

INDEPENDENT STUDY

The Governing Board authorizes independent study as an optional alternative instructional strategy for 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. Independent study may also be offered through course-based independent study pursuant to Education Code section 51749.5 et seq.

Independent study may also be offered in the event of emergency conditions which make in-person instruction infeasible for all or some pupils pursuant to Education Code section 46393. Emergency conditions may include fire, flood, impassable roads, epidemic, earthquake, the imminence of a major safety hazard as determined by local law enforcement, a strike involving transportation services to students provided by a non-school entity, and an order provided for in Education Code section 41422. (See Education Code § 46392.)

The Board shall hold a public hearing when considering the scope of its existing or prospective use of independent study as an instructional strategy, its purposes in authorizing independent study, and factors bearing specifically on the maximum realistic lengths of assignments and acceptable number of missed assignments for specific populations of students or adult education students. (Education Code 51747; 5 CCR 11701)

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, and an online course.

Student participation in independent study shall be voluntary and no student shall be required to participate. (Education Code 51747, 51749.5, 51749.6)

Independent study for each student shall be under the general supervision of a district employee who possesses a valid certification document pursuant to Education Code section 44865 or an emergency credential pursuant to Education Code section 44300. Students' independent study shall be coordinated, evaluated, and documented, as prescribed by law and reflected in the accompanying administrative regulation. (Education Code 51747.5)

This policy shall govern dependent charter schools authorized by the Board and operated by the District that offer independent study.

INDEPENDENT STUDY (continued)**General Independent Study Requirements**

The Superintendent or designee may offer and approve independent study for an individual student 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 the student would in the regular classroom setting.

An individual with exceptional needs, as defined in Section 56026, may participate in independent study if the pupil's individualized education program developed pursuant to Article 3 (commencing with section 56340) of Chapter 4 of Part 30 specifically provides for that participation.

The minimum instructional minutes for students participating in independent study shall be the same as required for their peers at the school who are receiving in-person instruction, except as otherwise permitted by law. (Education Code 46100)

Because excessive leniency in the duration of independent study assignments may result in a student falling behind peers and increase the risk of dropping out of school, independent study assignments shall be completed no more than five school days after assigned 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. However, in no event shall the due date of an assignment be extended beyond the termination date specified in the student's written 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 of the following indicators: (Education Code 51747)

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

Supervising teachers shall 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. Except in unusual circumstances, the supervising teacher will meet, either in person or by electronic means, with each participating student at least once a week to discuss the student's progress.

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

A written record of the findings of any evaluation made to determine whether it is in the student's best interest to remain in independent study shall be treated as a mandatory interim pupil record. The record shall be maintained for a period of three years from the date of the evaluation and, if the pupil transfers to another California public school, the record shall be forwarded to that school.

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that students participating in independent study are provided with content aligned to grade level standards that is substantially equivalent to in-person instruction. For high schools, this shall include access to all courses offered by the district for graduation and approved by the University of California or the California State University as creditable under the A–G admissions criteria. (Education Code 51747)

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that students participating in independent study for 16 school days or more receive the following throughout the school year: (Education Code 51747)

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

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that procedures for tiered reengagement are used for all students participating in an independent study program for 16 school days or more who are:

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1. Not generating attendance for more than 10 percent of required minimum instructional time over four continuous weeks of the district's approved instructional calendar;
2. Found to be not participatory pursuant to Section 51747.5 for more than 50 percent of the scheduled times of synchronous instruction in a school month as applicable by grade span, or
3. In violation of their written agreement.

