

INDEPENDENT STUDY PROGRAM

The Mendocino County Office of Education (MCOE) will provide an independent study option for students and will insure that this option is substantially equivalent in quality and in quantity to classroom instruction. (Education Code 51746)

Independent study students have the same access to existing services and resources as are available to all other students in the school in which the independent study students are enrolled. [Education Code 11700(i)]

Students who engage in independent study have equal rights and privileges as the students who choose to continue in the classroom. [Education Code 11700(i)]

The Mendocino County Office of Education (MCOE) shall offer no course required for high school graduation exclusively through independent study. (Education Code 51745)

MCOE 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, 5147.3)

The independent study teacher ADA ratio will not exceed the baseline ratio for other MCOE instructional programs. (Education Code 51745.6)

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)

Students whose residence status is based solely on their parent/guardian/caregiver's employment within district boundaries may not be enrolled in full-time independent study. [Education Code 51747.3(c), 48204(b)]

Students must be enrolled in an MCOE school in order to enroll in independent study. (Education Code 51748)

Independent study may be an appropriate option for a student who is expected to be absent from school for five (5) or more consecutive school days. (Education Code 46300)

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

No temporarily disabled student may receive individual instruction pursuant to Education Code 48206.3 by means of independent study. (Education Code 51745)

Students who are 21 years of age 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 through a district adult education program. (Education Code 46300.1)

MCOE is not obligated to permit a student to participate in independent study if school officials given responsibility for that decision determine that independent study is not an appropriate alternative for the student. [Title 5, Code of Regulations 117000(d)]

INDEPENDENT STUDY PROGRAM (continued)**Criteria for Participation**

Students who are interested in independent study should contact their school administrator. Approval for participation shall be based on the following criteria:

1. Evidence that the student has the necessary skills to access the curriculum and willingness to work independent of a school site with limited supervision from a certificated teacher and be able to progress in order to advance to the next grade or graduate on time.
2. Assurance by student and parent that the requirements listed in the Master Agreement for Independent Study will be met.
3. Assurance that the student is not enrolled in Home or Hospital Instruction (Education Code 48206.3, 51745)
4. Availability of experienced certificated staff with adequate time to supervise the students effectively.

Master Agreement for Independent Study

The Master Agreement for Independent Study will ensure a learning plan for each student that is equivalent to a full day's work. (Education Code 46112, 46113, 46114, 46117, 46118, 46141, 46142, 46145, 46147, 46170, 47612.5, 48400)

The written independent study agreement for each participating students 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, which will be made available to the student.
4. MCOE's independent study policy describing the maximum length of time allowed between an assignment and its completion and the number of missed 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 study 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. In the case of a student who is referred or assigned to any school, class, or program pursuant to Education Code 48915 or 48917, the agreement shall also include the statement that instruction may be provided through independent study only if the student is offered the alternative of classroom instruction.

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

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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.

Before beginning the independent study, each written agreement shall be signed and dated by the student, the parent/guardian or caregiver of the student who are 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 permission for the student's independent study as specified in the agreement.

If the student satisfactorily completes any of the subjects/courses before the ending date of the Master Agreement, one or more subjects/courses may be added to this agreement if the agreement is re-signed and re-dated by the teacher and the student.

In the eventuality that MCOE uses any software program to generate independent study paperwork and records, the software version of the Master Agreement will include all of the elements contained upon the Board approved hard-copy Master Agreement.

Student Exit from Independent Study

The student, parent, and/or caregiver of an independent study student may request to be returned to classroom instruction at any time during the school year. This request may come from the student, parent, caregiver, and/or school administration after discussion of the most appropriate placement. Students must be transferred to their school of origin unless circumstances determine other placement as appropriate.

The school may require a change because the student:

1. Is not meeting the obligations of the independent study Master Agreement.
2. Is not following MCOE school rules.

If a student fails to meet the obligations of the independent study agreement, the following may occur:

1. There may be a letter, or meeting/telephone conference with the student, parent, supervising teacher, counselor, and/or principal to determine if independent study is the appropriate placement for the student.
2. The outcome of this meeting shall be written into the student's permanent record.
3. The record shall be considered a mandatory interim student record and shall be maintained for three years from the date of the meeting.
4. If the student transfers to another California public school, the record shall be forwarded to that school.

