

VENTURA COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATION NO. 6158

ADOPTED: 02/24/97

CLASSIFICATION: Curriculum/Instruction

**REVISED: 08/11/00
08/23/21**

SUBJECT: Independent Study

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 master agreement pursuant to Education Code 51747.

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)

Educational Opportunities

For the 2021-22 school year, VCOE shall offer independent study, as specified in Education Code 51745, to meet the educational needs of students who are in VCOE's court and community schools and for whom VCOE is deemed to be their district of residence, unless VCOE Schools and Programs has obtained a waiver. (Education Code 51745) All other students for whom VCOE is not deemed to be their district of residence, independent study shall be provided by those students' district of residence.

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
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, or otherwise, 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. The parent/guardian or student shall be responsible for initiating the request for an independent study agreement.

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

Equivalency

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

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)

VCOE 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 study program and complete assigned work consistent with Education Code 51747, 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 board policy and administrative regulation.

For the 2022-23 school year and thereafter, 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 provided that experienced

certificated staff are available to effectively supervise students in independent study. The 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 in an independent study program. When applicable, the Superintendent or designee may consider the parent/guardian's level of commitment to assist the student when necessary.

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 district residency status is based on their parent/guardian's employment within district boundaries pursuant to Education Code 48204. (Education Code 46300.2, 51747.3)

A student with disabilities, as defined in Education Code 56026, shall not participate in independent study unless the student's individualized education program ("IEP") specifically provides for such participation. (Education Code 51745)

If an IEP team determines, through the IEP process, that a student with a disability attending a VCOE program, and for whom VCOE is not their district of residence, can receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education ("FAPE") through independent study, the student shall then participate in the independent study program provided by the student's district of residence.

A temporarily disabled student shall not receive individual instruction pursuant to Education Code 48206.3 by means of independent study. (Education Code 51745)

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

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 independent study master 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 independent study master agreement as requiring an evaluation, the 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 master 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)

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
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

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 VCOE 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 44865, 51747.5)

The ratio of student average daily attendance for independent study students age 18 years or younger to full-time equivalent certificated employees responsible for independent study shall not exceed the equivalent ratio for all other education programs in VCOE (not including students enrolled in special day classes on a full time basis, or the teachers of those classes; and students and teachers in necessary small schools funded pursuant to Education Code

section 42280 *et seq.*), unless a new higher or lower ratio for all other educational programs offered is negotiated in a collective bargaining agreement or VCOE enters into a memorandum of understanding that indicates an existing collective bargaining agreement contains an alternative ratio. (Education Code 51745.6)

The responsibilities of the supervising teacher shall include, but are not limited to:

1. Completing designated portions of the written independent study master 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 Board 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. Select and save with each agreement representative samples of the student's completed and evaluated assignments for each subject on not less than a bi-weekly basis
10. 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 Superintendent or designee shall ensure that independent study teachers have access to professional development and support comparable to classroom-based teachers.