



CATEGORY: **Instruction**
SUBJECT: **Independent Study**

A. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

- 1. To outline administrative procedures governing independent study.
- 2. **Related Procedures:**
 - High school diploma program 4410
 - Graduation from senior high school 4770

B. LEGAL AND POLICY BASIS

- 1. **Reference:** Board policy: F-3100; additional board policy: F-1000, F-1050, F-1100, F-1500, F-2000, F-2250, F-2750, F-7000, H-1501, H-6900; Education Code Sections 33031, 35160, 35256, 44809, 44865, 46100, 46147, 46201, 46300, 46300.4, 48206.3, 48340, 51225.3, 51745, 51745.6, 51746, 51747, 51747.5, 51748, 51749, 51749.3; California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Section 11700-11703; California Interscholastic Foundation—San Diego Section.

C. GENERAL

- 1. **Originating Office.** Suggestions and questions concerning this procedure should be directed to the Executive Director, Curriculum and Instruction Division, Office of the Deputy Superintendent. Questions concerning accounting of attendance should be directed to the Pupil Accounting Department, Office of Resource Development, Financial Operations Division, Office of the Chief Administrative Officer.
- 2. **Purpose of Independent Study.** Independent study is offered at the district’s option and is not available in all California school districts. School districts are not obliged to permit a student to engage in independent study if school officials given responsibility for the decision determine that independent study is not an appropriate alternative for the student. (See Title V, California Code of Regulations 11700[D].) Independent study is conducted under the supervision of a credentialed district employee. No student may be required to participate in independent study. No average daily attendance (ADA) for independent study may be claimed for an expelled or suspended student unless classroom instruction is made continuously available to that student.

Independent study is an instructional strategy that may be used to generate both ADA and academic credit, or academic credit only.

Note: The district is prohibited from claiming any combination of classroom and independent study instruction that would exceed one day of apportionment per day of instruction in the school's calendar.

a. Independent study may be used in the district in any of the four situations below:

- (1) **To accommodate a temporary absence.** A student who is usually in classroom attendance but will be temporarily out of school for any reasonable excuse, including illness, may use an independent study agreement to earn academic credit and, within limits, generate ADA.

Note: The maximum duration of an independent study master agreement to accommodate a temporary absence is one semester (or one-half year in single-track school sites); Education Code does *not* specify a 20 day limit.

- (a) To generate **academic credit and ADA**, a signed agreement must be in effect on or before the first day of the assignment and the academic work must be completed by the date indicated. The student must be out of regular classroom attendance for five or more consecutive school days.
 - (b) To earn **academic credit only**, a student must complete assignments and tests missed during the absence. *Schools must inform parents that academic credit can still be earned once a student returns to regular classroom attendance.* Students absent from school for any excusable reason, including illness, “shall be allowed to complete all assignments and tests missed during the absence that can be reasonably provided, and, upon satisfactory completion within a reasonable period of time, shall be given full credit therefor. As the teacher of any class from which a pupil is absent shall determine[,] the tests and assignments shall be reasonably equivalent to, but not necessarily identical to, the tests and assignments that the pupil missed during the absence” (California Education Code §48205). Schools offering independent study for academic credit only are not required to complete any district paperwork.
- (2) **To receive an extra or special course outside the school day.** A student in attendance at a comprehensive school site may earn academic credit by completing an extra or special course outside the regular school day of attendance. Schools offering independent study for academic credit only are not required to complete any district paperwork.
 - (a) Independent study may not be offered during the regular school day in the district. No district written plan has been submitted to or approved

by the California Department of Education School Fiscal Services Division to combine ADA based on classroom attendance with ADA based on independent study.

- (b) An extra or special course completed through independent study outside the school day is defined as a course that exceeds the requirements for graduation in a specified subject area, including physical education, and is used as an elective course for graduation. Since one day of ADA credit (apportionment) has already been claimed for the student during the regular school day, no ADA will be claimed for this independent study agreement.
 - (c) High school credit earned in independent study courses taken outside the regular school day must be in fields and subjects included in the *Uniform Course File*. Such independent study coursework does not earn a letter grade and will not be used when calculating a student's weighted grade point average. Such coursework will earn elective graduation credit only. Enter "P" (pass/credit) for passing grades; do not enter failing grades. Credit toward graduation is allowed for a grade of "P." Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) coursework may not be offered via independent study.
 - (d) **Exception:** Minor students concurrently enrolled in a comprehensive high school may enroll in district Adult Education High School Diploma Program (HSDP) independent study classes outside the regular school day for the purpose of making up failed coursework needed for graduation. Grades earned in such coursework shall be recorded in the same manner as those earned in district coursework. See Administrative Procedure 4410 for additional information about the district's adult education program.
- (3) **Full academic program.** A student may enroll in a full academic program that uses independent study as the primary instructional strategy (e.g., Mt. Everest Academy, ORACLE, SOAR, MET).

