



## 1. Purpose

- 1.1. This policy applies to all pupils participating in independent study at Nord Country School (the “School”).
- 1.2. Independent study shall offer a means of individualizing the educational plan for students whose needs may **temporarily** be met best through study outside of the regular classroom setting. The governing board authorizes independent study as an optional alternative instructional strategy by which students in grades K - 8 may reach curriculum objectives and fulfill graduation requirements.
- 1.3. The School’s independent study option shall be substantially equivalent in quality and quantity to classroom instruction, thus enabling students enrolled in independent study to complete the schools’ adopted course of study within the customary timeframe. Students in independent study shall have access to the same services and resources as is available to other students in the school.

## 2. Responsibilities

- 2.1. The Principal or designee shall determine that the prospective independent study student understands and is prepared to meet the Schools’ requirements for independent study.
- 2.2. The Principal or designee shall ensure that each student’s independent study is coordinated, evaluated, and carried out under the general supervision of an assigned certificated employee or employees.
- 2.3. Parents/guardians should recognize that independent study at the elementary level must emphasize a commitment primarily from the parent/guardian and secondarily from the student.
- 2.4. Independent study will be offered to enrolled students at the discretion of the principal or designee.
- 2.5. The Principal or designee shall ensure that a written independent study agreement, as prescribed by law and detailed below, exists for each participating student.

## 3. Timeframe for Submission of Work/ Missed Assignments Prior to Evaluation

- 3.1. To foster each student’s success in independent study, the Board establishes that all independent study assignments are to be submitted no later than the first day upon which the student returns to the classroom after the independent study work agreement has been completed. For example, a pupil who is engaged in independent study for eight days will need to submit all assignments on the day that student returns to the classroom, submitting all work assigned in the agreement.

- 3.2. When circumstances justify a longer period of time, the principal or designee may extend the due date of an assignment to a period not to exceed ten school days, with day one counted as the first day the pupil returns to the classroom.
- 3.3. If a student fails to complete three independent study assignments per period of five independent study days, or fails to make satisfactory progress (as defined below), the Principal or designee shall conduct an evaluation to determine whether it is in the student's best interest to remain in independent study or return to the regular school program. A written record of the findings of any evaluation made pursuant to this subdivision shall be maintained in the pupil's permanent record and treated as a mandatory interim pupil record. The record shall be maintained for a period of three (3) years from the date of the evaluation and, if the pupil transfers to another California public school, the record shall be forwarded to that school.

#### **4. Satisfactory Educational Progress and Missed Assignments**

- 4.1. Satisfactory educational progress shall be based on all of the following indicators, as applicable:
  - 4.1.1. Pupil achievement and engagement, as measured by all of the following, as applicable:
    - 4.1.1.1. Statewide assessments that are part of the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP), or any other subsequent assessment as certified by the State Board of Education;
    - 4.1.1.2. The percentage of English learner pupils who make progress toward English proficiency as measured by the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC), or subsequent assessments of English proficiency as certified by the State Board of Education; and
    - 4.1.1.3. The English learner reclassification rate.
  - 4.1.2. Pupil engagement, as measured by all of the following, as applicable:
    - 4.1.2.1. School attendance rates;
    - 4.1.2.2. Chronic absenteeism rates; and
    - 4.1.2.3. Middle school dropout rates.
  - 4.1.3. The failed completion of three or more of assignments during any period of five days while on independent study.
  - 4.1.4. Performance on assessments, or other indicators that evidence that the pupil is working on assignments.
  - 4.1.5. Learning requirement concepts, as determined by the supervising teacher.

4.1.6. Progressing toward successful completion of the course of study or individual course, as determined by the supervising teacher.

## **5. Academic Content**

- 5.1. Independent study shall include the provision of content aligned to grade level standards that is substantially equivalent to in-person instruction.
- 5.2. Independent study shall include access to all courses offered by the School for promotion to high school.

## **6. Tiered Reengagement**

- 6.1. Tiered reengagement strategies shall apply to all pupils participating in independent study for 15 or more schooldays in a school year and who are not generating attendance for more than 10 percent of the required minimum instructional time over four continuous weeks of the school-approved instructional calendar who are:
  - 6.1.1. Found not participatory in required synchronous instructional offerings for more than 50 percent of the scheduled times of synchronous instruction in a school month as applicable to the student's grade span, or
  - 6.1.2. Are in violation of their written agreement.
- 6.2. The school shall have local programs intended to address chronic absenteeism, as applicable, including at least the following reengagement strategies:
  - 6.2.1. Verifying current contact information for the pupil;
  - 6.2.2. Notifying parents or guardians of lack of participation within one school day of the recording of a non-attendance day or lack of participation;
  - 6.2.3. A plan for outreach from the school to determine pupil needs, including a connection with health and social services, as necessary; and
  - 6.2.4. A clear standard requiring a pupil-parent-educator conference, as defined below, to review:
    - 6.2.4.1. the pupil's written agreement;
    - 6.2.4.2. reconsider the independent study program's impact on the pupil's achievement and well-being, consistent with the school's policy regarding the maximum amount of time allowed between the assignment and completion of pupil's assigned work;
    - 6.2.4.3. satisfactory educational progress; and

6.2.4.4. the number of missed assignments allowed before an evaluation of whether the student should be allowed to continue in independent study.

6.3. For the purposes of this policy, “pupil-parent-educator conference” means a meeting involving, at a minimum, all parties who signed the pupil’s written independent study agreement.

