

Mt. Diablo USD

Administrative Regulation

Independent Study

AR 6158

Instruction



Purposes of Program

The Governing Board recognizes the value of supervised independent study for students in situations where their special interests, abilities, or individual needs are not being accommodated in the traditional instructional program. These students must have the willingness and ability to successfully complete the educational requirements of independent study.

Students who may be appropriately enrolled in independent study include, but are not limited to, students who:

1. Have an understanding of and commitment to independent study
2. Exhibit the ability and the willingness to work independently with limited supervision by the certificated teacher.
3. Have learning styles that can be met through independent study.
4. Are exceptional or gifted and need in-depth opportunities, which may include concurrent enrollment in post secondary educational programs, or participation in acting, athletics and/or sports.
5. Request independent study because they will be absent from school for five or more consecutive school days.
6. Have experienced difficulty in adapting to the regular curriculum, achieving academic success, or conforming to school rules, and are ready to or have dropped out.
7. Wish to continue studies while on extended family vacation or travel.
8. Have received suspended expulsion (or stay of expulsion), rather than full expulsion from the Board, and have been offered independent study with a classroom option (i.e., enrollment at a traditional or alternative school, opportunity class, or continuation school).
9. Are genuinely needed at home because of illness in the family.
10. Have parents/guardians who wish to assist in the Home Independent Study for their children.
11. Arrived in the district mid-semester.
12. Are employed and need to help the family.
13. Are in drug or alcohol rehabilitation programs.
14. Are pregnant or have children.

To engage in independent study, a student with special needs who has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) may do so only to the extent his or her IEP specifies independent study as the instructional model.

Selection or Intake Process

A student who has met the criteria for participation may:

1. Complete a full program of courses.
2. Take a full program of courses and continue or take a lab class (i.e. band, chemistry) at the comprehensive school.
3. Complete an extra or special course outside the regular school day.
4. Enroll for a limited period of time if the student is to be out of school for five or more consecutive school days.

The selection or intake process should be accomplished through a standardized district application. The student should:

1. Complete an Application for Intake at the school office. If this is a new student, the student may request independent study when meeting with district officials and initially enrolling into the district.
2. Meet with school personnel to determine if the student meets the criteria for participation of independent study.
3. Complete all components of the independent study agreement with the supervising teacher.

Finishing the above process completes the student's intake process. Depending on the availability of a certificated teacher, a student should be able to start the independent study option immediately.

Student Exit From Independent Study

The student or parent/guardian/caregiver may request a classroom option at any time. This request may come from the student, parent/guardian/caregiver, or school administration. As a general rule, students in grades K-12 may transfer to a classroom option at any time during a semester. The teacher, student service coordinator or school administrator will make every effort to counsel the student and parent/guardian/caregiver on the most appropriate option.

The school may request a change because a student:

1. Is not meeting the obligations of the independent study agreement.
2. Is no longer meeting the criteria for participation.
3. Is inappropriately placed.

Instruction

1. All independent study students including adults must be enrolled in a district school.

2. No course required for high school graduation shall be offered exclusively through independent study.
3. For K-12 Average Daily Attendance (ADA) purposes, independent study teacher-ADA ratio must not exceed the baseline ratio for other instructional programs in the district.

Note: Adult education is not restricted by a teacher-to-ADA ratio cap.

4. Class size reduction funding is not available for any student enrolled in independent study.
5. Special education students (individuals with exceptional needs as defined in Education Code 56026) must have an IEP that allows independent study.
6. No funds or other things of value may be provided to independent study students that are not provided to other students in the school in which the student has a classroom option.
7. A certificated teacher in the school district must supervise, coordinate, and evaluate the study of each student engaged in independent study. Assistance to the student on independent study by any other non-certificated individual must be supervised by the designated supervising teacher or coordinated by him or her, even if the other individual is a certificated employee of the district.
8. Students engaged in independent study must be residents of the local county or an adjacent county.
9. Independent study shall not be available to students whose residence status is based solely on their parent/guardian/caregiver's employment within district boundaries.
10. No temporarily disabled student may receive individual instruction by means of independent study. Home and Hospital instruction may not be provided through independent study. However, if the student/parents/guardians/caregivers and district agree, the student may instead receive instruction through Independent Study as an alternative to Home and Hospital instruction.
11. No more than 10% of the ADA of students participating in continuation or opportunity programs may be engaged in independent study education.

