

Independent Study 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 one (1) to a maximum of ten (10) consecutive school days. Independent Study requires written approval from the campus Principal or designee. A student may participate in a maximum of two (2) 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. Independent Study is an optional educational alternative in which no pupil may be required to participate and is designed to teach the knowledge and skills of the core curriculum. WCS shall provide appropriate existing services and resources to enable pupils to complete their Independent Study successfully. Parents are requested to give at least five (5) school days’ notice of a request for Independent Study.

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 the campus Principal or designee. Once approval is received, Staff should 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 the campus Principal or designee as to whether it is in the student's best interest to remain in Independent Study upon the following triggers:
1. When the student fails to complete three (3) or more Independent Study assignments during any period of Independent Study.
 2. In the event a student's educational progress falls below satisfactory levels as determined by ALL of the following indicators:
 - a. 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).
 - b. The completion of assignments, assessments, or other indicators that evidence that the student is working on assignments.
 - c. Learning required concepts, as determined by the supervising teacher.
 - d. 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. WCS shall provide content aligned to grade level standards that is substantially equivalent to in-person instruction. For high school grade levels, this shall include access to all courses offered by WCS for graduation and approved by the UC or CSU as creditable under the A-G admissions criteria.
- D. WCS has adopted tiered reengagement strategies* for the following students:
1. All pupils who are not generating attendance for more than 10 percent of required minimum instructional time over four continuous weeks of WCS' approved instructional calendar;
 2. Pupils found not participatory in synchronous instructional

offerings pursuant to Education Code Section 51747.5 for more

than 50 percent of the scheduled times of synchronous instruction in a school month as applicable by grade span; or

3. Pupils who are in violation of the written agreement pursuant to Education Code Section 51747(g).

These procedures shall include local programs intended to address chronic absenteeism, as applicable, with at least all of the following:

- 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 recording of a non-attendance day or lack of participation;
 - c. A plan for outreach from WCS to determine pupil needs including connection with health and social services as necessary.
 - d. A clear standard for requiring a pupil-parent-educator conference to review a pupil's written agreement, and reconsider the independent study program's impact on the pupil's achievement and well-being, consistent with the policies adopted pursuant to paragraph (4) of subdivision (g) of Education Code Section 51747.
- E. The following plan shall be in place in accordance with Education Code Section 51747(e) for synchronous instruction and live interaction*:
1. Grades K-3, inclusive: WCS shall provide opportunities for daily synchronous instruction for all pupils throughout the school year by each pupil's teacher or teachers of record;
 2. Grades 4-8, inclusive: WCS shall provide opportunities for daily live interaction between the pupil and a certificated or non-certificated employee of WCS and at least weekly synchronous instruction for all pupils throughout the school year by each pupil's teacher or teachers of record;
 3. Grades 9-12, inclusive: WCS shall provide opportunities for at least weekly synchronous instruction for all pupils throughout the school year by

each pupil's teacher or teachers of record.

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. WCS shall transition pupils whose families wish to return to in-person instruction from Independent Study expeditiously, and, in no case later than five (5) instructional days.*

** The tiered reengagement strategies, plan for synchronous instruction and live interaction, and plan to transition pupils whose families wish to return to in-person instruction (paragraphs D, E, and F above) shall not apply to:*

- 1. Pupils who participate in an independent study program for fewer than 16 schooldays in a school year;*
 - 2. 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. Local educational agencies shall obtain evidence from appropriately licensed professionals of the need for pupils to participate in independent study pursuant to this subdivision; or*
 - 3. Independent Study offered due to school closure or material decrease in attendance for 15 school days or less for affected pupils under one or more of the circumstances described in Education Code Sections 41422 and/or 46392, and 46393 for which WCS files an affidavit seeking an allowance of attendance due to emergency conditions.*
- G. A current written Independent Study Agreement shall be maintained on file for each Independent Study pupil, including but not limited to, all of the following, and shall be renewed each trimester/semester:
1. 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.

2. The objectives and methods of study for the student's work, and the methods used to evaluate that work.
3. 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.
4. A statement of the policies adopted pursuant to subdivisions (a) and (b) of Education Code Section 51747 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.
5. 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.
6. A statement of the number of course credits or, for the elementary grades, other measures of academic accomplishment appropriate to the agreement, to be earned by the pupil upon completion.
7. 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.
8. The inclusion of a statement in each independent study agreement 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.

For a pupil participating in an independent study program that is scheduled for more

than 15 school days, each written agreement shall be signed, before 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 the certificated employee designated as

having responsibility for the special education programming of the pupil, as applicable.

For a pupil participating in an independent study program that is scheduled for 15 school days or fewer, each written agreement shall be signed, during the school year in which the independent study program takes place, by the pupil, the pupil's parent, legal guardian, or caregiver, if the pupil 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 the certificated employee designated as having responsibility for the special education programming of the pupil, as applicable. The written agreement may be signed at any time during the school year, but it is the intent of the Legislature that parents or guardians of pupils be provided the agreement at or before the beginning of the school year. For the purposes of this paragraph, "caregiver" means a person who has met the requirements of Part 1.5 (commencing with Section 6550) of Division 11 of the Family Code.

Written agreements may be signed using an electronic signature that complies with state and federal standards, as determined by the California Department of Education, that may be a marking that is either computer generated or produced by electronic means and is intended by the signatory to have the same effect as a handwritten signature. The use of an electronic signature shall have the same force and effect as the use of a manual signature if the requirements for digital signatures and their acceptable technology, as provided in Section 16.5 of the Government Code and in Chapter 10 (commencing with Section 22000) of Division 7 of Title 2 of the California Code of Regulations, are satisfied.

The Charter School shall comply with the Education Code sections 51745 through 51749.3 and the provisions of the Charter Schools Act of 1992 and the State Board of Education regulations adopted there under.

Attendance Accounting:

1. 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, WCS 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.

2. 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.