

Novato USD

Administrative Regulation

Instruction

Independent Study

AR 6158

Educational Opportunities

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
4. Continuing and special study during travel
5. Volunteer community service activities that support and strengthen student achievement

(cf. 6142.4 - Service Learning/Community Service Classes)

In addition, when requested by the parent/guardian due to emergencies, 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 his/her 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, thus enabling students participating in independent study to complete the district's adopted course of study within the customary time frame. Students in independent study

shall have access to the same services and resources that are available to other students in the school. (5 CCR 11701.5)

(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. (Education Code 46300.6, 51747.3)

Eligibility for Independent Study

Provided that experienced certificated staff are available to effectively supervise students in independent study, 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. A student whose academic performance is not at grade level may participate in independent study only if the school 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.

Parents/guardians of students who are interested in independent study should contact the principal or designee. Approval for participation shall be based on the following criteria:

1. Complete the independent study application process.
2. Parent and student shall meet with the Coordinator of Alternative Education or designee to determine if independent study is the best education alternative for the student
3. Evidence that the student will work independently to complete the program (good attendance and 2.0 GPA for Grades 6-12 and performing at or above grade level for Grades K-5).
4. Availability of experienced certificated staff with adequate time to effectively supervise the student.
5. Student and parent meet with the supervising teacher at the appointed time to begin independent study.

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

Students participating 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 district boundaries pursuant to Education

Code 48204. (Education Code 51747.3)

(cf. 5111.12 - Residency Based on Parent/Guardian Employment)

A student with disabilities, as defined in Education Code 56026, shall not participate in independent study unless his/her individualized education program specifically provides for such participation. (Education Code 51745)

(cf. 6159 - Individualized Education Program)

(cf. 6183 - Home and Hospital Instruction)

No more than 10 percent of the students enrolled in a continuation high school, or opportunity school or program, not including pregnant and parenting students who are primary caregivers for one or more of their children, shall be in independent study at any given time. (Education Code 51745)

(cf. 5146 - Married/Pregnant/Parenting Students)

(cf. 6184 - Continuation Education)

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 by the Board of Education. (Education Code 46300.1, 46300.4)

(cf. 6200 - Adult Education)

Written Agreements

A written agreement shall be developed for each student participating in independent study for five or more school days. (Education Code 46300, 51747)

The agreement shall include general student data, including the student's name, address, grade level, birth date, school of enrolment, and program placement

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 Board's independent study policy describing the maximum length of time allowed between an assignment and its completion 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 semester, or one-half year if the school is on a year-round calendar.
6. A statement of the number of course credits or, for an elementary student, 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.
8. 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.

(cf. 5144.1 - Suspension and Expulsion/Due Process)

The agreement also may include a schedule for achieving objectives and completing the agreement and a schedule of conferences between the student and supervising teacher.

The curriculum and methods of study specified in the written agreement shall be consistent with Board policy, administrative regulations and procedures for curriculum and instruction. (5 CCR 11702)

(cf. 6143 - Courses of Study)

Before the student begins the independent study, the written agreement shall be signed and dated by the student, the parent/guardian or caregiver of the student if the student is under age 18, the certificated employee responsible for the general supervision of independent study, and all persons who have direct responsibility for providing assistance to the student. (Education Code 51747; 5 CCR 11702)

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

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Students participating in independent study shall have the right, continuously, to enter or return to the regular classroom mode of instruction, including upon termination of the agreement.

Independent study students who are late, miss scheduled conferences or do not submit assigned work on time shall not be reported as tardy or truant. However, the independent study administrator 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.
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 missed the number of assignments specified in Board policy and the written independent study agreement as precipitating an evaluation, the Superintendent or designee shall conduct an evaluation which may result in termination of the independent study agreement and 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 who consents to the assignment. (Education Code 44865, 51747.5; 5 CCR 11700)

Supervising Teachers

The principal and independent study administrator may recommend and the Superintendent shall approve the assignment of teachers to directly supervise independent study and/or work with students on specific subject matter. The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that independent study teachers have access to professional development and support comparable to classroom-based teachers.

The ratio of student average daily attendance to full-time equivalent certificated employees responsible for independent study shall not exceed the equivalent ratio for all other education programs in the district. (Education Code 51745.6)

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.

2. A separate listing of the students and adult education 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 and in adult education, as specified in their written agreements.
3. A file of all agreements, with representative samples of each student's or adult education student's work products bearing the supervising teacher's signed or initialed and dated notations 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 participating, separate from classroom attendance records, and maintained on a current basis as time values of student or adult education work products are personally judged by a certificated teacher, and reviewed by the supervising teacher if they are two different persons

(cf. 3580 - District Records)

The above records shall be maintained for three years, excluding the current fiscal year.

A written record of the findings of any evaluation conducted after the student has missed the number of assignments specified in Board policy 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)

(cf. 5125 - Student Records)

Short-Term School-Based Independent Study Program

Short-term school-based independent study, in which a space is reserved for the student in his or her school of placement, is limited to no more than 15 consecutive school days. Students who are absent after the allotted fifteen days shall be disenrolled from their school of placement and given the option to enroll in NOVA, Novato Unified School District's Independent Study School. Upon return, students will need to re-enroll and are subject to school and class placement based upon space.

To be eligible for a Short-Term Independent Study contract, a student must have satisfactory academic progress and attendance.

Secondary Students (Grades 6-12): Academic Requirements

2.0 Grade Point Average and no F's (fail), as determined by the most recent progress report or quarter's grades.

Secondary Students (Grades 6-12): Attendance Requirements

Less than 18 periods of unexcused absence since the beginning of the school year.

Elementary Students (Grades K-5): Academic Requirements

Satisfactory academic performance is required. Student's should be performing at or above grade level as determined by the most recent progress report or trimester report card for general education students.

For K-5 students receiving Special Education services, the latest progress report or report card must indicate progress towards meeting educational goals and objectives.

Elementary Students (Grades K-5): Attendance Requirements

Less than three days of unexcused absences and/or tardies of 30 minutes or more.

If the student does not meet the eligibility requirements for a Short-Term School-Based Independent Study contract, the absences will be considered to be "unexcused" and will be added in when considering truancy referrals for the student.

Short-Term School-Based Independent Study contracts shall be completed at least five (5) school days before absence begins. These contracts will not be issued during state testing periods, nor during finals weeks.

There can be no more than two Short-Term School-Based Independent Study contracts granted per student per school year. All contracted work must be submitted to the school on the contracted day of return. If all the contracted work is returned with satisfactory progress, the student will maintain a clear attendance record. If the student's work is unsatisfactory or incomplete, the school will grant excused days of absence for the amount of satisfactory work returned. The additional days of absence will be considered unexcused, and will count towards truancy limits. If a student had any unexcused absence(s) due to failure to complete work on an initial Short-Term Independent School-Based Study contract, a second Short-Term School-Based Independent Study contract will not be granted for that school year.

Regulation NOVATO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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