Tiered reengagement strategies procedures used in district independent study programs shall include local programs intended to address chronic absenteeism, as applicable, with at least, all of the following: (Education Code 51747)

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 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 only applies to students participating in an independent study program for 16 school days or more in a school year. (Education Code 51747)

The requirements for tiered reengagement, synchronous instruction / live interaction, and a required plan to transition to return to in-person instruction from independent study shall not apply to pupils who participate in an independent study program for 15 school days or fewer in a school year and pupils enrolled in a comprehensive school for classroom-based instruction who, under the care of appropriately licensed professionals, participate in independent study due to necessary medical treatments or inpatient treatment for mental health care or substance abuse. Local educational agencies shall obtain evidence from appropriately licensed professionals of the need for pupils to participate in independent study pursuant to this provision. (Education Code 51747)

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that a written master agreement exists for each participating student as prescribed by law. (Education Code 51747, 51749.5)

INDEPENDENT STUDY (continued)**Virtual Learning Program**

The Virtual Learning Program (“VLP”) is a full-time independent study program, which requires attendance five days per week in full day virtual learning opportunities. The VLP attendance requirements differ from the requirements of general independent study. For purposes of VLP only, the following terms shall apply:

1. Students participating in VLP must be present, with video and audio capability, in the virtual learning platform for a full day of virtual learning, as specified in the Master Agreement, five days per week.
2. “Five days per week” means Monday through Friday and follows the District’s academic calendar.
3. One day of missed attendance shall constitute one missed assignment for purposes of this Policy and the Master Agreement.
4. Students participating in VLP are required to turn in 100% of teacher assignments for each instructional day. Pursuant to this Policy and the Master Agreement, a student who has three missed assignments during the term of the Master Agreement shall be referred for an evaluation to determine whether it is in the student’s best interest to remain in independent study.
5. Pursuant to this Policy and the Master Agreement, the District shall implement Tiered Reengagement Strategies for students participating in VLP.

INDEPENDENT STUDY (continued)

Master Agreement

A written agreement is required for students participating in independent study for any length of time.

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 are not limited to, all of the following: (Education Code 51747; 5 CCR 11700, 11702)

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 Board's 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 in order to be consistent with their program or plan, students in foster care or experiencing homelessness, and students requiring mental health supports.

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8. A statement that independent study is an optional educational alternative in which no student may be required to participate, and the student has the continuing option of classroom instruction.
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, a statement that instruction may be provided through independent study only if the student is offered the alternative of classroom instruction.
10. For a pupil participating in an independent study program that is scheduled for more than 15 school days, each written agreement shall be signed, before the commencement of independent study, 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.
11. For a pupil participating in independent study program that is scheduled for 15 school days or fewer, each written agreement may be signed at any time during the school year in which the independent program takes place, including at or before the beginning of the school year, 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.

Written agreements may be signed using an electronic signature that complies with state and federal standards, as determined by the California Department of Education (CDE). (Education Code 51747)

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

Course-Based Independent Study

The district's course-based independent study program for students in grades K-12 shall be subject to the following requirements: (Education Code 51749.5)

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1. A signed learning agreement shall be completed and on file for each participating student pursuant to Education Code 51749.6
2. Courses shall be taught under the general supervision of certificated employees who hold the appropriate subject matter credential and are employed by the district or by another district, charter school, or county office of education with which the district has a memorandum of understanding to provide the instruction.
3. Courses shall be annually certified by Board resolution to be of the same rigor and educational quality and to provide intellectual challenge that is substantially equivalent to in-person, classroom-based instruction, and shall be aligned to all relevant local and state content standards. For high schools, this shall include access to all courses offered by the district for graduation and approved by the University of California or the California State University as creditable under the A-G admissions criteria. The certification shall, at a minimum, include the duration, number of equivalent daily instructional minutes for each school day that student is enrolled, number of equivalent total instructional minutes, and number of course credits for each course, consistent with that of equivalent classroom-based courses. The certification shall also include plans to provide opportunities for students in grades transitional kindergarten, kindergarten, and grades 1-3 to receive daily synchronous instruction, for students in grades 4-8, to receive both daily live interaction and at least weekly synchronous instruction, and for students in grades 9-12 to receive at least weekly synchronous instruction.
4. Students enrolled in independent study courses shall meet the applicable age requirements established pursuant to Education Code 46300.1, 46300.4, 47612, and 47612.1, and the applicable residency and enrollment requirements established pursuant to Education Code 46300.2, 47612, 48204, and 51747.3.
5. For each student participating in an independent study course, satisfactory educational progress shall be determined based on the student's achievement and engagement in the independent study program, as indicated by their performance on applicable student-level measures of student achievement and student engagement set forth in Education Code 52060, completion of assignments, assessments, or other indicators that evidence that the student is working on assignments, learning of required concepts, as determined by the supervising teacher, and progress toward successful completion of the course of study or individual course, as determined by the supervising teacher.

