

INDEPENDENT STUDY

Educational Opportunities

For the 2021 – 2022 school year, Venture Academy shall offer independent study to meet the educational needs of students as specified in Education Code Section 51745.

Educational opportunities offered through independent study may include, but are not limited to:

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. Continuing and special study during travel.
4. Volunteer community service activities and leadership opportunities that support and strengthen student achievement.
5. Individualized study for a student whose health, as determined by the student's parent/guardian, would be put at risk by in-person instruction or for a student who is unable to attend in person instruction due to quarantine due to exposure to, or infection with, COVID-19, pursuant to local or state public health guidance.

In addition, when requested by a parent/guardian due to an emergency or illness, 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.

No course required for high school graduation shall be offered exclusively through independent study.

Equivalency

The Venture Academy's independent study option shall be substantially equivalent to in-person instruction to enable participating students to complete Venture Academy'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.

Venture Academy 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 Venture Academy-owned devices adequate to participate in an independent study program and complete assigned work consistent with Education Code Section 51747, or to participate in an independent study course, as authorized by Education Code Section 51749.5, shall not be considered funds or other things of value.

Eligibility for Independent Study

To participate in independent study, a student shall be enrolled in a school operated by the Venture Academy.

For the 2022 – 2023 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. For an elementary student, the Superintendent or designee may consider the parent/guardian's level of commitment to assist the student.

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 Section 48204.

An individual with exceptional needs, as defined in Education Code Section 56026, may participate in independent study if the student's individualized education program specifically provides for such participation. If a parent or guardian of an individual with exceptional needs requests independent study pursuant paragraph (5) of the Educational Opportunities section above, the student's individualized education program team shall make an individualized determination as to whether the student can receive a free appropriate public education in an independent study placement. A student's inability to work independently, the student's need for adult support, or the student's need for special education or related services shall not preclude the individualized education program team from determining that the student can receive a free appropriate education in an independent study placement.

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

Students aged 21 or older, and students aged 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 Section 51225.3 or the Governing Board.

Beginning July 1, 2021, with the exception of students participating in independent study programs due to an emergency, as described in Education Code Sections 41522 and 46392, not 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.

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 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 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 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.

Responsibilities of Independent Study Administrator

The responsibilities of the independent study administrator include, but are not limited to:

1. Assist with determination of placement in independent study.
2. Facilitate the completion of written independent study agreements.

3. Ensure a smooth transition for students into and out of the independent study mode of instruction.
4. Complete or coordinate the preparation of all records and reports required by law, superintendent 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 Venture Academy's employee who possesses a valid certification document pursuant to Education Code Section 44865 or emergency credential pursuant to Education Code Section 44300, registered as required by law, and who consents to the assignment.

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

1. Complete designated portions of the written independent study agreement and sign the agreement.
2. Supervise and approve coursework and assignments.
3. Maintain records of student assignments showing the date the assignment is given and the date the assignment is due.
4. Maintain 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. Provide direct instruction and counsel as necessary for individual student success
6. Regularly meeting with the student to discuss the student's progress.
7. Determine the time value of assigned work or work products completed and submitted by the student.
8. Assess student work and assign grades or other approved measures of achievement.
9. Document each student's participation in live interaction and/or synchronous instruction pursuant to Education Code Section 51747 on each school day, as applicable, in whole or in part, for which live interaction or synchronous instruction is provided as part of the independent study program.

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that independent study teachers have access to professional development and support comparable to classroom-based teachers.

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.

Student-parent-educator conference means a meeting involving, at a minimum, all parties who signed the student's written independent study agreement pursuant to Education Code Section 51747 or the written learning agreement pursuant to Education Code Section 51749.6.

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 a teacher or teachers of record for that student pursuant to Education Code Section 51747.5.