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Policy: 001
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Independent Study Policy

Resources used to create this policy:

Independent Study Operations Manual (2000) California Department of Education

Policy

The Charter Council authorizes independent study as an optional alternative instructional strategy by which pupils in grades K-12 may reach curriculum objectives and fulfill graduation requirements. Independent study shall offer a means of personalizing the educational plan for pupils whose needs may be met best through study outside of the regular classroom setting.

The Executive Director or designee shall determine that the prospective independent study pupil understands and is prepared to meet the school's requirements for independent study. Independent study entails a commitment by both the parent/guardian and the pupil. As the pupil gets older, he/she assumes a greater portion of the responsibility involved. Independent study may be offered only to pupils who can achieve in this program as well as or better than they would in a regular classroom.

The Executive Director or designee shall ensure that a written independent study agreement, as prescribed by law, exists for each participating pupil. (Education Code 51747)

The following written policies have been adopted by the Forest Charter School Charter Council for implementation at Forest Charter School:

1. To foster each pupil's success in independent study, the Charter Council establishes the following maximum length of time which may elapse for all grades between the time an assignment is made and date by which the pupil must complete the assigned work is thirty (30) school days.

When circumstances justify a longer time, the Executive Director or designee may extend the maximum length of an assignment to a period not to exceed eight weeks, pursuant to a written request with justification.

2. The Executive Director or designee shall conduct an evaluation to determine whether it is in the best interests of the pupil to remain in independent study upon the following triggers:
 - a. When any pupil fails to complete 70% of assignments during a period of thirty (30) school days.
 - b. In the event pupil's educational progress falls below satisfactory levels as determined by

Forest Charter School's Tiered Intervention Process which considers ALL of the following indicators:

- i. The pupil's achievement and engagement in the independent study program, as indicated by the pupil's performance on applicable pupil-level measures of pupil achievement and pupil engagement set forth in Education Code Section 52060(d) paragraphs (4) and (5).
- ii. The completion of assignments, assessments, or other indicators that evidence that the pupil is working on assignments.
- iii. Learning required concepts, as determined by the supervising teacher.
- iv. Progressing toward successful completion of the course of study or individual course, as determined by the supervising teacher.

A written record of the findings of any evaluation conducted pursuant to this policy 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.

3. Forest Charter School shall provide content aligned to grade level standards that is provided at a level of quality and intellectual challenge substantially equivalent to in-person instruction. For high school grade levels this shall include access to all courses offered by Forest Charter School for graduation and approved by the UC or CSU as creditable under the A-G admissions criteria.
4. For pupils who participate in independent study for fifteen (15) or more days in a school year, Forest Charter School has adopted tiered reengagement strategies for the following pupils:
 - a. All pupils who are not generating attendance for more than three (3) school days or 60% of the instructional days in a school week, or 10 percent of required minimum instructional time over four continuous weeks of the Charter School's approved instructional calendar;
 - b. Pupils found not participatory pursuant to Education Code Section 51747.5 for more than the greater of three schooldays or 60 percent of the scheduled days of synchronous instruction in a school month as applicable by grade span; or
 - c. Pupils who are in violation of the written agreement pursuant to Education Code Section 51747(g).

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

- a. Verification of current contact information for each enrolled pupil;
 - b. Notification to parents or guardians of lack of participation within one school day of the recording of a non-attendance day or lack of participation;
 - c. A plan for outreach from Forest Charter School to determine pupil needs including connection with health and social services as necessary;
 - d. A clear standard for requiring a pupil-parent- educator conference to review a pupil's written agreement and reconsider the independent study program's impact on the pupil's achievement and well-being, consistent with the policies adopted pursuant to paragraph (4) of subdivision (g) of Education Code Section 51747.
5. For pupils who participate in independent study for fifteen (15) or more days in a school year, the following plan shall be in place in accordance with Education Code Section 51747(e) for synchronous

instruction and live interaction:

- a. For pupils in transitional kindergarten through grade 3, inclusive, the plan to provide opportunities for daily synchronous instruction for all pupils throughout the school year by each pupil's assigned supervising teacher shall be as follows: large group, 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 supervising teacher and pupils.
- b. For pupils in grades 4-8, inclusive, the plan to provide opportunities for daily live interaction between the pupil and a certificated or non-certificated employee of Forest Charter School and at least weekly synchronous instruction for all pupils throughout the school year by each pupil's assigned supervising teacher shall be as follows: For synchronous instruction: large group, 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 supervising teacher and pupil. For live interaction: large group, small group, or one-on-one interaction in person, or in the form of internet or telephonic communications, and involving live two-way communication between employee(s) and pupils.
- c. For pupils in grades 9-12, inclusive, the plan to provide opportunities for at least weekly synchronous instruction for all pupils throughout the school year by each pupil's assigned supervising teacher shall be as follows: large group, 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 supervising teacher and pupils.

