

## INTRODUCTION TO SHORT TERM INDEPENDENT STUDY

### Summary of main points

1. Independent Study is an **instructional strategy . . . not a different curriculum**. The students are supposed to be learning the same kinds of things that they would be learning if they were in class . . . math, science, social studies, etc. Just keeping a journal is not acceptable to the State of California and of course, the auditors.
2. The legal requirements are the same for both short-term and long-term Independent Study.
3. The purpose is to provide an alternative to classroom instruction that responds to the student's individual needs. It is supposed to provide the student with curriculum that is the same as or superior to classroom instruction.
4. By law, Independent Study must be voluntary . . . a student may not be required to go on Independent Study. A classroom option must always be available to the student. The Independent Study **must** be in the best interest of the student. No Independent Studies are issued the first 5 days of school, nor the last week (Monday through Thursday) of the school year.
5. The Independent Study contract must be for at least 5 consecutive school days. If the contract is for more than two weeks, the parties should try to make appointments to meet every week or two to evaluate and collect work products and give assignments. A new agreement may be created for additional Independent Study work after the first agreement is completed. Example 1: 5 days in October and 6 days in December would require two Independent Study contracts.  
Example 2: An emergency comes up during an existing Independent Study contract, and the student is unable to return to school on the scheduled return date. **A second** Independent Study contract should be written for the additional period, faxed to parent and student for signature. The second completed Independent Study contract should be faxed back to the school site and the original should be mailed to the school site along with the assignments from the first contract. The envelope must be postmarked on or before the end of the first contract and before the new contract starts. Keep **all** papers related to this contract for backup.
6. Because of abuses by schools in the past, Independent Study programs are heavily audited by the State. If schools or districts are found to be out of compliance, they can lose thousands of dollars of State funds! **Independent Study is one of the most heavily audited parts of the school program.**
7. To be in compliance, you must use current approved forms, completely filled out, signed, and dated. Work samples must be attached to the original Independent Study contracts and kept for three years after the school year ends. All work must be assigned and evaluated by certificated teachers (not secretaries, counselors, or administrators). The student's assigned teacher evaluates and determines the number of days of apportionment (ADA).
8. The work is to be assigned on a contract basis and **must be completed prior to the scheduled date of return to the classroom**. Students may **NOT** complete work for Independent Study apportionment (ADA) after they return to class. (Teachers may give them course credit/grades for work done after returning, **but such work cannot be used for generating ADA**). Under no circumstances can the assignments be completed before

the beginning date of the Independent Study contract. **The assignments must be completed within the contract dates.**

9. Prior to starting the Independent Study contract, a meeting should be held with the parent(s), student, and teacher(s). **All teachers, the student, and parent must sign and date the forms prior to the beginning of Independent Study.** (Even students who can not sign their names must make their mark.) Reminder: Independent Study must be voluntary.
10. Teachers must evaluate completed work both for quality (grade) and quantity of time apportionment earned. This is not supposed to be done by administrators, secretaries, or counselors.
11. "Representative samples" of work assignments along with the original Independent Study contract must be kept for 3 years. The school district has a filing system enabling auditors to ask for and see any given student's work samples, Independent Study contracts, and apportionment (ADA) records. **Keep samples showing at least one day's work assignments for each week on Independent Study.** You must keep the student's original work, not copies. For 3-D work projects, keep a photograph with written notes about how time value was credited.
12. For each sample, the teacher must write/mark:
  - a. Subject
  - b. Date turned in/evaluated
  - c. Evaluation assessment . . . grade (quality)
  - d. Time credit earned (quantity)
  - e. Signature/initial
13. The auditor will want to be able to see the original work sample(s) and attendance forms for student "X" for week "Y". Keep Independent Study Contracts, work assignment sheets, and samples of work stapled together.
14. If a student has an I.E.P., he/she may NOT participate in the Independent Study program unless the I.E.P. specifically provides for that participation.

## HOW ARE DAYS/HOURS OF ADA DETERMINED?

When the teacher enters an assignment (on the Assignment sheet), a time value should be indicated. This is an estimated amount of time that the teacher thinks would be reasonable for **this** student to do a good job on the assignment. It should reflect the time that the student would have spent on the assignment at school and home as if the student was doing it at school and home. It might vary somewhat from student to student, depending on the student's abilities, but it should be reasonable and realistic. It can be stated in hours or fractions of days.

When the students turns in the work, the **teacher** will evaluate it for its **quality** (grade), and for **quantity** . . . how many hours of ADA credit does this work merit? The time should generally equal the time indicated on the Assignment Sheet; it may be a little less, but it will rarely be more.