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If satisfactory educational progress in an independent study course is not being made, the teacher shall notify the student and, if the student is under age 18 years, the student's parent/guardian. The teacher shall conduct an evaluation to determine whether it is in the student's best interest to remain in the course or whether the student should be referred to an alternative program, which may include, but is not limited to, a regular school program. A written record of the evaluation findings shall be a mandatory interim student record maintained for three years from the date of the evaluation. If the student transfers to another California public school, the record shall be forwarded to that school.

Procedures for tiered reengagement strategies shall be used for all students who are not making satisfactory educational progress in one or more courses or who are in violation of the written learning agreement, as described in the section "Learning Agreement for Course-Based Independent Study" below. These procedures shall include, but are not necessarily limited to, the verification of current contact information for each enrolled student, a plan for outreach from the school to determine student needs, including connection with health and social services as necessary, and 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 requirements for tiered reengagement, synchronous instruction / live interaction, and a required plan to transition to return to in-person instruction from course-based independent study shall not apply to pupils who participate in a course-based independent study program for fewer than 16 school days in a school year and pupils enrolled in a comprehensive school for classroom-based instruction who, under the care of appropriately licensed professionals, participate in independent study due to necessary medical treatments or inpatient treatment for mental health care or substance abuse. Local educational agencies shall obtain evidence from appropriately licensed professionals of the need for pupils to participate in independent study pursuant to this provision.

6. Examinations shall be administered by a proctor.
7. Statewide testing results shall be reported and assigned to the school at which the student is enrolled and shall be included in the aggregate results of the district. Test results also shall be disaggregated for purposes of comparisons with the test results of students enrolled in classroom-based courses.
8. A student shall not be required to enroll in courses included in the course-based independent study program.
9. The student-teacher ratio in the courses in this program shall meet the requirements of Education Code 51745.6.

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10. For each student, the combined equivalent daily instructional minutes for courses in this program and all other courses shall meet applicable minimum instructional day requirements, and the student shall be offered the minimum annual total equivalent instructional minutes pursuant to Education Code 46200-46208.
11. Courses required for high school graduation or for admission to the University of California or California State University shall not be offered exclusively through independent study.
12. A student participating in this program shall not be assessed a fee that is prohibited by Education Code 49011.
13. A student shall not be prohibited from participating in independent study solely on the basis that the student does not have the materials, equipment, or access to Internet connectivity necessary to participate in the course.
14. A student with exceptional needs, as defined in Education Code 56026, may participate in course-based independent study if the student's individualized education program specifically provides for that participation.
15. A temporarily disabled student shall not receive individual instruction pursuant to Education Code 48206.3 through course-based independent study.
16. The district shall maintain a plan to transition any student whose family wishes to return to in-person instruction from course-based independent study expeditiously, and, in no case, later than five instructional days.

Learning Agreement for Course-Based Independent Study

Before enrolling a student in a course within this program, the Superintendent or designee shall provide the student and, if the student is under age 18 years, the student's parent/guardian with a written learning agreement that includes all of the following: (Education Code 51749.6)

1. A summary of the district's policies and procedures related to course-based independent study pursuant to Education Code 51749.5.
2. The duration of the enrolled course(s) and the number of course credits for each enrolled course, consistent with the Board certifications made pursuant to item #3 above.

