

**POWAY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE**

Originator: Area Superintendent

Issue No: 2

Date: 10/15/01

Page: 1 of 9

ARTICLE: 3.0 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

3.15 INDEPENDENT STUDY PROGRAMS

Reference: EC 46300.1, 46300.2, 46300.6,
46300.7, 51745, 51745.1,
51745.6, 51747, 51747.3,
51747.5, 51748, 52123; Title V
(11701.5, 11702)

SECTION 3.15.1 Independent Study Programs

The Board of Education recognizes the value of supervised independent study for students in situations where special interest, abilities, or unique individual needs cannot be properly accommodated in the regular instructional program.

Criteria for Participation

K-12 and adult students must be enrolled in a District school as a condition of participating in independent study.

Types of students who are appropriately placed 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 best be met through Independent Study.
4. Request Independent Study because they will be absent from school for five (5) or more consecutive school days and have an acceptable reason for requesting Independent Study:
 - a) vacation or travel
 - b) funeral
 - c) religious purposes
 - d) family emergencies
 - e) jury duty

Others who may benefit from Independent Study include students who:

1. Could be classified as school phobic.
2. Have experienced difficulty in adapting to the regular curriculum, achieving academic success, or conforming to school rules and are ready to drop out of school or have dropped out.
3. Wish to pursue special or unique educational interests that are not compatible with attendance in the regular education program.
4. Have special medical problems but do not qualify for home teaching provided for those who are temporarily disabled.

SECTION 3.15.1 Independent Study Programs

5. Wish to continue studies while on an extended family vacation or travel.
6. Have received suspended expulsion rather than full expulsion from the Board and have been referred to specified settings in lieu of expulsion. Instruction may be provided through independent study only if the student is offered the alternative of classroom instruction.
7. Are genuinely needed at home because of illness in the family.
8. Have parents who wish to provide home schooling for their children.
9. Are experiencing psychological problems and are under the care of a physician.
10. Have attended four years of high school but have not achieved a high school diploma.
11. Arrive in the District mid-semester and cannot make up missed work to complete a full semester.
12. Wish to participate extensively in artistic or athletic programs which conflict with regular school hours.
13. Are employed full-time to help with financial problems at the home.
14. Are in drug or alcohol rehabilitation programs.
15. Are pregnant or parenting teens.
16. Have parents who request an alternative program.

Independent Study Guidelines and Restrictions

Independent study programs carry the following restrictions:

1. Not more than ten (10) percent of the ADA of students participating in continuation education or Opportunity Education shall be eligible for apportionment credit for independent study. (This restriction does not apply to summer school or to pregnant and/or parenting teens.)
2. No individual with exceptional needs may participate in independent study unless his or her individualized education program specifically provides for that participation.
3. No temporarily disabled student may receive individual instruction through independent study unless the temporarily disabled student's parents and the school district official agree that the student may instead receive instruction through independent study as an alternative to "home and hospital" instruction.
4. Independent study is an optional educational alternative in which no student may be required to participate. Further, in the case of a student who is referred or assigned to any school, class, or program pursuant to section 48915 or 48917, the agreement shall also include the statement that instruction may be provided to the student through independent study only if the student is offered the alternative of classroom instruction.
5. All independent study students including adults must be enrolled in a school.

SECTION 3.15.1 Independent Study Programs

6. No course required for high school graduation may be offered exclusively through independent study.
7. Class size reduction funding is not available for any student enrolled in independent study.
8. 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.
9. Students engaged in Independent Study must be residents of the local county or an adjacent county.
10. Independent Study shall not be available to students whose residence status is based solely on their parent/guardian/caregiver's employment within District boundaries.
11. For ADA purposes, Independent Study teacher-ADA ratio must not exceed the baseline ratio for other instructional programs in the District. Adult education is not restricted by a teacher-to-ADA ratio cap.
12. A certificated employee of the school district (or county office) 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.
13. The curriculum and methods of study specified in the written Independent Study Master Agreement and Subsidiary Contracts shall be consistent with the Board's Policies, Administrative Regulations and Procedures for curriculum and instruction.
14. The independent study option shall be equivalent in quality and quantity to classroom instruction.