The teacher does not need to ascertain the amount of time that the student actually worked on the assignment . . . What matters is the amount of time that the work "represents", **as determined by the teacher**. The teacher is supposed to verify that the time awarded is reasonable for that assignment for that student.

When the assignments are turned in, the hours or fractions of days are added up to determine the number of days of ADA earned. The amount of work required for a day/week varies.

Kindergarten	180 minutes per day	15 hours per week
Grades 1-3	230 minutes per day	19.7 hours per week
Grades 4-8	240 minutes per day	20 hours per week

It does not matter when the work is done so long as it is done (1) **After** the Independent Study contract and Assignment sheets are signed and the Independent Study starts and (2) **Before** the scheduled day the student is to return to school.

You will find an example on the following page.

## EXAMPLE OF HOW TO DETERMINE ADA

For example, Freddy Fourth-grader is given the following assignments to complete while visiting Aunt Bertha in Sacramento for 8 days (32 hours of assignments were given):

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Potential Time</u>	<u>Time earned</u>	<u>Grade</u>
(1) Read Chapter 5 in Social Studies book and answer all section review questions (not all were completed, received B on what was completed)	8 hrs	7 hrs	B
(2) Tour Sutter's Fort and write a 2 page illustrated report	4 hrs	4 hrs	A
(3) Do worksheets #4-9 for novel being studied by class (not all were completed, received A on what was completed)	5 hrs	3 hrs	A
(4) Chapter 5 in Math book: do all even number math problems	11 hrs	11 hrs	B
(5) Read leveled leisure book (parent signature verification)	4 hrs	4 hrs	Pass

Total hours earned on #1-5: 29 hours; divide 29 by 4 = 7.25 days, which would earn 7 days of ADA since partial days can not be awarded.

## ATTENDANCE RECORDS

The district needs to be able to identify/show which days of apportionment were earned for Independent Study. A copy of the completed Independent Study contract should be given to the school secretary on the 1<sup>st</sup> day the student gone on Independent Study or when the contract has been signed by all parties. The attendance clerk will enter the first and last day of the Independent Study and the number of school days covered. No apportionment is earned for days when the student is on Independent Study until the teacher has recorded the time earned and returned the completed work samples to the office. At that time the attendance clerk will change the designation in the computer attendance program to indicate that the work has been completed.

## WHAT DO AUDITORS LOOK FOR?

Independent Study is the most heavily audited part of a district's attendance records. One individual teacher or school not following proper procedures can cost the district thousands of dollars of lost apportionment.

The items most commonly checked for are:

1. Claiming a day's ADA when the student did not complete a day's worth of assignments:
  - a. Be sure to give the student plenty of work to do. The equivalent of normal school days.
  - b. Assign a reasonable amount of time credit (ADA for work done).
2. Claiming ADA prior to signing off the Independent Study contract and assignment record:
  - a. Be sure that the papers are signed and dated prior to the student starting the assignments
  - b. Be sure the student has not put the wrong date on his or her assignments
  - c. Be sure NOT to give/claim ADA credit for work done after the student's scheduled date of return to school
3. Failing to review students' completed assignments:
  - a. Be sure to sign, date, mark days earned, grade, subject, etc. on the assignment samples
  - b. Make comments on the assignments to show that you have actually assessed them
4. Failure to keep student assignment samples:
  - a. Keep representative samples of assignments (1 day of work for every week on Independent Study) for 3 years (the third July following the completion of the audit)
  - b. Keep samples of assignments attached to the original Independent Study contract
5. Evidence that the Independent Study contract is voluntary, discuss this with parents and student. The student has the option of being in a classroom.
6. Records of assignments made, accounting of work completed, and ADA earned. Use the Assignment Sheets to record and complete all parts of the Independent Study contract. Keep in mind that an auditor will need to understand the information.
7. Accurate accounting of hours earned. The assignment records must match the ADA claimed.

## SUMMARY OF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### Parent/Guardian:

- 1 Request an Independent Study contract at least 5 days in advance (or as soon as possible in the case of an unexpected prolonged absence). In an emergency and if Principal, teacher(s) and all parties agree, the Independent Study contract can be completed in less than 5 days. This will be decided on a case by case basis.
- 2 Make and keep appointment to meet with Supervising Teacher to go over and sign the Independent Study contract.
- 3 Ensure student completes all assignments and returns them on the scheduled date of return. (If the student does not return on the expected date, for illness for example, the work assignments **must** be returned on/or before the scheduled date of return, even if the student is not at school.)

### Student:

- 1 Voluntarily sign Independent Study contract and assignment sheets.
- 2 Be sure that all assignments are understood prior to leaving school/meeting.
- 3 Complete all work prior to the scheduled date of return.
- 4 Turn in all assignments on scheduled date of return.

