

Independent Study

The Solano County Superintendent of Schools 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.

A student's participation in independent study shall be voluntary. (Education Code § 51747, 51749.5)

Independent study for each student shall be under the general supervision of a Solano County Office of Education (SCOE) employee who possesses a valid certification document pursuant to Education Code § 44865 or an emergency credential pursuant to Education Code § 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)

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

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 of record for that student pursuant to Education Code § 51747.5. (Education Code § 51745.5)

Equivalency

SCOE's independent study option shall be substantially equivalent in quality and quantity to classroom instruction to enable participating students to complete SCOE'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)

SCOE 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

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study program and complete assigned work consistent with Education Code section 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)

Eligibility for Independent Study

Students are eligible for independent study as authorized in law, and as specified in Superintendent's policy and administrative regulation.

For the 2022-23 school year and thereafter, the County 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 County 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 County 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 residency status is based on their parent/guardian's employment within county boundaries pursuant to Education Code 48204.

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.

If a parent or guardian of an individual with exceptional needs requests independent study pursuant to paragraph (5) of subdivision (a), the pupil's individualized education program team shall make an individualized determination as to whether the pupil can receive a free appropriate public education in an independent study placement. A pupil's inability to work independently, the pupil's need for adult support, or the pupil's need for special education or related services shall not preclude the individualized education program team from determining that the pupil can receive a free appropriate education in an independent study placement.

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.

General Independent Study Requirements

For the 2022-23 school year and thereafter, the County 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 SCOE 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
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

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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

In addition, when requested by a parent/guardian due to an emergency 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.

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

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

The County Superintendent or designee shall ensure that students participating in independent study are provided with content aligned to grade level standards at a level of quality and intellectual challenge substantially equivalent to in-person instruction. For high schools, this shall include access to all courses offered by SCOE 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 County Superintendent or designee shall ensure that students participating in independent study for 15 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
3. For students in grades 9-12, opportunities for at least weekly synchronous instruction

The County Superintendent or designee shall ensure that procedures for tiered reengagement strategies are used for all students who:

1. fail to generate attendance for more than 10% of the required minimum instructional time over four continuous weeks of the approved instructional calendar;
2. do not participate in synchronous instructional offerings for more than 50% of the scheduled times of synchronous instruction in a school month; or
3. is in violation of the written agreement.

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

Verification of current contact information for each enrolled student;

1. Notification to parents/guardians of lack of participation within one school day of the absence or lack of participation
2. A plan for outreach from the school to determine student needs, including connection with health and social services as necessary
3. 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 County 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 15 school days or more. (Education Code § 51747)

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

Upon the request of the parent/guardian of a student, before making a decision about enrolling or disenrolling in independent study and entering into a written agreement to do so, SCOE shall conduct a telephone, videoconference, or in-person student-parent-educator conference or other meeting during which the student, parent/guardian may ask questions about the educational options, including which curriculum offerings and nonacademic supports will be available to the student in independent study. (Education Code § 51747)

Monitoring Student Progress

The independent study administrator and/or supervising teacher shall promptly and directly address any failure by the student to meet the terms of the student's written agreement. The following supportive strategies may be used:

1. A letter to the student and/or parent/guardian
2. A meeting between the student and the teacher and/or counselor
3. A meeting between the student and the independent study administrator, including the parent/guardian if appropriate
4. An increase in the amount of time the student works under direct supervision

When the student has failed to make satisfactory educational progress or missed the number of assignments specified in the written agreement as requiring an evaluation, the County Superintendent or designee shall conduct an evaluation to determine whether or not independent study is appropriate for the student. This evaluation may result in termination of the independent study agreement and the student's return to the regular classroom program or other alternative program.

A written record of the findings of any such evaluation shall be treated as a mandatory interim student record which shall be maintained for three years from the date of the evaluation. (Education Code § 51747)

Master Agreement

Students are eligible for independent study as authorized in law and as specified in SCOE's Administrative Policy.

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A written agreement shall be developed and implemented for each student participating in independent study for three or more consecutive school days. (Education Code § 46300, 51747; 5 CCR 11703)

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 SCOE's administrative 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.
8. A statement that independent study is an optional educational alternative in which no student may be required to participate.
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 sections 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. Before the commencement of independent study, the agreement shall be signed and dated by the student, the student's parent/guardian or caregiver if the student is under age 18 years, the certificated employee responsible for the general supervision of independent study, and all persons who have direct responsibility for providing assistance to the student.

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's signature on the agreement shall constitute permission for the student to receive instruction through independent study.

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 parent/guardian prior to enrollment or disenrollment from independent study. (Education Code § 51745.5, 51747, 51749.5)

Records for Audit Purposes

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 SCOE's administrative policy, administrative regulation, and other procedures related to independent study.
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 K-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, a daily or hourly attendance register that is separate from classroom attendance records, maintained on a current basis as time values of student work products 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 sections 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 SCOE 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). If a student has an Individualized Education Program (IEP), the master agreements must also be signed by the certificated employee who is designated as having responsibility for the special education programming of the student, if applicable.

SCOE 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 independent study on a school day shall be documented as non-participatory for that school day. (Education Code § 51747.5)

The County 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)

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.

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

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 SCOE 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 sections 44865, 51747.5; 5 CCR 11700)

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 a daily or hourly attendance register in accordance with item #4 in the section on "Records for Audit Purpose" in the accompanying Superintendent's policy.
5. Providing direct instruction and counsel as necessary for individual student success
6. Regularly meeting with the student to discuss the student's progress
7. Determining the time value of assigned work or work products completed and submitted by the student
8. Assessing student work and assigning grades or other approved measures of achievement
9. 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 County Superintendent or designee shall ensure that independent study teachers have access to professional learning and support comparable to classroom-based teachers.

Legal Reference:

EDUCATION CODE

- 44300 Teacher Credentialing – Emergency Permits
- 44865 Employment of Certificated Employees
- 46300 Average Daily Attendance (ADA) General Provisions
- 46300.6 ADA General Provisions
- 48206.3 Compulsory Education Law – Persons Included
- 48915 Pupil Rights and Responsibilities – Suspension or Expulsion
- 48917 Pupil Rights and Responsibilities – Suspension or Expulsion
- 51745 Authorized Classes and Courses of Instruction – Independent Study
- 51745.5 Authorized Classes and Courses of Instruction – Independent Study
- 51745.6 Authorized Classes and Courses of Instruction – Independent Study
- 51747 Authorized Classes and Courses of Instruction – Independent Study
- 51747.3 Authorized Classes and Courses of Instruction – Independent Study
- 51747.5 Authorized Classes and Courses of Instruction – Independent Study
- 51748 Authorized Classes and Courses of Instruction – Independent Study
- 51749.5 Authorized Classes and Courses of Instruction – Independent Study
- 51749.6 Authorized Classes and Courses of Instruction – Independent Study
- 52060 Local Control and Accountability Plans & Statewide System of Support
- 56026 Special Education Programs General Provisions – Definitions

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- 11700 Independent Study General Provisions – Definitions
- 11701.5 Equitable Provision of Resources and Services
- 11702 Required Independent Study Agreements
- 11703 Independent Study Records