Comprehensive high school students may be enrolled in independent study for two years, after which they must return to the regular high school unless extenuating circumstances exist. No more than 140 Independent Study credits may be applied toward a comprehensive high school diploma. No credit restriction exists for students working toward an adult school diploma or a continuation high school diploma.

Independent Study Written Agreements

A written independent study agreement must be executed for each participating student and maintained on file. (A student enrolled in independent study must be a full-time student.) The independent study agreement for a student must require and cover a study 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 and shall include:

1. The manner, frequency, date, time, and place for submitting a student's assignments and for reporting his or her progress.
2. The objectives and methods of the course of study for the student's work covered by the agreement.
3. The specific resources, including materials and personnel, which will be made available to the student in order to attain the objectives.
4. A schedule of conferences between student and supervising teacher.

SECTION 3.15.1 Independent Study Programs

5. The method utilized to evaluate the student's work.
6. A statement regarding the maximum length of time allowed between the assignment and the completion of a student's assigned work.
7. The number of missed assignments which will require an evaluation of whether or not the student shall be allowed to continue in independent study. A written record of the outcome of any such evaluation must be retained in the student's file.
8. The duration of the independent study agreement, including the beginning and ending dates for the student's participation under the agreement up to a limit of one semester or one-half year for a school on a year-round schedule.
9. A statement of the number of course credits or, for elementary or middle school grades, other measures of academic accomplishment, appropriate to the agreement, to be earned by the student upon completion.
10. A statement that independent study is an optional educational alternative in which no student may be required to participate. Participation is voluntary. In the case of the student who is referred or assigned to any school, class, or program pursuant to Section 48915 or 48917, the agreement shall also include the statement that instruction may be provided to the student through independent study only if the student is offered the alternative of classroom instruction.
11. The signatures of the student, the student's parent, legal guardian, or caregiver, if the student is less than 18 years of age, a certificated employee who has been designated as having responsibility for the general supervision of independent study, and the person who has direct responsibility for providing assistance to the student.
12. Identification of the student, address, birth date, grade level, program placement, and school in which the student is enrolled.
13. A statement that when circumstances justify a longer time for a student to complete an assignment, the Superintendent or designee may extend the maximum length of an assignment.

Independent Study Students' Privileges, Rights, and Responsibilities

High school students will be enrolled in a minimum of six classes but will work on one class at a time unless the counselor deems that circumstances and the student's ability make it feasible for the student to work on two or more classes at one time. The exception is the student who needs six classes or less to graduate from high school. The duration within which a five-credit semester course must be completed is between four and seven weeks unless extenuating circumstances qualify the student for an extension of time.

When any student fails to complete three (3) missed assignments during any period of 15 school days or misses two (2) appointments without valid reasons, the Superintendent or designee shall conduct an evaluation to determine whether the student should be allowed to continue in Independent Study.

Students enrolled in independent study will have access to existing services and resources in the school in which the student is enrolled as is available to all other students in the school. The services and resources may include, but need not be limited to, any of the following:

SECTION 3.15.1 Independent Study Programs

1. School library resources and services.
2. Participation in promotion and graduation exercises.
3. Attendance at school functions such as dances, athletic events, and plays.
4. Enrollment in single classes not available through independent study but which are an essential part of the student's educational program.

The eligibility for existing services and activities shall be subject to individual school site rules and regulations regarding student discipline.

The New Directions program provides the independent study mode of delivery for all schools in the District with the exception of Abraxas Continuation High School and the Adult School, which provide their own independent study programs. Students must be referred to New Directions by the school of attendance unless the student is enrolled but no longer attending the school of attendance or the student has recently moved to the District and has not enrolled in the school of residence.

Attendance

"Tardiness" and "truancy" are terms that can, in a formal legal sense, apply only to students' actions in regular programs. Independent study students who are late for or miss scheduled conferences, or who do not submit assigned work on time, should therefore not be reported as "tardy" or "truant." Such failure to meet the terms of their written agreements, however, should always be promptly and directly addressed.

There are no excused absences in independent study; therefore, no apportionment may be claimed on that basis.