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3. The duration of the learning agreement, which shall not exceed a school year or span multiple school years.
4. The learning objectives and expectations for each course, including, but not limited to, a description of how satisfactory educational progress is measured and when a student evaluation is required to determine whether the student should remain in the course or be referred to an alternative program, which may include, but is not limited to, a regular school program.
5. 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.
6. 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 in order to be consistent with their program or plan, students in foster care or experiencing homelessness, and students requiring mental health supports.
7. A statement that enrollment is an optional educational alternative in which no student may be required to participate. In the case of a student who is suspended or expelled, or who is referred or assigned to any school, class, or program pursuant to Education Code 48915 or 48917, the agreement also shall include the statement that instruction may be provided to the student through course-based independent study only if the student is offered the alternative of classroom instruction.
8. The manner, time, frequency, and place for submitting a student's assignments, for reporting the student's academic progress, and for communicating with a student's parent/guardian regarding a student's academic progress.
9. The objectives and methods of study for the student's work, and the methods used to evaluate that work.
10. A statement of the adopted policies regarding the maximum length of time allowed between the assignment and the completion of a student's assigned work, the level of satisfactory educational progress, and the number of missed assignments allowed before an evaluation of whether the student should be allowed to continue in course-based independent study.
11. A statement of the number of course credits or, for the elementary grades, other measures of academic accomplishment appropriate to the learning agreement, to be earned by the student upon completion.
12. Before the commencement of an independent study course projected to last more than 15 school days for an individual pupil, the learning agreement shall be signed and dated by the student, and by the student's parent/guardian or caregiver, if the student is less than 18 years of age, the certificated employee who has been designated as having responsibility for the general supervision of the independent study course, and the certificated employee designated as having responsibility for the special education programming of the pupil, as applicable.

INDEPENDENT STUDY (continued)

For a pupil participating in independent study program that is scheduled for 15 school days or fewer, each written agreement shall be signed at any time during the school year in which the independent study program takes place, including at or before the beginning of the school year, 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 purposes of this paragraph "caregiver" means a person who has met the requirements of Family Code 6550-6552.

Written agreements may be signed using an electronic signature that complies with state and federal standards, as determined by the CDE. (Education Code 51749.6)

A signed learning agreement from a parent/guardian of a student who is less than 18 years of age shall constitute the parent/guardian's permission for the student to receive instruction through course-based independent study. (Education Code 51749.6)

The Superintendent or designee shall retain a physical or electronic copy of the signed learning agreement for at least three years and as appropriate for auditing purposes. (Education Code 51749.6)

Student-Parent-Educator Conferences

A student-parent-educator conference shall be held as appropriate including, but not limited to, as a reengagement strategy and/or if requested by a student, parent/ guardian, or caregiver prior to enrollment or disenrollment from independent study. (Education Code 51745.5, 51747, 51749.5)

Also, prior to signing the independent study agreement, the parent or guardian may request that the District conduct a telephone, videoconference, or in-person student-parent-education conference or other school meeting during which the student, parent or guardian, and, if requested by the student or parent/guardian, an education advocate, may ask questions about the education options, including which curriculum offerings and nonacademic supports will be available to the student in independent study, before making the decision about enrollment or disenrollment in the various options for learning. (Education Code 51747, 51749.6)

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 regulation, and other procedures related to independent study.

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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 TK-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 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, an hourly attendance register that is separate from classroom attendance records, maintained on a current basis as time values of student work products, specifically a fraction of the work product and the time the student engaged in asynchronous instruction, 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 (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 district employee who possesses a valid certification document pursuant to Education Code 44865 or an emergency credential pursuant to Education Code 44300 (Education Code 51747.5)

The district 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 independent study is provided. A student who does not participate in scheduled live interaction or synchronous instruction shall be documented as nonparticipatory for that school day for purposes of pupil participation reporting and tiered reengagement pursuant to Section 51747. (Education Code 51747.5)

The 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 assessments for each student for independent study assignments. (Education Code 51747.5)

The signed, dated agreement, any supplemental agreement, assignment records, work samples, and attendance records may be maintained on file electronically. (Education Code 51747)

INDEPENDENT STUDY (continued)

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.

