agreement, and as appropriate, a learning agreement for students participating in course-based independent study, exists for each participating student as prescribed by law.

Upon the request of the parent/guardian of a student, before making a decision about enrolling or disenrolling in independent study and entering into a written agreement to do so, YCOE school administrators shall conduct a telephone, videoconference, or in-person student-parent-educator conference or other meetings 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 independent study.

A written agreement shall be developed and implemented for each student participating in independent study for one (1) 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 is not limited to, all the following:

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
4. A statement of the policy detailing the maximum length of time allowed between an assignment and its completion, the level of satisfactory educational progress, 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 the elementary grades, 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, students with disabilities with an individualized education program, or a Section 504 plan to be consistent with their program or plan, 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
9. 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, instruction may be provided through independent study only if the student is offered the alternative of classroom instruction.

10. Before the commencement of independent study projected to last for more than 15 school days, the agreement shall be signed and dated by the student, the student's parent/legal guardian or caregiver if the student is under 18 years of age, the certificated employee responsible for the general supervision of independent study, and for students with disabilities, the certificated employee designated as having responsibility for the special education programming of the student.
11. For a pupil participating in an independent study program that is scheduled for 15 school days or fewer, the written agreement shall be signed, during the school year in which the independent study program takes place, by the pupil, the pupil's parent, legal guardian, or caregiver, if the pupil is less than 18 years of age, the certificated employee who has been designated as having responsibility for the general supervision of independent study, and the certificated employee designated as having responsibility for the special education programming of the pupil, as applicable.

For independent study of 15 or fewer school days, parents, legal guardians, or caregivers will be provided with the agreement at or before the beginning of the school year.

Written agreements may be signed using an electronic signature that complies with state and federal standards, as determined by the CA Department of Education (CDE).

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

### **Student-Parent-Educator Conferences**

A student-parent-educator conference shall be held as appropriate, including, but not limited to, as a re-engagement strategy and/or if requested by a parent/guardian before enrollment in or disenrollment from independent study.

### **Records for Audit Purposes**

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

1. A copy of the policy, administrative regulation, and other procedures related to independent study
2. A listing of the students, by grade level, program, and school, who have participated in independent study, along with the units of the curriculum attempted and completed by students in grades K-8 and the course credits attempted by and awarded to students in grades 9-12 and adult education
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 the teacher has personally evaluated the work or personally reviewed the evaluations

made by another certificated teacher

4. As appropriate to the program in which the students are participating, a daily or hourly attendance register that is separate from classroom attendance records, 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
5. Appropriate documentation of compliance with the teacher-student ratios required by Education Code 51745.6 and 51749.5
6. Appropriate documentation of compliance with the requirements pursuant to Education Code 51747.5 to ensure the coordination, evaluation, and supervision of the independent study of each student by a County Office employee who possesses a valid certification document pursuant to Education Code 44865 or an emergency credential pursuant to Education Code 44300

A written record of the findings of any evaluation conducted after the student has missed the number of assignments specified in policy shall be treated as a mandatory interim student record which shall be maintained for three years from the date of the evaluation.

The County Superintendent or designee shall document each student's participation in live interaction and synchronous instruction pursuant to Education Code 51747 on each school day, as applicable, in whole or in part, for which live interaction or synchronous instruction is provided as part of the independent study program. A student who does not participate in scheduled live interaction or synchronous instruction shall be documented as non-participatory for that school day.

The County Superintendent or designee also shall maintain a written or computer-based record, such as a grade book or summary document of student engagement for each class, of all grades, assignments, and other evaluations issued to assessments for each student for independent study assignments.

The signed, dated agreement, any supplemental agreement, assignment records, work samples, and attendance records may be maintained on file electronically.

**Legal Reference:****FEDERAL**

20 USC 6301 Highly qualified teachers

**STATE**

5 CCR 11700-11703 Independent study

Ed. Code 17289 Exemption for facilities

Ed. Code 41976.2 Independent study programs; adult education funding

Ed. Code 42238 Revenue limits

Ed. Code 42238.05 Local control funding formula; average daily attendance  
Ed. Code 44865 Qualifications for home teachers  
Ed. Code 46200-46208 Incentives for longer instructional day and year  
Ed. Code 46300-46307.1 Methods of computing average daily attendance  
Ed. Code 46390-46393 Emergency average daily attendance  
Ed. Code 47612-47612.1 Charter School Operation  
Ed. Code 47612.5 Charter schools operations, general requirements  
Ed. Code 48204 Residency requirements for school attendance  
Ed. Code 48206.3 Home or hospital instruction; students with temporary disabilities  
Ed. Code 48220 Classes of children exempted  
Ed. Code 48340 Improvement of pupil attendance  
Ed. Code 48915 Expulsion; particular circumstances  
Ed. Code 48916.1 Educational program requirements for expelled students  
Ed. Code 48917 Suspension of expulsion order  
Ed. Code 49011 Student fees  
Ed. Code 51225.3 High school graduation  
Ed. Code 51745-51749.6 Independent study  
Ed. Code 52522 Adult education alternative instructional delivery  
Ed. Code 52523 Adult education as supplement to high school curriculum; criteria  
Ed. Code 56026 Individual with exceptional needs  
Ed. Code 58500-58512 Alternative schools and programs of choice