Work Samples

Representative samples of original work must be on file for each independent study student and must be evaluated by the supervising teacher overseeing the work (Title 5 11703(b)(3)). In MCOE, a representative sample is one day's worth of work, including every course taken. These will be submitted to the office every two weeks. The work samples will include the following:

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1. Required:
 - a. Certificated teacher's signature or initials
 - b. Date the assessment was made for apportionment credit
 - c. What percentage of a day's worth of work the sample represents
2. Evidence of:
 - a. Subject/course
 - b. Student's full name
 - c. Date student completed the assignment
 - d. Academic evaluation

Attendance

An independent study student must be assigned a full day's work of work equivalent to that which he/she would have been assigned if he/she had been in a classroom setting. A student should be assigned more than the minimum number of 4 hours of work (Education Code 46145, 46147) in order to meet academic requirements and progress/graduate on schedule.

Independent study apportionment credit (ADA) is based on the student's completed work assignments. The amount of ADA to be collected is based upon the supervising teacher's judgment of the time value of each work assignment.

According to Title 5 Regulation 11703(b) (4), independent study attendance must:

1. Be recorded on a separate state approved attendance roster. If using any other system, MCOE will get approval in writing by the California Department of Education and have the approval letter on file.
2. Match supervising teacher's ADA records with attendance roster.
3. Be recorded in whole days.
4. Ensure that no student work has been accepted after the due date for apportionment. Late student work may not be accepted for academic credit.
5. Ensure that independent study teachers never "bank" excessive days/hours of work to be used in a period in which the student generates little or no work.
6. Include the signature of the certificated supervising teacher in blue or black ink.

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.

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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, 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.

If the student fails to complete two (2) independent study course assignments within a weekly assignment period, the Superintendent or designee shall conduct an evaluation which may result in termination of the independent study agreement, 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)

The responsibilities of the independent study administrator shall be to:

- Ensure that MCOE's independent study option is operated in accordance with law, Board Policy and Administrative Regulation.
- Ensure that the independent study option is equivalent in academic quality to regular classroom programs.
- Approve the participation of students requesting independent study for a period exceeding five (5) school days.
- Facilitate the completion of independent study written agreements and monitor all paperwork and procedures for compliance.
- Approve all academic credits and attendance earned through independent study program. If academic work is supervised at a location apart from the student's regular school site, this information must be forwarded to the appropriate staff and become-part of the student's permanent record.
- Authorize the selection of employees who are assigned to supervise independent study.
- Supervise and evaluate employees assigned to independent study functions who are not regularly supervised by another administrator.
- Complete or coordinate the preparation of all necessary records and reports.
- Establish and maintain in a systematic manner all records required by law, Board policy and administrative regulation.
- Monitor enrollment in independent study to stay within prescribed limits and to maximize income to MCOE without compromising the educational quality of independent study.

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- Develop and manage the budget for independent study.
- Obtain and maintain current information and skills required for the operation of an independent study strategy that meets established standards for MCOE's educational programs.
- Prepare and submit reports as required by the County Board or County Superintendent.
- Ensure a smooth transition into and out of the independent study mode of instruction.

Supervising Teachers

The independent study administrator shall approve the assignment of any teacher who directly supervises independent study on a regular basis. The principal may recommend teachers or students for independent study. The teacher may be the student's regular classroom teacher, particularly for elementary students.

Independent study teachers shall:

- Complete designated portions of the written agreement and add additional information to written agreement when appropriate.
- Supervise and approve coursework.
- Design all lesson plans.
- Write the assignments for students.
- Assess all student work.
- Personally judge the time value of assigned work or work products completed and submitted by the student.
- Select and save with each agreement representative samples of the student's completed and evaluated assignments on not less than a monthly basis, preferably biweekly.
- Sign and complete the agreement when the student has reached his/her objectives or the agreement is terminated.
- 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

MCOE 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 audit purposes and shall include the following (5 CCR 11703):

- A copy of the Board policy, administrative regulation, and procedures related to independent study.
- A separate listing of independent study students as well as students referred to district adult education programs, by grade level, program and school, that have participated in independent study, identifying units of the

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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 district adult education, as specified in their written agreements.

- A file of all agreements, with representative samples of each student's work products bearing signed or initialed and dated notations by a certificated teacher indicating that he/she has personally-evaluated the work. If there is a supervising teacher, he/she must indicate that he/she have reviewed the evaluations made by the certificated teacher by initial and date notations.
- A register of work completed separate from classroom attendance records. Work completion is to be expressed as the number of days it took to complete the student work product, as personally judged by a certificated teacher, and reviewed by the supervising teacher.

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

MENDOCINO COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

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