Policy

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VISALIA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Visalia, California

INDEPENDENT STUDY**Definitions**

Live interaction means interaction between the student and classified or certificated staff, and may include peers, provided for the purpose of maintaining school connectedness, including, but not limited to, wellness checks, progress monitoring, provision of services, and instruction. This interaction may take place in person, or in the form of Internet or telephonic communication. (Education Code 51745.5)

Student-parent-educator conference means a meeting involving, at a minimum, all parties who signed the student's written independent study agreement pursuant to Education Code 51747 or the written learning agreement pursuant to Education Code 51749.6. (Education Code 51745.5)

Synchronous instruction means classroom-style instruction or designated small group or one-on-one instruction delivered in person, or in the form of Internet or telephonic communications, and involving live two-way communication between the teacher and student. Synchronous instruction shall be provided by the teacher or teachers of record for that student pursuant to Education Code 51747.5 or the certificated employee providing instruction for course- based independent study. (Education Code 51745.5)

Educational Opportunities

The 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 district'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.

Educational opportunities offered through independent study may include, but are not limited to: (Education Code 51745)

1. Special assignments extending the content of regular courses of instruction

(cf. 6143 - Courses of Study)

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

(cf. 5112.3 - Student Leave of Absence)

INDEPENDENT STUDY (continued)

5. Volunteer community service activities and leadership opportunities that support and strengthen student achievement
6. Individualized study for a student whose health, as determined by the student's parent/guardian, would be put at risk by in-person instruction or for a student who is unable to attend in-person instruction due to a quarantine due to exposure to, or infection with, COVID- 19, pursuant to local or state public health guidance; and

(cf. 0420.4 - Charter School Authorization)

(cf. 6142.4 - Service Learning/Community Service Classes) (cf. 6181 - Alternative Schools/Programs of Choice)

7. Course-based independent study

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 the student's regular classes.

(cf. 5113 - Absences and Excuses)

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

(cf. 6146.1 - High School Graduation Requirements)

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 timeframe. 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)

Students participating in independent study shall have access to Internet connectivity and devices adequate to participate in the educational program and complete assigned work. (Education Code 51747)

(cf. 0410 - Nondiscrimination in District Programs and Activities)

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. Providing access to Internet connectivity and local educational agency-owned devices adequate to participate in an independent study program and complete assigned work consistent with Education Code 51747, or to participate in an independent study course, as authorized by Education Code 51749.5, shall not be considered funds or other things of value. (Education Code 46300.6, 51747.3)

INDEPENDENT STUDY (continued)**Content Standards**

The content shall be aligned to grade-level standards that are substantially equivalent to in-person instruction. For high schools, this shall include access to all courses offered by the local educational agency for graduation and approved by the University of California or the California State University as creditable under the A–G admissions criteria.

Eligibility for Independent Study

Students are eligible for independent study as authorized by law, and as specified in board policy and administrative regulation. A student shall be enrolled in a district school while participating in independent study. (Education Code 51748)

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 provided that experienced certificated staff are available to effectively supervise students in independent study. The Superintendent or designee may also approve the participation of a student whose health would be put at risk by in-person instruction.

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 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.

A student participating in independent study must be a resident of the 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. (Education Code 46300.2, 51747.3)

(cf. 5111.1 - District Residency)

A student with disabilities, as defined in Education Code 56026, may participate in independent study if the student's individualized education program specifically provides for such participation. (Education Code 51745) Upon request from a parent or guardian for a student with a disability to participate in independent study pursuant to #6 above, the student's IEP team shall convene to determine whether the student can receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) while participation in independent study. The IEP team shall not reject a request for participation in independent study on the basis of any of the following: (Education Code 51745)

1. The student's inability to work independently;

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2. The student's need for adult support; or
3. The student's need for special education and related services.

In addition, any student with disabilities who receives services from a nonpublic, nonsectarian school through a virtual program may be permitted to participate in independent study if the student's IEP team determines that FAPE can be provided to the student by means of the virtual program and other conditions of law are satisfied. (Education Code 51745(c))

A temporarily disabled student shall not receive individual instruction pursuant to Education Code 48206.3 through independent study. (Education Code 51745)

(cf. 6159 - Individualized Education Program)
(cf. 6183 - Home and Hospital Instruction)

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. (Education Code 46300.1, 46300.4)

(cf. 6200 - Adult Education)

