



INDEPENDENT STUDY POLICY

ADOPTED: 09/09/2024

America's Finest AFCS (AFCS) offers independent study to meet the educational needs of all students enrolled in the AFCS. Independent study is an alternative educational program designed to teach the knowledge and skills of the core curriculum. The AFCS provides appropriate resources and services to support students in their independent study program.

The following written policy has been adopted by the AFCS's Board of Directors to implement independent study.

Independent study for each student shall be under the general supervision of a AFCS employee who possesses a valid certification document pursuant to Education Code 44865 or an emergency credential pursuant to Education Code 44300. Independent study shall be coordinated, evaluated, and documented as prescribed by law.

For students in all programs and grade levels offered by the AFCS, the maximum length of time that may elapse between the time an assignment is made and the date by which the student must complete the assigned work shall be twenty (20) school days.

An evaluation shall be conducted to determine whether it is in a student's best interest to remain in independent study whenever the student fails to make satisfactory educational progress and/or misses the equivalency of three (3) days' worth of assignments. Satisfactory educational progress shall be determined based on all of the following indicators:

1. 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 engagement specified in Education Code 52060.
2. The completion of assignments, assessments, or other indicators that evidence that the student is working on assignments.
3. Learning required concepts, as determined by the supervising teacher.
4. Progress towards 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 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.

The AFCS shall ensure that students participating in the independent study are provided with content aligned to grade-level standards that are substantially equivalent to in-person instruction. For high schools, this shall include access to all courses offered by the AFCS for graduation and approved by the University of California or the California State University as creditable under the A-G admissions criteria.

The AFCS shall ensure that students participating in independent study* receive the following throughout the school year in accordance with Education Code section 51747(e):

1. For students in transitional kindergarten, kindergarten, and grades 1 to 3, opportunities for daily synchronous instruction provided by each student's teacher or teachers of record, as follows: Daily online synchronous opportunities for Math or English Language Arts Instruction with a grade level teacher.

2. Students in grades 4-8 have opportunities for daily live interaction with classified or certificated staff and at least weekly synchronous instruction provided by each student's teacher or teachers of record, as follows: Daily online synchronous opportunities for Math or English Language Arts Instruction with a grade-level teacher or with a Subject Matter Specialist.
3. For students in grades 9-12, opportunities for at least weekly synchronous instruction provided by each student's teacher or teachers of record, as follows: Weekly office hours offered via video conference.

The AFCS shall ensure that procedures for tiered re-engagement strategies are used for all students who are not generating attendance for more than 10 percent of the required minimum instructional time over four (4) continuous weeks of the AFCS's approved instructional calendar, students 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 students who are in violation of their written agreement pursuant to Education Code Section 51747(g). * The procedures shall include local programs intended to address chronic absenteeism, as applicable, with at least but are not necessarily limited to, all of the following:

1. Verification of current contact information for each enrolled student.
2. Notification to parents/guardians of lack of participation within one school day of the recording of a nonattendance day or lack of participation.
3. A plan for outreach from the AFCS to determine student needs, including connection with health and social services as necessary.
4. A clear standard for requiring a student-parent-educator conference to review a student's written agreement and reconsider the independent study program's impact on the student's achievement and well-being, consistent with the policies adopted pursuant to paragraph (4) of subdivision (g) of Education Code Section 51747.

To the extent consistent with Education Code sections 47612.5(b) and 47634.2, the AFCS shall develop a plan to transition students whose families wish to return to in-person instruction from independent study expeditiously and, in no case, later than five instructional days.

The AFCS shall ensure that a written master agreement exists for each participating student as prescribed by law.

Before signing a written agreement, the parent or guardian of a student may request that the AFCS conduct a phone, videoconference, or in-person student-parent-educator conference or other school meeting during which the student, parent, or guardian, and, if requested by the student, or parent, an education advocate, may ask questions about the educational options, including which curriculum offerings and nonacademic supports will be available to the student in independent study, before making the decision about enrollment or disenrollment in the various options for learning.

The AFCS shall not provide independent study students and their parents/guardians with funds or items of value that a school district could not legally provide to a similarly situated pupil of the school district, or to the pupil's parent or guardian are not provided for other students and their parents/guardians. Providing access to Internet connectivity and AFCS-owned devices adequate to participate in an independent study program and complete assigned work consistent with Education Code 51747 shall not be considered funds or other things of value.

Master Agreement

A written agreement shall be developed and implemented for each student participating in an independent study.

The independent study agreement for each participating student shall include, but is not limited to, all of the following:

1. The manner, time, frequency, and place for submitting the student's assignments, reporting the student's academic progress, and communicating with a student's parent/guardian regarding the 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 will be made available to the student, including materials and personnel. These resources shall include confirming or providing all students with Internet connectivity and devices adequate to participate in the educational program and complete assigned work.
4. A statement of the AFCS's policies detailing the maximum length of time allowed between an assignment and its completion, the level of satisfactory educational progress, and the number of missed assignments will trigger an evaluation of whether the student should be allowed to continue in independent study.
5. The duration of the independent study agreement, including the beginning and end dates for the student's participation in independent study under the agreement, with a maximum of 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 student 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, students with disabilities with an individualized education program, or a Section 504 plan to be consistent with their program or plan, 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 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 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.
9. Each written agreement shall be signed and dated, before the commencement of independent study, by the student, the student's parent/guardian, or caregiver if the student is under the age 18 years, the certificated employee responsible for the general supervision of independent study, and the certificated employee designated as having responsibility for the special education programming of the student, 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 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 (CDE), 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 parent/guardian's signature on the agreement shall constitute permission for the student to receive instruction through independent study.

Records for Audit Purposes

The AFCS shall maintain written contemporaneous records that document all student attendance and make these records available for audit and inspection. Records (such as the signed, dated agreement, any supplemental agreement, assignment records, work samples, attendance records, and any other records for audit purposes) may be maintained on file electronically.

The AFCS shall maintain a "daily engagement log," tracking each student's daily engagement in

educational activities for each day school is in session, in a written or computer-based record such as a grade book or summary document of student engagement, for each class, that lists of all grades, assignments, assessments and associated grades for each student for independent study assignments.

The AFCS shall document each student's participation in live interaction and synchronous instruction pursuant to Education Code 51747 on each school day, as applicable, in whole or in part, for which independent study is provided. A student who does not participate in independent study on a school day shall be documented as non-participatory for that school day.

The AFCS shall comply with the Education Code sections 51745 through 51749.3, and the provisions of the AFCSs Act of 1992 and the State Board of Education regulations adopted there under.

The Executive Director/Chief Executive Officer may establish regulations to implement these policies in accordance with the law.