The administrator shall incorporate in procedures the appropriate use of the following strategies with the aim of increasing student achievement as well as reducing and preventing failures to meet the terms and conditions of the independent study agreement:

1. A letter of concern, to student and parent/guardian, if appropriate.
2. A specifically scheduled appointment.
3. A special meeting with the teacher and/or counselor.
4. A meeting with the administrator, including the parent/guardian if appropriate.
5. An increase in the amount of time the student must be on campus or in an equivalent supervised situation.
6. Termination of the agreement and the student's return to a regular classroom program of instruction or other appropriate alternative.

Students requesting independent study and their parents/guardians should recognize that independent study at the elementary level must emphasize a commitment on the part of the student's parents/guardians. At the secondary and adult level, the major commitment must be made on the part of the student.

SECTION 3.15.1 Independent Study Programs

Attendance procedures for Independent Study must meet the following minimum attendance requirements:

Kindergarten	180 minutes
Grades 1-3	240 minutes
Grades 4-8	240 minutes
Grades 9-12	240 minutes
Continuation/Opportunity	15 hours per week
Adult School	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 assignment. 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. If the work is completed by the due date, attendance credit may be claimed if the student's completed work is equivalent to the minimum day for the specified grade level. K-12 attendance is recorded in days. Continuation, opportunity, and adult school attendance is recorded in hours.

Independent Study Records

Each school or program shall maintain records for the students of that school or location. Records shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. A copy of the District policy and procedures pertaining to independent study.
2. A file of all agreements with representative samples of completed and evaluated student assignments.
3. A list of all students who have participated or are currently participating in an independent study program which shows credits attempted by and awarded to each student and a record of the student's attendance.
4. An attendance register separate from the register(s) used for regular classroom attendance, in which attendance is recorded on the basis of approved positive attendance accounting procedures.
5. A record of grades, credits, and other evaluations of independent study assignments issued to the student.
6. Sufficient records of students' participation in independent study to serve as audit materials. All student work except assignments returned to students is kept until the end of the year in which it is completed. Representative samples of each student's work are kept for three years. Representative samples are defined as examples representing student work pertaining to Independent Study assignments where ADA was reported for attendance. Also kept are the weekly assignment sheets showing the date assignments were given and completed and the teacher's evaluation of the work for attendance credit, and the teacher's signature or initials. At the end of three years, the transcripts, weekly assignment sheets, course completion records, and independent study agreements may be translated to microfiche for easier storage, and all samples of student work may be discarded.

SECTION 3.15.1 Independent Study Programs

Units of credit in independent study may be applied toward promotion to the next grade or towards graduation. The counselor of each student shall coordinate credits with the counselor of the school in which the student is enrolled.

Staffing Requirements

The ratio of average daily attendance by independent study students 18 years of age or less to District full-time equivalent certificated employees responsible for independent study shall not exceed the equivalent ratio for all other education programs operated by the District. The computation of the ratios shall be performed annually by the director of finance at the time of the second Principal Apportionment Report. A waiver of this student/teacher requirement may be obtained by requesting a waiver of Education Code Section 51747.6

The independent study of each student shall be performed and evaluated under the supervision of a certificated teacher.

Independent Study Supervising Teachers

The following regulations shall apply to the selection and duties of supervising teachers:

1. Teachers who directly supervise independent study on a regular basis will be approved, prior to assignment, by the independent study administrator.
2. The principal of any school may recommend teachers and students for independent study. The teacher may be the student's regular classroom teacher, particularly when the student is at the elementary level.
3. Independent study teachers shall:
 - a. Complete designated portions of the written agreement.
 - b. Add additional information when appropriate.
 - c. Supervise and approve coursework.
 - d. Select and save with each agreement representative samples of the student's completed and evaluated assignments on a monthly basis.
 - e. Sign and complete the agreement when the student has reached his or her objectives or the agreement is terminated.
 - f. Maintain any required records and files on a current basis.
 - g. Keep parents informed of the student's progress when appropriate.
 - h. Participate on District curriculum committees.
4. Independent study teachers shall complete a record of the student's assignments on not less than a monthly basis. The record form shall provide for individual assignments, with comments on resources provided to facilitate the completion of each assignment; due date and evaluation comments to be added when the assignments have been completed. Each form shall be consistent with the terms of the written agreement and be signed by the student and teacher at the time of the assignment and after evaluation of the completed work.
5. Independent study teachers shall determine and assign grades or other approved measures of the student's achievement when appropriate.