Note: 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 form.

12. Students, age 21 or older and students, age 19 or older who have not been continuously enrolled in school since their 18th birthday, may contact Adult Education regarding participation in independent study through the Adult Education program.
13. The curriculum specified in the written independent study agreement and subsidiary contracts shall be consistent with the Board's policies and administrative regulations for curriculum and instruction.
14. The curriculum shall be standards-based and substantially equivalent in quality and quantity to classroom instruction.
15. Independent study may be an appropriate option for a student who is expected to be absent from school for five or more consecutive school days.

Independent Study Agreement

A written independent study agreement must be executed for each participating student and must be maintained on file. The independent study agreement requires a learning plan that represents not less than the equivalent of a minimum school day for the student's grade level for every school day covered by the agreement.

The independent study agreement shall include, but not be limited to:

1. General data:

- a. Name of student
- b. Address
- c. Grade level
- d. School name/program placement
- e. Birth date

2. Subject(s) and course value/units/credits (other measures for elementary).

3. Objectives included for student's work.

4. The curriculum and method(s) of study specified shall be consistent with the Board's policies, administrative regulations and procedures for curriculum and instruction.

5. Resources including materials and personnel made available.

6. Method(s) of evaluation

7. Manner of reporting (e.g., small groups, one-on-one, E-mail, FAX).

8. Time of meetings with the teacher and student.

9. Location/place of the meeting.

10. Frequency of the meetings between the teacher and student.

11. Duration of enrollment with beginning and ending dates.

12. Maximum length of the agreement, no longer than one semester.

13. Dated signatures for each:

- a. Student
- b. Parent/Guardian/Caregiver

Caregiver Affidavit must be on file (Not necessary if adult or Emancipated Minor. Emancipated Minors include: married, active military or court directed.)

- c. Supervising certificated teacher
- d. Other teachers who have direct responsibility for providing assistance.

Note: Independent Study agreement for attendance becomes effective only when all signatures on the independent study agreement have been signed and dated.

14. **Subsidiary Contracts.** If used such as Assignment and Work Records and/or High School Course Contracts, they should be made a part of the independent study agreement by specific reference(s).

15. A statement that identifies the number of missed assignments that will lead to an evaluation of whether the student should continue in independent study or return to the classroom for his or her best interest. A written record of the outcome of any such evaluation must be retained in the student's permanent record file or folder.

Note: At a minimum, permanent means for the full duration of the student's enrollment in school. It does not mean the audit file for independent study agreements.

16. A statement of the maximum length of time, by grade level and type of program that may elapse between the date the assignment is made and the date the student must complete the assigned work.

17. A statement that independent study is a continuously voluntary, educational alternative and that a classroom option is always available.

18. A statement that when circumstances justify a longer time, the Superintendent/designee may extend the maximum length of an assignment to a period not to exceed a period of time pursuant to a written request.

19. A statement that instruction may be provided for a Education Code 48915 (expulsion) or Education Code 48917(suspension) student through independent study, only if the student is offered the alternative of classroom instruction.

20. A statement that independent study for anticipated absences is appropriate only when a student is absent from school for five or more consecutive school days.

21. A statement allowing one or more classes to be added to the independent study agreement during the semester as needed.

Independent Study Agreement with Subsidiary Contract

Subsidiary contracts are not required but may be used to support, define, and clarify specific subjects. If subsidiary contracts are used such as Assignment and Work Records and/or High School Course Contracts, they should be made a part of the independent study agreement by specific reference(s).

