



Section: 100
Policy: 001
FCS Council Approved: May 16, 2011

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 students in grades K-12 may reach curriculum objectives and fulfill graduation requirements. Independent study shall offer a means of personalizing the educational plan for students 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 student 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 student. As the student gets older he/she assumes a greater portion of the responsibility involved. Independent study may be offered only to students 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 student. (Education Code 51747)

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

Completed Within 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.

When any student fails to complete independent study assignments, (30% missed assignments will initiate an evaluation on whether the Independent Study Program is meeting the students needs) the Executive Director or designee shall conduct an evaluation to determine whether it is in the student's best interest to remain in Independent study.

Instruction

The Council shall not provide independent study students or their parents/guardians with funds or items of value that are not provided for other students and their parents/guardians. (Education Code 46300.6, 51747.3)

Eligibility

No student shall be required to participate in independent study. (Education Code 51747)

Students enrolling in independent study must be residents of the local county or an adjacent county. (Education Code 51747.3)

Full-time independent study shall not be available to students whose district residency status is based on their parent/guardian's employment within county boundaries pursuant to Education Code 48204. (Education Code 51747(c)).

No individual with exceptional needs, as defined in Education Code 56026, may participate in independent study unless his/her Individualized Education Program specifically provides for such participation. (Education Code 51745)

Criteria for Participation

Approval for participation shall be based on the following criteria:

1. Evidence that the student will work independently to complete their program.
2. Availability of experienced certificated staff with adequate time to supervise the student effectively.

Written Agreements and Assignments

The written independent study agreement for each participating student shall include, but not be limited to, all of the following: (Education Code 51747)

1. The manner, frequency, time and place for submitting the student's assignments and for reporting his/her 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, including materials and personnel that will be made available to the student.
4. The school's independent study policy describing the maximum length of time allowed between assignments that 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 under the agreement. No independent study agreement shall be valid for any period longer than one semester, or one-half year for a school on a year round calendar.

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 that independent study is an optional educational alternative in which no student may be required to participate.

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 student and Supervising Teacher.

Before beginning the independent study, each written agreement shall be signed and dated by the student, the parent/guardian or caregiver of the student 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 student. (Education Code 51747)

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

Student Rights and Responsibility

Students participating in independent study shall have the right, continuously, to enter or return to the regular classroom mode of instruction. The independent study teacher shall promptly and directly address any failure by the student to meet the terms of his/her written agreement. The following supportive strategies may be used:

1. A letter to the student and/or parent/guardian, as appropriate.
2. A special meeting between the student and the teacher and/or counselor.
3. A meeting between the student and the administrator, including the parent/guardian if appropriate.
4. An increase in the amount of time the student works under direct supervision.
5. Referral to the School Attendance Review Board.

When the student has missed the number of assignments specified in Charter Council Policy as precipitating an evaluation, the Executive Director or designee shall conduct an evaluation which may result in termination of the independent study agreement (i.e. disenrollment from FCS), with the student's return to a regular classroom or alternative instructional program.

Administration of Independent Study

Each student's independent study shall be coordinated, evaluated and carried out under the general supervision of a certificated employee. (Education Code 51747.5)

Supervision Teachers

The independent study administrator shall approve the assignment of any teachers who directly supervise independent study on a regular basis. The Executive Director may recommend teachers or students for independent study.

Independent Study Teachers Shall:

1. Complete designated portions of the written agreement and add additional information to the written agreement when appropriate.
2. Supervise and approve coursework.
3. Design/approve all lesson plans.
4. Write the assignments for students.
5. Assess all student work.
6. Personally judge the time value of assigned work or work products completed and submitted by the student.
7. Select and save with each agreement representative samples of the student's completed and evaluated assignments.
8. Sign and complete the agreement when the student has reached his/her objectives or the agreement is terminated.
9. Maintain any required records and files on a current basis.

When appropriate, independent study teachers shall determine and assign grades or other approved measures of achievement.

Records

District records shall identify all students participating in independent study and shall specify the grade level, program placement and school in which each of these students is enrolled.
(Education Code 51748)

Each school shall maintain records for the students at that school.

Records shall be maintained for audit purposes and shall include the following:

1. A copy of the Charter Council policy, administrative regulation, and procedures related to independent study.
2. A separate listing of the students, by grade level, program and school, who have participated in independent study, identifying units of the curriculum attempted and units of the curriculum completed by students in grades K-8 and identifying course credits attempted by and awarded to students in grades 9-12 as specified in their written agreements.
3. A file of all agreements, with representative samples of each student's work products bearing signed or initialed and dated notations by the supervising teacher indicating that he/she has personally evaluated the work or that he/she has personally reviewed the evaluations made by another certificated teacher.
4. A daily or hourly attendance register, as appropriate to the program in which the students are enrolled and maintained on a current basis as time values of student work products are personally judged by a certificated teacher and reviewed by the supervising teacher if they are two different persons.

The school also shall maintain a record of grades and other evaluations issued to each student for independent study assignments.

Legal Reference:

EDUCATION CODE

17289 Exemption for building

44865 Qualifications for home teachers and teachers in special classes and schools; consent to assignment

46300-46300.6 Methods of computing ADA

48220 Class of children exempted

48340 Improvement of pupil attendance

48915 Expulsion; particular circumstances

48917 Suspension of expulsion order

51225.3 Requirements for high school graduation

51745-51749.3 Independent study programs

5200 Improvement of elementary and secondary education; legislative intent

52015 School improvement plans; components of plan

52017 Secondary schools; additional plan components

56026 Individual with exceptional needs

FAMILY CODE

6550 Authorization affidavits

CODE OF REGULATIONS, TITLE 5

11700-11703 Independent Study