SECTION 3.15.1 Independent Study Programs

Administration of Independent Study

The use of independent study shall be administered by the Director of Alternative Programs. His or her responsibility shall include:

1. Ensuring that independent study occurs in accordance with state law and district policy and regulations.
2. Approving the participation of students requesting independent study.
3. Facilitating the completion of independent study written agreements.
4. Approving all credits earned through independent study supervised at a location apart from the student's regular school and forwarding the information to the appropriate school staff so that it becomes part of the student's permanent record.
5. Authorizing the selection of all staff who are assigned to supervise independent study.
6. Supervising any staff assigned to independent study functions that are not regularly supervised by another administrator.
7. Completing or coordinating the preparation of all necessary records and reports.
8. Establishing and maintaining in a systematic manner all records required by state regulations for an audit trail of average daily attendance attributed to independent study and reported by the district.
9. Monitoring enrollment in independent study to stay within prescribed limits and to maximize income to the district without compromising the educational quality of independent study.
10. Developing and managing the budget for independent study.
11. Obtaining and maintaining current information and skills required for the operation of an independent study strategy that meets established standards for district educational programs.
12. Preparing and submitting reports as required by the superintendent or school board.
13. Developing and participating in a staff development program for independent study.

Adult Students

Students who are age 19 or 20 must have been continuously enrolled since their 18th birthday for their ADA to be computed at the rate for the unified school district, apart from adult education (EC 46300.1). If they have not been continuously enrolled, they are eligible for adult education classes.

Attendance credit for adult students is based on an apportionment day equal to three hours, which means that a normal 5-day week consists of a maximum 15 hours of study per student (as for Continuation Education), five (5) days as for K-12 education. The district cannot claim more than 3 hours per apportionment day in adult school. This is a limit on the amount of adult education ADA that may be claimed, not a limit on the amount of student work that may be completed. Students may, if they can, enroll in more adult classes.

SECTION 3.15.1 Independent Study Programs

The attendance of adult students who are pursuing adult education course work through independent study shall be eligible for apportionment only if the course work meets the requirements for a high school diploma. Non-academic elective and vocational education courses are not eligible pursuant to the limit set by EC 46300.4.

Independent study for adult students may earn apportionment only if and when it has been initiated and carried out pursuant to the school district's policies for independent study.

Each school and program shall keep records of independent study adult students as defined above and shall report the average daily attendance of these students to the director of finance, who will make reports to the State Department of Education upon request.

Off Campus Independent Study

Each school site in a K-12 and adult school District will have the right to enroll students in independent study for a limited period of time if the students must be absent from school under conditions which do not meet the state requirements for excused absences. Off Campus Independent Study (OCIS) is appropriate when a student is absent from school for five (5) or more consecutive school days. The reason for such absence is usually family vacations, funerals, religious reasons, family emergencies, and jury duty.

The Board understands that all Independent Study rules and regulations apply to short-term OCIS. Because it takes lead time by the office to complete the independent documents and for the teacher(s) to provide curriculum and materials, students requesting independent study for five or more consecutive days should notify school attendance departments five days prior to departure. For extended absences, school attendance departments should be notified seven to ten days prior to departure. Homework should be provided for anything less than five days. The student's teacher will prepare an independent study contract and provide materials and assignments for the student to complete while absent. The Off Campus Independent Study (OCIS) master agreement must be signed and dated by all parties prior to the absence. When the student gives the teacher the work assigned in the agreement, attendance may be claimed for the student for the days of absence provided that the work is completed by the date specified in the agreement and the work is equivalent to a full minimum day of attendance claimed. Teachers will give attendance credit based on the quantity of the work completed.

Home Independent Study/Home Schooling

The Superintendent or designee shall encourage parents/guardians desiring to teach their children at home to enroll the student(s) in an independent study program provided by the District. Such enrollment allows continued contact and cooperation between the school system and home-based student.

Through independent study, students will be provided with curriculum guides, state-adopted textbooks, workbooks, equipment, suggestions, and assistance as needed.

Because socialization is an important benefit of regular school attendance, students in independent study should be offered study trips and other group activities which bring home-based students into group settings on a temporary basis.