Subsidiary contracts should include:

1. Specific subject objectives
2. Specific subject assignments and activities
3. Specific subject resources including materials and personnel
4. Method(s) of evaluation
5. Signatures of student, teacher, and other persons assisting
6. Dates when subsidiary contracts begin and end

Student Assignment/Work Records

The Student Assignment or Work Records supplements the independent study agreement. It contains detailed components of the independent study agreement that include:

1. Course of study/subject(s)
2. Objectives of the assignments
3. Method of study (activities that the student does to complete the objectives)
4. Resource materials (texts, workbooks, videos, computer activities, projects, etc.) and personnel who may be assisting the student to meet the objectives
5. Methods of evaluation for attendance and academic credit
6. Date assignment made and date assignment due
7. Grades and/or academic credits earned after the assignment is completed
8. Attendance credits
9. Signature of certificated teacher or initials
10. Signature of participating student and parent/guardian (recommended only)

Student Responsibilities and Rights

The student's legal rights and responsibilities must be identified and included in the independent study agreement. Additional student's rights and responsibilities will be specified in other written documents (e.g., Administrative Regulations, Student Handbook, and Parent Information Packet). Procedures must be established that ensures a student's due process rights.

The student agrees to:

1. Read and understand the conditions listed on the I.S. agreement
2. Voluntarily sign the independent study agreement
3. Abide by all terms of the independent study agreement
4. Complete all school intake processes
5. Notify school in advance for all planned missed school appointments
6. Complete and submit work assignments by the due date
7. Deal with incomplete assignments, as the teacher requires
8. Contact the teacher or school when assistance is needed
9. Ask for a classroom option whenever a student feels that independent study is not appropriate

There are no excused absences in independent study. Students are in violation of the independent study agreement and are subject to dismissal if they are late or absent from scheduled appointments or do not submit assigned work by the due dates.

Parent Responsibilities and Rights

The parent/guardian/caregiver must agree to:

1. Read and understands the conditions listed on the independent study agreement
2. Abide by the terms of the independent study agreement including a commitment to, and the support and guidance of, the student in independent study
3. Voluntarily sign the independent study agreement
4. Notify the school in advance when the student will be away from school
5. Ensure student completes all assignments by the due date
6. Ensure the student keeps all appointments
7. Furnish transportation to school when needed
8. Act as a support system for the student in the discipline of completing work independently
9. Understand they have the right to review the program of instruction and revoke the independent study agreement at any time

Supervising Teacher

The duties of the supervising teachers shall include the following:

1. The teacher must assign courses in areas identified in Education Code 44865 (a-g classes).
2. The supervising teacher must design, assign, coordinate, evaluate the work and provide general supervision of the student's independent study agreement. The teacher shall:
 - a. Complete designated portions of the independent study agreement, accompanying documents, and required record keeping for student assignments and attendance credits.
 - b. Design a learning plan and assign appropriate student work that is comparable to classroom work.
 - c. Provide curriculum based on the district-approved course of study and content standards.
 - d. Supervise student's study and evaluate coursework completed by the student.
 - e. Assess all student work for attendance credit.
 - f. Select and save representative samples of the student's completed and evaluated assignments.
 - g. Maintain and keep current any required records and files.
 - h. Determine and assign grades or other approved measures of the student's achievement when appropriate.
 - i. Keep parents/guardians informed of the student's progress when appropriate.
 - j. Counsel and coach for the student's success.
 - k. Work on district educational and curriculum committees.

- l. Continue to grow professionally through a staff development plan.
- m. Personally judge the time value of assigned work or work products completed and submitted by the students.

Administration of Independent Study

School districts or county offices of education 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.

When a district approves a Board policy to offer independent study, the Superintendent shall assign a designee to administer the program, and ensure quality and legal compliance. The Superintendent or designee will:

1. Ensure that independent study occurs in accordance with state law and district policies and regulations.
2. Approve the participation of students requesting independent study.
3. Facilitate and monitor all paperwork, procedures, and written agreements for independent study.
4. Establish and maintain in a systematic manner all records required by state law and regulations.
5. Approve all academic credits and attendance earned through independent study.
6. Authorize the selection of all staff members who are assigned to supervise independent study.
7. Supervise and evaluate staff.
8. Develop and participate in a staff development program for independent study.
9. Prepare or coordinate the preparation of all necessary records and reports.
10. Develop and manage the budget for independent study.
11. Provide a smooth transition into and out of the independent study mode of instruction.
12. Obtain and maintain current information and skills required for the operation of an independent study strategy that meets established standards for the district's educational programs.
13. Monitor enrollment in independent study to stay within prescribed limits without compromising the educational quality of independent study