Except for students participating in independent study due to an emergency as described in Education Code 41422 and 46392 and pregnant and parenting students who are the primary caregiver for their child(ren), no more than 10 percent of the students enrolled in a continuation high school or opportunity school or program, not including pregnant students and parenting students who are primary caregivers for one or more of their children, shall be enrolled in independent study. (Education Code 51745)

(cf. 5146 - Married/Pregnant/Parenting Students) *(cf. 6184 - Continuation Education)*

Responsibilities of Independent Study Administrator

The responsibilities of the independent study administrator include, but are not limited to:

1. Recommending certificated staff to be assigned as independent study teachers at the required teacher-student ratios pursuant to Education Code 51745.6 and supervising staff assigned to independent study functions who are not regularly supervised by another administrator
2. Approving or denying the participation of students requesting independent study
3. Facilitating the completion of written independent study agreements
4. Ensuring a smooth transition for students into and out of the independent study mode of instruction

INDEPENDENT STUDY (continued)

5. Approving all credits earned through independent study; and
6. Completing or coordinating the preparation of all records and reports required by law, Board policy, or administrative regulation

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 district employee who possesses a valid certification document pursuant to Education Code 44865 or emergency credential pursuant to Education Code 44300, registered as required by law, and who consents to the assignment. (Education Code 44865, 51747.5; 5 CCR 11700)

The ratio of student average daily attendance for independent study students age 18 years or younger to full-time equivalent certificated employees responsible for independent study shall not exceed the equivalent ratio for all other education programs in the district, unless a new higher or lower ratio for all other educational programs offered is negotiated in a collective bargaining agreement or the district enters into a memorandum of understanding that indicates an existing collective bargaining agreement contains an alternative ratio. (Education Code 51745.6)

The responsibilities of the supervising teacher shall include, but are not limited to:

1. Completing designated portions of the written independent study agreement and signing the agreement
2. Supervising and approving coursework and assignments
3. Maintaining records of student assignments showing the date the assignment is given and the date the assignment is due
4. Maintaining an attendance register documenting each hour or fraction of an hour of both pupil work products and the time the student engaged in asynchronous instruction in accordance with item #4 in the section on "Records" in the accompanying Board policy
5. Providing direct instruction and counsel as necessary for individual student success
6. Providing synchronous instruction in accordance with the accompanying Board policy.
7. Regularly meeting with the student to discuss the student's progress
8. Determining the time value of assigned work or work products completed and submitted by the student including participation in asynchronous instruction regardless of whether work products are produced;
9. Assessing student work and assigning grades or other approved measures of achievement

INDEPENDENT STUDY (continued)

10. Documenting each student's participation in live interaction and/or synchronous instruction pursuant to Education Code 51747 on each school day, for which independent study is provided.

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that independent study teachers have access to professional development and support comparable to classroom-based teachers.

(cf. 4131 - Staff Development)

Assessment and Documentation of Work Product and Participation

The independent study by each pupil shall be coordinated, evaluated, and, shall be under the general supervision of an employee of the District who possesses a valid certification document pursuant to Education Code Section 44865 or an emergency credential pursuant to Education Code Section 44300, registered as required by law.

Apportionment credit for independent study may be claimed only to the extent of the time value of pupil work products, as personally judged in each instance by a certificated teacher employed by the local educational agency. It is the intent of the Legislature that teachers be given access to digital assignment tracking systems to reduce workload associated with evaluating and accounting for pupil work.

INDEPENDENT STUDY (continued)

The District shall document each pupil's participation in live interaction and synchronous instruction pursuant to Education Code Section 51747 on each schoolday, as applicable, in whole or in part, for which live interaction or synchronous instruction is provided as part of the independent study program. A pupil who does not participate in scheduled live interaction or synchronous instruction shall be documented as nonparticipatory for that schoolday for purposes of pupil participation reporting and tiered reengagement pursuant to Education Code Section 51747.

A local educational agency shall maintain written or computer-based evidence of pupil engagement that includes, but is not limited to, a grade book or summary document that, for each class, lists all assignments, assessments, and associated grades.

For purposes of these documentation requirements, a local educational agency shall not be required to sign and date pupil work products when assessing the time value of pupil work products for apportionment purposes.

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VISALIA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Visalia, California