

		SUBJECT	
		INDEPENDENT STUDY	
DATE ISSUED	DATE REVISED		NOVA POLICY #
08/13/10	09/07/2017; 08/08/2021; 08/26/2021; 09/30/2021; 08/02/2022		
ISSUED BY	REVIEWED BY	APPROVED BY	COA POLICY #
		NOVA BOARD	

SUBJECT

Independent Study

POLICY STATEMENT

NOVA Academy Early College High and NOVA Academy Coachella ("Charter Schools") may offer independent study to meet the educational needs of pupils enrolled in the Charter Schools. 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. The Charter Schools shall provide appropriate existing services and resources to enable pupils to complete their independent study successfully. The following written policies have been adopted by the Board for implementation at the Charter Schools:

1. Completion of Assignments:

For pupils in both Charter Schools and in all grade levels 9-12, the maximum length of time that may elapse between the time an assignment is made and the date by which the pupil must complete the assigned work shall be 5 school days.

When special or extenuating circumstances justify a longer time for individual students, the CEO or their designee may approve a period not to exceed 20 days.

2. Missed Assignments and Level of Satisfactory Progress:

When any student fails to complete 4 assignments during any period of 20 school days or fails to make satisfactory progress as defined below, an evaluation will be conducted by the Administrative Director or his or her designee to determine whether it is in the best interests of the pupil to remain in independent study. A written record of the findings of any evaluation conducted pursuant to this policy shall be treated as a mandatory interim pupil record. This record shall be maintained for a period of three 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.

Satisfactory educational progress shall be based on all of the following indicators:

- ◆ Pupil achievement and engagement in the independent study program, as indicated by the pupil's performance on applicable pupil-level measures of pupil achievement and pupil engagement set forth in paragraphs (4) and (5) of subdivision (d) of Education Code Section 52060.
- ◆ The completion of assignments, assessments, or other indicators that evidence that the pupil is working on assignments
- ◆ Learning requirement concepts, as determined by the supervising teacher
- ◆ Progress toward successful completion of the course of study or individual course, as determined by the supervising teacher

3. Academic Content:

Independent study shall include the provision of content aligned to grade level standards that is substantially equivalent to in-person instruction.

Independent study shall include access to all courses offered by the School for graduation and approved by the University of California or the California State University as creditable under the A-G admission criteria.

4. Tiered Reengagement*:

The Charter Schools have adopted tiered reengagement strategies for the following pupils:

- a. all pupils who are not generating attendance for 10 percent of required minimum instructional time over four continuous weeks of the Charter School's approved instructional calendar,

- b. 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,
- c. or pupils who are in violation of their 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:

- ◆ Verifying current contact information for the pupil,
- ◆ Notifying parents or guardians of lack of participation within one school day of the recording of a non-attendance day or lack of participation,
- ◆ A plan for outreach from the school to determine pupil needs, including a connection with health and social services, as necessary,
- ◆ A clear standard requiring a pupil-parent-educator conference, as defined below, to review the 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.

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.

5. Opportunities for Synchronous Instruction*:

The School shall plan to provide opportunities for synchronous instruction as follows for all pupils engaged in independent study:

- ◆ For pupils in grades 9-12 inclusive, the School shall plan to provide opportunities for at least weekly synchronous instruction for all pupils throughout the year by offering office hours conducted by each teacher or teachers of record at least once weekly, Office hours shall offer one on one or small group instruction and shall be provided in person, virtual, or telephonically.

For the purposes of this policy, "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 of record and the pupil.

6. Return to In-Person Instruction*:

For pupils 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. Once a student returns to in-person instruction from independent study, the student will not be permitted to return to independent study except under extenuating circumstances as approved by the Principal.

**The tiered reengagement strategies, plan for synchronous instruction, and plan to transition pupils whose families wish to return to in-person instruction shall not apply to pupils who participate in an independent study program for fewer than 15 schooldays in a school year and 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. These sections shall not apply to 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 the Charter School files an affidavit seeking an allowance of attendance due to emergency conditions.*

7. Written Agreements:

A current written agreement shall be maintained on file for each independent study pupil, including but not limited to, all of the following:

- ◆ The manner, time, frequency, and place for submitting a pupil's assignments and for reporting the pupil's academic progress, and for communicating with a pupil's parent or guardian regarding academic progress.
- ◆ The objectives and methods of study for the pupil's work, and the methods used to evaluate that work.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ 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 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 above in this policy.
- ◆ The duration of the independent study agreement, including beginning and ending dates for the pupil's participation in independent study under the agreement. No

independent study agreement shall be valid for any period longer than one school year.

- ◆ A statement of the number of course credits to be earned by the pupil upon completion.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ 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. In the case of a pupil 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 pupil through independent study only if the pupil is offered the alternative of classroom instruction.
- ◆ 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 care giver, 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. Beginning in the 2022–23 school year, 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, 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. For purposes of this paragraph "caregiver" means a person who has met the requirements of Part 1.5 (commencing with Section 6550) of the Family Code.
 - Written agreements may be maintained electronically along with and may include subsidiary agreements, such as course contracts and assignment 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. 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.

- Before signing a written agreement pursuant to this section, and upon the request of the parent or guardian of a pupil, the Charter Schools shall conduct a phone, videoconference, or in-person pupil-parent-educator conference or other school meeting during which the pupil, parent or guardian, and, if requested by the pupil or parent, an education advocate, 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 various options for learning.
8. The Charter Schools shall comply with the Education Code Sections 51745 through 51749.3 and the provisions of the Charter Schools Act and the State Board of Education regulations adopted there under.
 9. The Charter Schools may establish regulations to implement these policies in accordance with the law.