## **7. Opportunities for Live Interaction and Synchronous Instruction**

7.1. The School shall plan to provide opportunities for live interaction and synchronous instruction as follows for all pupils participating in independent study for 15 or more schooldays in a school year:

7.1.1. For pupils in TK through grade three inclusive, the School shall plan to provide opportunities for daily synchronous instruction for all pupils throughout the year; and

7.1.2. For pupils in grades four through eight inclusive, the School shall plan to provide opportunities for both daily live interaction and at least weekly synchronous instruction for all pupils throughout the year.

7.2. For the purposes of this policy, “live interaction” means interaction between the pupil and certificated or non-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 live interaction may take place in-person, over the internet, or telephonically.

7.3. For the purposes of this policy, “synchronous instruction” means classroom-style instruction or designated small group or one-on-one instruction delivered in-person, over the internet, or telephonically, and involving live two-way communication between a teacher of record and the pupil.

## **8. Return to In-Person Instruction**

8.1. For pupils who participate in independent study for 15 or more schooldays in a school year and whose families wish to return to in-person instruction from independent study, the School shall allow the student to return expeditiously, and in no case later than five instructional days.

## **9. Exceptions for Pupils Under Professional Care**

9.1. Pupils enrolled in a comprehensive school for classroom-based instruction who, under the care of appropriately licensed professionals, participate in independent study due to necessary medical treatments or inpatient treatment for mental health care or substance abuse, are not subject to the tiered reengagement, live interaction, synchronous instruction, nor return to in-person instruction provisions described above. The School shall obtain evidence from appropriately licensed professionals of the need for pupils to participate in independent study pursuant to this subdivision.

## 10. Written Agreements

- 10.1. A current written agreement for each independent study pupil shall be maintained on file for each participating student.
- 10.2. For a pupil participating in an independent study program that is scheduled for more than 14 school days, each written agreement shall be signed, before the commencement of independent study, by the pupil, the pupil's parent, legal guardian or caregiver, the certificated employee who has been designated as having responsibility for the general supervision of the pupil's independent study, and the certificated employee who has been designated as having responsibility for the special education programming of the pupil, as applicable.
- 10.3. For a pupil participating in an independent study program that is scheduled for less than 15 school days, each written agreement shall be signed within 10 school days of the commencement of the first day of the pupil's enrollment in independent study, by the pupil, the pupil's parent, legal guardian, or caregiver, the certificated employee who has been designated as having responsibility for the special education programming of the pupil, as applicable.
- 10.4. The independent study agreement for a student will require and cover a study plan that represents the same amount of study that would be required of a student in the classroom and be consistent with the School curriculum and course of study of students participating in the regular classroom setting.
- 10.5. Each independent study written agreement shall contain at least all of the following:
  - 10.5.1. The manner, time, frequency, and place for submitting a pupil's assignments, for reporting a pupil's academic progress, and for communicating with a pupil's parent or guardian regarding academic progress.
  - 10.5.2. The objectives and methods of study for the pupil's work, and the methods used to evaluate that work.
  - 10.5.3. The specific resources, including materials and personnel that will be made available to the pupil. These resources shall include confirming or providing access for all pupils to the connectivity and devices adequate to participate in the academic program and complete assigned work.
  - 10.5.4. A statement of the policies adopted regarding the maximum length of time allowed between the assignment and the completion of a pupil's assigned work, the level of satisfactory educational progress, and the number of missed assignments allowed prior to an evaluation of whether or not the pupil should be allowed to continue in independent study. The level of satisfactory educational progress and missed assignments shall conform to the requirements specified in this policy

- 10.5.5. The duration of the independent study agreement, including the beginning and ending dates for participating in independent study, recognizing that no independent study agreement shall be valid for any period longer than one school year.
- 10.5.6. A statement of the measures of academic accomplishment appropriate to the agreement and to be earned by the pupil upon completion.
- 10.5.7. A statement detailing the academic and other supports that will be provided to address the needs of pupils who are not performing at grade level, or need support in other areas such as English learners, individuals with exceptional needs as needed to be consistent with the student's individualized education program or plan pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. Sec. 794), pupils in foster care, pupils experiencing homelessness, and pupils requiring mental health supports.
- 10.5.8. The inclusion of a statement in each independent study agreement that independent study is an optional educational alternative in which no pupil may be required to participate, unless the pupil is on independent study due to quarantine. If the pupil is participating in independent study during quarantine or school closure for exposure to, or infection with COVID-19 pursuant to local or state health guidance then this is not an optional educational alternative and that distinction should be noted.
- 10.5.9. Written agreements may be maintained electronically and may include subsidiary agreements, such as course contracts and assignments and work records. Written agreements may be signed using electronic signatures that comply with applicable state and federal standards and are intended by the signatory to have the same effect as a handwritten signature.
- 10.5.10. Before signing a written agreement pursuant to this policy, a parent or guardian may request that the School conduct a phone, videoconference, or in-person conference with the pupil, parent or guardian, and, if requested by the pupil or parent, an education advocate,. During this meeting they may ask questions about the educational options, including which curriculum offerings and nonacademic supports will be available to the pupil in independent study, before making the decision about enrollment or disenrollment in the program.

## **11. Adoption and Review**

- 11.1. Originally Adopted: October 8, 2014
- 11.2. Recent Revision: August 9, 2022
- 11.3. Recent Review: January 24, 2024