The teacher/administrator shall incorporate into program procedures the appropriate use of strategies with the aim of increasing student achievement as well as reducing and preventing failures. They include:

1. A letter of concern to the student and parent/guardian if appropriate
2. A specially scheduled appointment

3. A special meeting with the teacher and/or counselor
4. A meeting with the administrator, including the parent/guardian/caregiver
5. Placing the student on a student discipline contract
6. Referring the student to Student Success Team (SST)
7. Increasing the amount of time the student meets with a teacher or in an equivalent supervised situation
8. Terminating the independent study agreement and recommendation for the student's return to a regular classroom option or other appropriate alternatives

Work Samples

Representative samples of original work of the student evaluated by a certificated teacher must be on file. One sample of student work is required for each course taken each quarter.

Representative samples are defined as examples for each class representing student work product where ADA was reported for attendance.

The work samples should include the identification of the:

Required

1. Certificated teacher signature or initials
2. Date of assessment evaluation for attendance credit

Recommended

3. Subject
4. Student's name
5. Date student completed the assignment
6. Academic evaluation
7. Notation of the assessment evaluation for attendance credit (i.e., number of days or hours)

Attendance

Attendance procedures for independent study must meet the following attendance requirements:

Required Time

Kindergarten 200 minutes per day

Grades 1-3 280 minutes per day

Grades 4-8 300 minutes per day

Grades 9-12 360 minutes per day

Continuation/Opportunity 15 hours per week

Adult 15 hours per week

Independent study attendance credit is based on the completed work product of the student. ADA is based on the independent study teacher's judgment of the time value of each work product. Work assignments must be equivalent to the full school day assignments that would have been required of the student if the student were in the classroom option. If the work is completed by the due date, attendance credit may be claimed providing the student's completed work is equivalent to the minimum day for the specified grade level. For K-12, attendance is recorded in days. Independent study attendance must:

1. Be on a separate state approved attendance register
2. Be approved by the State Department of Education if a school/program is using an alternative and/or computerized attendance accounting system.
3. Match teacher records with attendance reported.
4. Be recorded in whole days for apportionment of at least the applicable minimum day for K-12 with maximum ADA of five days per week (maximum ADA for Continuation/Opportunity Programs and Adult Education is 15 hours per week for five days of attendance).
5. Student work may not be accepted after the due date for attendance credit. Student's work may be accepted for academic credit after the due date.

Records

Each school or program shall maintain records for all students using independent study and shall specify the grade level, program placement and school in which each of the students is enrolled. Units of credit in I.S. may be applied toward promotion to the next grade or towards graduation.

The following records must be available for an audit. Records shall include, but not be limited to:

1. A copy of the district Board policy and administrative regulations and procedures pertaining to independent study.
2. A file for each student containing a:
 - a. Independent study agreement and any subsidiary contracts.
 - b. Student assignment or work record.
 - c. Representative samples of completed work by the student and evaluated by a certificated teacher. *One sample is required for each course taken in a quarter.*
 - d. Record of attendance, credits, grades, and other evaluations of independent study assignments.

e. Student transcript for high school students (transcript should list the "school of record" and not a program's name or "independent study").

3. A daily or hourly attendance register, as appropriate to the program in which the students or adult education students are enrolled, 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 the certificated teacher, and reviewed by the supervising teacher if they are two different persons.

4. A list of all students, by grade level program or school, who have participated or are currently participating in independent study, showing "credits attempted" and "awarded to" each student and a record of the student's attendance.

5. If using a system of accounting other than the state approved register (computerized attendance accounting), a letter of approval by California Department of Education must be on file.

6. A list of independent study teachers that includes their teaching assignments. This list allows the auditor to calculate the ratio of independent study ADA/teachers and compare the ratio to other instructional programs in the district. Adult education is not restricted by this teacher-to-ADA ratio.

7. 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)

Note: All records (except the student transcripts, which are kept permanently) are to be kept for three years and made available for auditing.

Short-Term Independent Study

All the same rules and regulations apply to short-term independent study as they do for a longer period of time. Independent study is appropriate when a student is absent from school for five or more consecutive school days. (Education Code 46300 (e)(1)) In a K-12 and adult school, a student has a right to enroll in independent study for a limited period of time providing the student is to be absent from school for five or more consecutive days. Homework should be provided for any absence less than five days.