Adult Education also offers through HSDP a full academic program using independent study as a primary instructional strategy (see Administrative Procedure 4410).

In full academic programs, a sample of student work that meets state audit requirements should be provided for each course for each attendance period (see D.5).

(4) **Special circumstances.** Students may be enrolled in independent study as a result of special circumstances, such as “D” or “F” make up, health issues, acceleration, or schedule conflicts. If more than a single site or program is involved with independent study for special circumstances, both the sending and receiving sites must approve the arrangement.

- b. Independent study is available to students in Kindergarten through adult education programs. No student with exceptional needs may participate in independent study unless the Individualized Education Program (IEP) specifically provides for participation. An IEP team, including staff members involved in independent study, must make this decision prior to enrollment and ensure that the IEP specifically provides for participation in independent study.

3. **Definitions**

- a. **Independent study:** Supervised independent study is an alternative to classroom instruction consistent with the district’s course of study (not an alternative curriculum). It provides individual pupils with a choice of ways to master state content standards as well as a way to accommodate special interests, abilities, or individual needs.
- b. **Attendance credit:** Attendance credit earns revenue for the district. Only student work that was started after a Master Agreement (see f below) was filled out and signed, and completed by the due date(s) specified in that Master Agreement, may be counted for attendance credit. Attendance credit is determined by the *amount* of work the student completes, as determined by the supervising credentialed teacher, not by the *quality* of achievement or learning. Attendance credit is recorded in terms of days, or, in the case of summer school or adult education, in hours.

Title 5, California Code of Regulations, Section, 11703(b)(4) requires a daily or hourly attendance credit register (as appropriate to the program in which students are enrolled) to be maintained. This register is separate from and in addition to the classroom attendance records. It should be maintained on a current basis as the time values of pupils’ or adult education students’ work products are determined by a certificated teacher, and reviewed by the supervising credentialed teacher if they are two different persons. This requirement is satisfied a “C” code is entered in the Zangle computer system (see D.4).

- c. **Academic credit:** Academic credit leads to a record of progress, a grade, completion of a course, and/or promotion. Academic credit is based on academic achievement assessed by a certificated staff member in terms of competency, knowledge, and skills demonstrated by the student’s work according to the

evaluation criteria specified in advance in the Subsidiary Assignment Agreement (see f below).

- d. **Supervising credentialed teacher:** A staff member with a teaching credential assigned time and responsibility to oversee a student engaged in independent study. There can be only one supervising teacher per student. The supervising teacher:
 - (1) provides continuing oversight of the study design, implementation plan, and allocation of resources, and monitors the pupil's or adult education student's progress in independent study.
 - (2) makes a personal determination, or a personal review of the determination made by another certificated teacher, of the time values for apportionment of each pupil's or adult education student's work products.
- e. **Designee:** A credentialed staff member designated by the principal to approve independent study requests.
- f. **Master Agreement for Independent Study:** A written and signed agreement (see attached sample [E.1]) with all legally required elements and components that is on file for each student currently enrolled in independent study. Any Subsidiary Assignment Agreements (see attached sample [E.2]) are part of the Master Agreement.
- g. **Completion/submission.** Students must complete the assigned work by the date specified on the Master Agreement to earn attendance credit. If the assigned work is submitted by mail, e-mail, overnight carrier, or after a school holiday, the completion date may vary from the submission date.
- h. **Representative Sample.** A representative sample of the student's original work must be on file with the Master Agreement for each course for which ADA was reported. The supervising credentialed teacher must sign and date the sample.
- i. **Master List of Students on Independent Study.** A list of all students participating in a school site's independent study program(s) in a given school year (see attached sample [F.1]).

4. **Limitations**

- a. The duration of an independent study Master Agreement may not exceed one semester or, in a school on a year-round calendar, one half year.
- b. A student on independent study must fulfill course requirements that are consistent with those for students enrolled in the regular school program.