For pupils who participate in independent study for fifteen (15) or more days in a school year, the following plan shall be utilized to transition pupils whose families wish to return to in-person instruction from independent study expeditiously, and, in no case, later than five instructional days: FCS will provide the family with a list of schools in which they can enroll, including their district of residence.

6. Written Agreements and Assignments

A current written agreement shall be maintained on file for each independent study pupil, including, but not be limited to, all of the following:

- a. The manner, frequency, time and place for submitting the pupil's assignments, for reporting the pupil's academic progress, and for communicating with a pupil's parent or guardian regarding a pupil's academic progress.
- b. The objectives and methods of study for the pupil's work and the methods used to evaluate that work.
- c. The specific resources, including materials and personnel, that will be made available to the pupil. These resources shall include confirming or providing access to all pupils to the connectivity and devices adequate to participate in the educational program and complete assigned work.
- d. A statement of the policies adopted pursuant to Education Code Section 51747, subdivisions (a) and (b) regarding the maximum length of time allowed between the assignment and the completion of a pupil's assigned work, the level of satisfactory educational progress, and the number of missed assignments allowed before an evaluation of whether or not the pupil should be allowed to continue in independent study.
- e. The duration of the independent study agreement, including the beginning and ending dates for

the pupil's participation in independent study under the agreement. No independent study agreement shall be valid for any period longer than one school year.

- f. 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 pupil upon completion.
- g. A statement detailing the academic and other supports that will be provided to address the needs of pupils who are not performing at grade level, or need support in other areas, such as English learners, individuals with exceptional needs in order to be consistent with the pupil's individualized education program or plan pursuant to Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. Sec. 794), pupils in foster care or experiencing homelessness, and pupils requiring mental health supports.
- h. The inclusion of a statement in each independent study agreement that independent study is an optional educational alternative in which no pupil may be required to participate. In the case of a pupil who is referred or assigned to any school, class, or program pursuant to Section 48915 or 48917, the agreement also shall include the statement that instruction may be provided to the pupil through independent study only if the pupil is offered the alternative of classroom instruction.
- i. 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 all persons who have direct responsibility for providing assistance to the pupil. For purposes of this paragraph "caregiver" means a person who has met the requirements of Part 1.5 (commencing with Section 6550) of Division 11 of the Family Code.
 - Written agreements may be signed using an electronic signature that complies with state and federal standards, as determined by the California Department of Education, that may be a marking that is either computer generated or produced by electronic means and is intended by the signatory to have the same effect as a handwritten signature. The use of an electronic signature shall have the same force and effect as the use of a manual signature if the requirements for digital signatures and their acceptable technology, as provided in Section 16.5 of the Government Code and in Chapter 10 (commencing with Section 22000) of Division 7 of Title 2 of the California Code of Regulations, are satisfied.
 - For the 2021–22 school year only, the Charter School shall obtain a signed written agreement for an independent study program of any length of time no later than 30 days after the first day of instruction in an independent study program or October 15, whichever date comes later.

The curriculum and methods of study specified in the written agreement shall be consistent with the Charter Council's policies, administrative regulations and procedures for curriculum and instruction. The agreement may also include a schedule for achieving objectives and completing the agreement and a schedule of conference between the pupil and Supervising Teacher.

Before beginning the independent study, each written agreement shall be signed and dated by the pupil, the parent/guardian or caregiver of the pupil under 18 years of age, the certificated employee designated as responsible for the general supervision of independent study, and all persons who have direct responsibility for providing assistance to the pupil. (Education Code 51747)

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

7. Forest Charter School shall comply with the Education Code sections 51745 through 51749.3 and the provisions of the Charter Schools Act of 1992 and the State Board of Education regulations adopted there under.
8. The Executive Director may establish regulations to implement these policies in accordance with the law.