Procedures for Short-Term Independent Study

Prior to the Independent Study

The "MDUSD Application and Master Agreement for Independent Study" must be used in all cases. All information requested on the form is required and must be provided. Otherwise, the independent study contract will be invalid. It is important the following procedures be followed:

1. Independent study is available to special education students only when specified in their IEP.
2. The contract must be requested and signed by the student, parent or guardian, and responsible certificated individual prior to the student leaving on the independent study. If students are too

young to write their own name, they may make their mark and the parent or guardian can sign the student's name next to the mark. A contract cannot be developed after the fact.

3. The contract must have a beginning date, an ending date, and a due date. The due date should be no longer than one day following the anticipated return of the student to school. (Work that is not completed and submitted by the due date will earn no apportionment credit).
4. Holidays are not counted when computing the length of the contract.
5. A contract cannot be longer than a semester. If the requested time period is longer than a semester, a new contract can be written at the end of the first contract.
6. The responsible certificated individual, usually the classroom teacher, will make an independent study work assignment that will be equivalent to the amount of work that will be completed in the classroom during the period of the independent study. This work will be done by the student during the time of independent study, not after the student returns. This assignment must be clearly written on the contract. A contract does not have to include all of the student's subjects. Some subjects can be excluded. Enough work needs to be assigned that constitutes a minimum day.
7. It is acceptable to have one certificated individual responsible for evaluating the work assigned in the contract.
8. If a student is on independent study through the last day of school, be sure that the work is received early enough on the last day for evaluation. In most cases, independent study contracts should be due prior to the last day of school to assure sufficient time for evaluation.
9. Academic credit earned during an independent study assignment is separate from the apportionment credit and is not affected by these rules.

During the Independent Study

Students on an independent study contract should be recorded as absent. Code the absence as "A" or "U" depending on the reason for absence. When the contract is completed, change the absence to present and submit an adjustment form to the district attendance office if necessary.

After the Independent Study

The work required on an independent study contract must be turned in no later than one day after the student returns to school. When the student turns in his/her assigned work, a certificated individual will make two evaluations of the work.

1. The quality of the work is assessed. This will serve as the basis for the academic credit.
2. The quantity of the work is assessed. This evaluation should be in terms of whole days of work represented in the completed work. It is possible for a student to receive partial ADA credit for work completed. For example, if a student's contract is for a period of 10 days, however, it was determined through the teacher (s) evaluation that only five days worth of work was completed, the contract can be credited with five days. If the days credited is less than 5 days, no

credit can be given because of the five-day minimum. Send an adjustment sheet coding the adjusted days to "A" or "U."

3. Independent study assigned work not completed and submitted by the due date earns no apportionment. Credit cannot be given if the work is not received on time. For this reason, if a parent/guardian of an independent study student determines that, due to unforeseen events other than illness, he/she will be unable to return to school by the due date, the school can be called prior to the return date to request an extension of the due date. Written documentation of that telephone call and the new due date must be clearly noted on the original contract. No additional apportionment credit can be claimed for the additional days, unless an additional assignment is made and documented by the teacher.
4. If the student is unable to return to school on the due date because of illness, a parent/guardian or another responsible individual should bring the completed work to school. No extension of an independent study due date can be made solely on the basis of illness.
5. If the assigned work is not turned in, the initial report of the student's attendance must remain "A" or "U."
6. As part of the evaluation process, the responsible certificated person must also select a representative sample, preferably a graded sample, of actual student work and attach it to the school's copy of the completed contract.
7. If the completion and evaluation of an independent study contract occurs after the close of the school attendance month, an "Absence Adjusted from Previous Attendance Months" form should be submitted to the Attendance Office. This will change the reported non-ADA days to "present."
8. Only certificate personnel may sign the contract indicating approval of work completed. Clerical staff may not sign for an administrator and initial the signature.
9. Copies of the independent study contract should be distributed and filed as indicated on the form.

Regulation MT. DIABLO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Approved: May 10, 2005 Concord, California