- c. No course required for high school graduation may be offered exclusively through independent study; i.e., any course required for graduation must also be offered in the classroom mode.
- d. Students should be assigned the equivalent of a full day of classroom work.
- e. A maximum of 20 school days may elapse between the date an independent study assignment begins and the date the student completes the assigned work.
- f. There are no excused absences in independent study. Students are in violation of the Master Agreement and are subject to dismissal from independent study if they miss scheduled appointments or do not complete assigned work by the due dates.
- g. The supervising credentialed teacher shall incorporate into program procedures the appropriate use of strategies with the aim of increasing pupil achievement as well as reducing and preventing failures. These strategies include but are not limited to:
 - (1) Increasing the amount of time the student meets with a teacher or in an equivalent supervised situation.
 - (2) Consulting with the parent, counselor, and/or administrator, as appropriate.
 - (3) Referring the student to the Student Study Team.
 - (4) Referring the student to the School Attendance Review Board.
 - (5) Terminating the Master Agreement and recommending the student's return to a regular classroom. In this case, a written record of the findings must be placed in the student's permanent record.
- h. For K–12 ADA purposes, the independent study teacher–ADA ratio must not exceed the baseline ratio for other instructional programs in the district.
- i. Class size reduction funding is not available for any student enrolled in independent study.
- j. To receive K–12 apportionment, students who are age 19 or 20 must have been continuously enrolled in school since their 18th birthday and be making steady progress toward a high school diploma, as personally judged in each instance by a supervising certificated teacher.
- k. Students engaged in independent study must reside in the local county in which the apportionment claim is reported or in an adjacent county.

1. No more than 10 percent of the ADA of students participating in a continuation high school or opportunity class, program, or school may be engaged in independent study education. Pregnant and/or parenting students are excluded from this limit. The number of students is based on ADA as reported on J-18/19 P 2 forms.
 - m. A new Master Agreement and Subsidiary Assignment Agreement must be generated for summer school.
5. **Requesting independent study**
- a. **Requests to accommodate a temporary absence** are made on an individual basis. Principal or designee determines the student's need for independent study. A minimum of one week in advance of a planned absence, the student and/or the parent/guardian must notify the site designee of the need for an independent study agreement to cover the days of absence. (If a personal or family emergency is involved, the principal may waive the time requirement.) *ADA credit will not be given unless a signed agreement is in effect on or before the days of classroom absence.*
 - b. **Requests for independent study outside the traditional school day** should be directed to the principal or designee.
 - c. **Requests for enrollment in a school or program that uses independent study as the primary instructional strategy** must be directed to the individual provider.
6. A written **Master Agreement** and all **Subsidiary Assignment Agreements** shall be executed for each pupil. The school of enrollment retains the original set of these documents and gives a copy to the parent/guardian or student.
- a. **Master Agreement.** Every Master Agreement shall include:
 - (1) The student's name, identification number, address, phone number, grade level, birth date, age, and the name of the school or program.
 - (2) The duration of the independent study Master Agreement, up to a limit of one semester or one-half year for an independent study provider on a year-round schedule.
 - (3) The beginning and ending dates for the pupil's participation under the agreement. No apportionment can be taken before or after these dates.
 - (4) A statement that the subject/course objectives and student activities for the pupil's work are covered in the Subsidiary Assignment Agreement.

- (5) A statement specifying the maximum length of time allowed between the assignment and the completion of the pupil's assigned work, as determined by board policy.
- (6) A statement that the methods used to evaluate the pupil's work are specified in the Subsidiary Assignment Agreements.
- (7) A statement that the Subsidiary Assignment Agreement will specify the resources, including materials and personnel, that will be made available to the pupils in order to attain the objectives outlined in (4) above.
- (8) A statement of the number of subjects and course credits or other measures of academic accomplishment appropriate to the agreement to be earned by the pupil on completion.
- (9) The manner, frequency, date, time, and location for submitting a pupil's assignment and for reporting his or her progress.
- (10) A statement of the maximum length of time allowed between the assignment and the completion of the pupil's assigned work, as determined by board policy. A maximum of 20 school days may elapse between the date the independent study assignment begins and the date the student completes the assigned work.
- (11) A statement that if a pupil fails to meet the terms of the Master Agreement, an evaluation must be made whether the pupil should be allowed to continue in independent study, as determined by board policy.
- (12) A statement that independent study is an optional educational alternative in which no pupil may be required to participate, pursuant to board policy.
- (13) A statement that independent study is to be equivalent in quality and quantity to classroom instruction and that independent study students have rights and privileges equal to students in classroom instruction.
- (14) The dated signatures of the pupil, pupil's parent/guardian (if the pupil is younger than 18 years old), and supervising credentialed teacher. Emancipated minors under 18 are not required to provide a parent's or guardian's signature. All signatures must be in place prior to the beginning date of the Master Agreement and Subsidiary Assignment Agreements. All signature lines must be completed.

- (15) A record of apportionment (attendance) for each attendance month, as determined by the supervising credentialed teacher.
 - (16) Review of poor progress, if applicable.
 - (17) An attached sample of student's original work, with supervising credentialed teacher's signature and date.
- b. **Subsidiary Assignment Agreement.** Independent study is based on *educational needs of the student* and *requirements of the subjects being studied*. Subsidiary Assignment Agreements will include the following provisions:
- (1) Course title.
 - (2) A statement of the major objectives in the subject area related to the activity.
 - (3) A list describing educational activities and resources, including school equipment, supplies, personnel, and materials needed by, and available to, the student in order to achieve subject-area objectives.
 - (4) The method of evaluation for academic credit.
- c. A new Master Agreement and Subsidiary Assignment Agreements must be generated for summer school.

