

## Independent Study Board Policy

Independent Study is an option for any student who is unable to participate in our classroom-based program for a period of a minimum three (3) to a maximum of ten (10) consecutive school days. Independent Study requires written approval from a Principal. A student may participate in a maximum of two periods of Independent Study per academic year.

Independent Study is conducted solely for the educational benefit of the students attending Westlake Charter School (“WCS” or the “Charter School”) as a means to encourage daily engagement in school work even during times of non-participation in the classroom-based program. No student is required to request or participate in an Independent Study. Parents are to give at least five (5) school days’ notice of a request for Independent Study.

Independent Study should not be used in cases where non-participation in the classroom-based program is due travel for longer than five (5) days. Independent Study will not be offered during the first or last thirty (30) days of the school year.

WCS understands that there may be situations where extenuating circumstances exist, including, but not limited to, serious illness or injury, quarantine and State-declared emergency, resulting in the need for exceptions to this Policy. When these situations arise, exceptions to this Policy may be made with written approval from a Principal. Once approval is received, Staff will work to implement Independent Study for students in an expedited manner.

The Board of Directors has adopted the following written policy in accordance with Cal. Education Code Section 51747, for implementation at WCS:

- A. The Independent Study program shall allow a maximum of ten (10) school days for all students in all grade levels from the time an assignment is made until the assignment must be completed and returned to the student’s assigned supervising credentialed teacher.
- B. An evaluation will be made by a committee made up of the student’s assigned supervising credentialed teacher and a Principal as to whether it is in the student’s best interest to remain in Independent Study upon the following triggers:
  - a. When the student fails to complete three (3) or more Independent Study assignments during any period of Independent Study.

- b. In the event the student's educational progress falls below satisfactory levels as determined by the Charter School's multi-tiered systems of support procedures which considers ALL of the following indicators:
  - i. The student's achievement and engagement in the independent study program, as indicated by the student's performance on applicable student-level measures of student achievement and student engagement set forth in Education Code Section 52060(d) paragraphs (4) and (5).
  - ii. The completion of assignments, assessments, or other indicators that evidence that the student is working on assignments.
  - iii. Learning required concepts, as determined by the supervising teacher.
  - iv. Progressing toward successful completion of the course of study or individual course, as determined by the supervising teacher.

A written record of the findings of any evaluation conducted pursuant to this Policy shall be 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. If the student transfers to another California public school, the record shall be forwarded to that school.

- C. The Charter School shall provide content aligned to grade level standards that is provided at a level of quality and intellectual challenge substantially equivalent to in-person instruction. For high school grade levels, this shall include access to all courses offered by the Charter School for graduation and approved by the UC or CSU as credible under the A-G admissions criteria.
- D. For independent study of fifteen (15) school days or more in a school year, the Charter School has adopted tiered reengagement strategies for all pupils who are not generating attendance for more than three (3) school days or 60% of the instructional days in a school week, or who are in violation of the written agreement pursuant to Education Code Section 51747(g). These procedures are as follow:
  - a. Verification of current contact information for each enrolled pupil;
  - b. Notification to parents or guardians of lack of participation within one (1) school day of the absence or lack of participation;
  - c. Outreach from the Charter School to determine pupil needs including connection with health and social services as necessary:
    - i. Verification of access to connectivity;
    - ii. Seeking to understand what is happening for pupil and at home;
    - iii. Establishing an understanding for parents regarding compulsory education and how lack of attendance impacts learning.

- d. When the evaluation described above is triggered to consider whether remaining in independent study is in the best interest of the pupil, a pupil-parent-educator conference shall be required to review a pupil's written agreement and reconsider the independent study program's impact on the pupil's achievement and well-being. This conference shall be a meeting involving, at a minimum, all parties who signed the pupil's written independent study agreement.
- E. All pupils in grades K-12 participating in independent study for fifteen (15) school days or more in a school year will be provided the opportunity for interaction based on the following grade span:
    - K-3: Daily synchronous instruction with the supervising teacher;
    - 4-8: Weekly synchronous instruction with the supervising teacher and daily interaction opportunity with certificated or non-certificated employees;
    - 9-12: Weekly synchronous instruction.

Interaction and instruction opportunities may include open office time with the assigned staff member, which may be facilitated either in-person or through virtual or telephonic means. During these opportunities, the student and staff member will have an opportunity to interact through individual or group instruction in order to increase pupil academic progress and connectivity with WCS.

- F. For independent study of fifteen (15) school days or more in a school year, upon written parent/guardian request for return to in-person instruction, pupil will be expeditiously returned to in-person instruction and in no case later than five (5) instructional days.
- G. A written Independent Study master agreement for each student shall be maintained on file. Each agreement shall be signed and dated and in effect prior to the start of reporting attendance (ADA) pursuant to that agreement. The agreement shall contain all the items required by Section 51747 of the Education Code, as listed below, and shall be renewed each semester:
  - a. The manner, time, frequency and place for submitting a student's assignments, for reporting the student's academic progress, and for communicating with a student's parent or guardian regarding a student's academic progress.
  - b. The objectives and methods of study for the student's work, and the methods used to evaluate that work.
  - c. The specific resources, including materials and personnel, that will be made available to the student. These resources shall include confirming or providing access to all students to the connectivity and devices adequate to participate in the educational program and complete assigned work.

- d. A statement of the policies adopted herein regarding the maximum length of time allowed between the assignment and the completion of a student'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 student should be allowed to continue in Independent Study.
- e. 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 school year.
- f. A statement on the number of course credits to be earned by the student upon completion or, for the elementary grades, other measures of academic accomplishment appropriate to the agreement, to be earned by the pupil upon completion.
- g. A statement detailing the academic and other supports that will be provided to address the needs of students who are not performing at grade level, or need support in other areas, such as English learners, individuals with exceptional needs in order to be consistent with the student's individualized education program or plan pursuant to Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. Sec. 794), students in foster care or experiencing homelessness, and students requiring mental health supports.
- h. The inclusion of 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 Section 48915 or 48917, the agreement also shall 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.

Each written agreement shall be signed, prior to the commencement of Independent Study, by the student, the student's parent, legal guardian, or caregiver, if the student is less than 18 years of age, the certificated employee who has been designated as having responsibility for the general supervision of Independent Study, and all other persons who have direct responsibility for providing instructional assistance to the student. As used herein, "caregiver" means a person who has met the requirements of Family Code Section 6550.

The Charter School shall comply with the Education Code sections 51745 through 51749.6 and the provisions of the Charter Schools Act of 1992 and the State Board of Education regulations adopted there under.

Attendance Accounting:

- A. WCS recognizes that families may not evenly distribute student's work assignments over weekdays. However, due to strict State law requirements for charter school attendance in independent study, the Charter School expects each student to be engaged in an educational activity required of them in the assignment on each weekday that WCS is in session, and asks that this "daily engagement" be documented on a daily basis in the student log by the parent/guardian. This should not be read to prohibit schoolwork on weekends and should not be read to dictate the manner in which a family distributes the assignments over the Independent Study period.
  
- B. WCS asks that a parent/guardian refrain from documenting any "daily engagement" on a day where a student did not engage in any educational activity required of them by the assignment. Work done on weekends or other days when school is not in session cannot be used to "make-up" weekdays where no "daily engagement" occurred.

The Executive Director may establish the necessary Staff Memos to implement these policies in accordance with the law.