

Instruction

Independent Study

Definitions

Full-Time Independent Study - Students are enrolled in the Mendocino Alternative School (Independent Study). Students are required to take a minimum of 4 classes in the IS program.

Part-Time Independent Study - Students are enrolled in one of the regular education high schools. Students may take courses on an independent study basis, but must take a minimum of 4 courses in the regular education setting. Part-time IS is not available at the K-6 levels.

Long-Term Independent Study- Students out of school for 16 days or more. School sites will determine the long-term independent study process.

Short-Term Independent Study - Students out of school for 5-15 days. School sites will determine the short-term independent study process.

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. 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 course(s) due to scheduling problems, and/or who need to make up credits or fill gaps in their learning. 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.

For students out for 5-15 days, short-term independent study will be utilized. The Mendocino K-8 School, Albion School, and Comptche School will adopt and determine a short term IS procedure. In addition, the Mendocino High, Community, and Sunrise Schools will adopt a short term IS procedure. In all cases, student and parents are required to notify school personnel of their intention of using short-term IS at least 5 school days prior to the absence. For students out 16 days or more, students may be required to transfer to IS for the remainder of the semester.

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 charter school, 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. (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.

The minimum period of time for any independent study option shall be five consecutive school days.

The Board recognizes that independent study may be used as an option to encourage students to remain in school. Teachers should carefully set the duration of independent study assignments, within the limits specified by the Board, in order to help identify students falling behind in their work or in danger of failing or dropping out of school.

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 should in most cases be no more than one week for all grade levels and types of program. 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.

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.

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.

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

To foster each participating student's success in independent study, the Board establishes the following maximum lengths of time which may elapse between the time an assignment is made and the date by which the student must complete the assigned work as follows:

All grade levels- 9 weeks, unless more frequent meetings are requested by the teacher or student. Nine-week assignments allow for projects, student self-pacing where appropriate for one quarter's work, or to allow students to be on independent study while traveling.

Home-Based Independent Study

The Superintendent or designee shall encourage parents/guardians desiring to teach their children at home to have their children participate in independent study. Such participation allows continued contact and cooperation between the school system and the home-based student and ensures that the student will be

offered a standards-based education substantially equivalent in quality and quantity to the district's classroom instruction.

EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSURES

Pursuant to Education Code (EC) Section 46393, for Form J-13A submissions due to a school closure and/or material decrease in attendance occurring after September 1, 2021, a school district, county office of education, or charter school that provides a Form J-13A affidavit to the Superintendent, pursuant to EC Section 41422 (school closure) or EC Section 46392 (material decrease), shall certify that it has a plan for which independent study will be offered to students, pursuant to Article 5.5 (commencing with EC Section 51745) of Chapter 5 of Part 28 of Division 4.

In the case of an emergency school closure, the following shall be followed:

1. Independent study is offered to any student impacted by any of the conditions listed in EC Section 46392 within 10 days of the first day of a school closure or material decrease in attendance. Students who are individuals with exceptional needs shall receive the services identified in their individualized education programs pursuant to paragraph (9) of subdivision (a) of EC Section 56345 and may participate in an independent study program.
2. Mendocino Unified School District will reopen for in-person instruction as soon as possible unless prohibited under the direction of the local or state health officer.
3. Notwithstanding subdivision (c) of EC Section 51745 or subparagraph (F) of paragraph (9) of subdivision (g) of Section 51747, independent study master agreements will be provided in a reasonable amount of time consistent with the steps outlined in this Independent Study Policy.

Program Evaluation

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, and the number and proportion of independent study students who graduate or successfully complete independent study. Based on the program evaluation, the Board and Superintendent shall determine areas for program improvement as needed.

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 Independentstudy 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)
(3/05 7/10) 12/14