D. IMPLEMENTATION

1. Site Administrator or Designee

- a. Ensures that independent study occurs in accordance with state law and district policies and procedures.
- b. Approves the participation of students requesting independent study.
- c. Facilitates and monitors all paperwork and procedures for independent study.
- d. Establishes and maintains in a systematic manner all records required by state law and regulations.
- e. Approves all academic credits and attendance earned through independent study.
- f. Authorizes the selection of all credentialed staff members who are assigned to supervise independent study.

- g. Supervises and evaluates staff.
- h. Develops and participates in a staff development program for independent study.
- i. Prepares or coordinates all preparation of all necessary records and reports.
- j. Provides a smooth transition into and out of the independent study mode of instruction.

2. Student/Parent

- a. Notifies the school at least five days in advance when the student will be away from school.
- b. Reads and understands the conditions listed on the Master Agreement.
- c. Abides by the terms of the Master Agreement, including a commitment to, and the support and guidance of, the student in independent study.
- d. Voluntarily signs the Master Agreement.
- e. Ensures that the student completes all assignments by the due date.
- f. Ensures that the student keeps all appointments.
- g. Furnishes transportation to school when needed.
- h. Acts as a support system for the student in the discipline of completing work independently.
- i. Understands that he or she has the right to review the program of instruction and revoke the Master Agreement at any time.

3. Supervising Credentialed Teacher

- a. Completes and signs Master Agreement.
- b. Notes the start and completion dates and distributes all Subsidiary Assignment Agreements.
- c. Notifies the attendance clerk of the dates the student will be on independent study. Ensures that student's name is placed on the site's Master List of Students on Independent Study.
- d. Keeps parents informed of the student's progress when appropriate.

- e. Counsels and coaches for the student's success.
 - f. Receives and evaluates student's work to determine the number of days/hours of attendance credit earned; uses professional judgment to determine the time value of the completed work. **Note:** There is no set mathematical formula to arrive at this value; if the teacher determines that a work product has a time value greater than he or she estimated when making the assignments, the teacher takes this into consideration when crediting the student's attendance.
 - g. Records time value on Master Agreement. Sends Master Agreement, Subsidiary Assignment Agreements, and a signed and dated sample of student's original work to school office for processing and retention.
4. **Attendance Accounting for a Temporary Absence**
- a. **Before student leaves on independent study.** Teacher indicates the days of the student's absence under the independent study agreement on classroom attendance rosters. In the Zangle computer system, enter "G." The "G" code may be posted into the future for all days of the student's planned absence.
 - b. **After the completion of the independent study agreement.** Attendance clerk replaces "G" with appropriate code, based on the length of the independent study agreement:
 - (1) For agreements of five (5) consecutive school days or longer, replace "G" with "C" for each day of attendance credit earned under the independent study agreement, as determined by the supervising credentialed teacher. (See section "Calculation of Attendance" on the second page of the Independent Study Master Agreement.)
 - (2) For absences of one (1) to four (4) school days, replace "G" with "P" for each day of academic credit earned. No ADA may be claimed for independent study agreements of fewer than five days.
5. **Records for an Audit.** To meet state audit requirements, the site administrator or designee ensures that the following are maintained at the school site:
- a. The Master Agreement, Subsidiary Assignment Agreements, and the sample of the student's original work for each student enrolled in independent study shall be retained at the school for three (3) years plus the current year.
 - b. The samples of the student's original work for each subject must have the supervising credentialed teacher's dated signature. The subject, student's name, and

SUBJECT: **Independent Study**

NO: **4316**

PAGE: **12 OF 12**

EFFECTIVE: **11-01-84**

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the completion date must be recorded on the sample. A representative sample of the student's original work must be on file for each course for which ADA was reported. (In full academic programs, a student work sample should be provided for each course for each attendance period.)

- c. A Master List of Students on Independent Study must also be on file for the previous three (3) years plus the current year (see attached sample [F.1]).

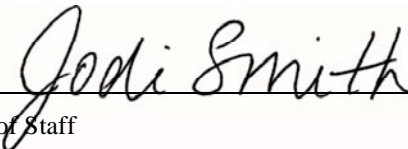
E. FORMS AND AUXILIARY REFERENCES

1. Master Agreement for Independent Study form
2. Subsidiary Independent Study Assignment Agreement form

F. REPORTS AND RECORDS

1. Master List of Students on Independent Study

G. APPROVED BY



Chief of Staff

For the Superintendent of Schools