### Classroom Teacher:

- 1 Develop written assignments that align with what the class will be doing in the student's absence. This will require a little imagination for teacher(s) who teach classes like P.E., computer, art, etc. It is suggested that written reports of activities that may relate to the class be assigned. For physical education, you may have the student keep track of time spent walking, swimming, etc.
- 2 If the student has more than one teacher, the home room teacher will be responsible for coordinating the Independent Study.
- 3 Meet with home room teacher and/or parents and student to explain assignments, assessment procedures, due date, etc. and complete all forms.
- 4 Provide student with materials needed to complete assignments (texts, packet, video tape, etc.).
- 5 Upon the student's return, assess the work both for quality (grade) and quantity (hours/days of apportionment ADA credit earned).
- 6 Record grade and apportionment ADA credit on assignment samples which are to be kept.
- 7 Submit evaluated work to office within 10 school days.

**Office Personnel:**

1. Facilitate setting up initial meeting between student, parent, and teacher.
2. Keep file of Independent Study contracts along with samples of completed classroom assignments.
3. Record earned attendance credits within 5 school days of receiving completed Independent Study contracts stating number of days of ADA.
4. Submit to the Principal for final approval.
5. Sign the contract verifying all documents have been received and recorded.

**Administrator:**

1. Ensure that staff understands procedures and legal requirements.
2. Ensure that proper records are kept.
3. Sign the contract verifying all documents have been received and all conditions have been met.

Penn Valley Union Elementary School District  
MASTER AGREEMENT FOR INDEPENDENT STUDY PROGRAM

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Beginning Date \_\_\_\_\_ Ending Date \_\_\_\_\_ Total Days \_\_\_\_\_

Scheduled Date of Return to School (work due) \_\_\_\_\_

Reason For Independent Study \_\_\_\_\_

Does the student have an active IEP? :  Yes  No

If checked Yes:

Date of IEP: \_\_\_\_\_ Case Manager: \_\_\_\_\_

*\*if student has an active IEP please allow 3 weeks for processing*

Objective:

- Independent Study is a voluntary optional alternative in which no pupil may be required to participate; a classroom option will always be available to the child.
- The legal requirements are the same for both short-term and long-term Independent Study.
- The purpose is to provide an alternative to classroom instruction that responds to the student's individual needs. It is supposed to provide the student with curriculum that is the same as or superior to classroom instruction.
- Penn Valley Union Elementary School District will provide teacher services, instructional materials and other necessary items and resources as specified for each assignment.
- **All assigned work is due on the scheduled date of the student's return to school in accordance with the Independent Study Contract.**

Agreement: We have read pages 1 and 2 of this Agreement and hereby agree to all of the conditions set forth (all signatures required).

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

\*Case Manager – Special Education Department (Name: ) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Case Manager: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Informal IEP meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Date Work Returned \_\_\_\_\_

Principal \_\_\_\_\_ Admin Review \_\_\_\_\_

Attendance Clerk \_\_\_\_\_ Date Recorded \_\_\_\_\_



**Student:**

I understand and agree to:

- Independent Study is a form of education that I have chosen.
- I am entitled to textbooks and supplies, supervision by my teacher, and all the services and resources received by other children enrolled in my grade at school.
- Complete my assigned work by its due date as explained by my teacher and described in my written assignments.
- Attendance credit is proportional to the school work completed.
- If I do not complete all assignments, my incomplete work will result in review of my agreement and I may not be able to continue or ask for another Independent Study Program.
- I must follow the discipline code and behavior guidelines of the school district
- I have the same rights as any student of the school district.

Student's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Guardian:**

I understand that the major objective of the Independent Study is to provide a voluntary educational alternative for my son or daughter. I understand and agree to the conditions listed above under "Student." I understand that:

- Learning objectives are consistent with and evaluated in the same manner that they would be if my child were enrolled in a traditional school program.
- Unless otherwise indicated, a teacher will meet with my son or daughter and me on a regular basis to direct and measure progress. The time and location of meetings with the teacher or supervisor will be determined by the teacher or supervisor in consultation with me and my son or daughter.
- To ensure that my child's Independent Study is consistent with traditional schooling, I need to encourage him or her to meet more than the minimum study requirements.
- I am liable for the cost of replacement or repair of damaged or lost books and other materials that are checked out to my son or daughter.
- If my child has an Individualized Education Program (IEP), the IEP must specifically provide for his or her enrollment in Independent Study.
- I am responsible for the supervision of my child while he or she is completing the assigned work and for ensuring the submission of all completed assignments necessary for evaluation.
- It is my responsibility to provide any needed transportation to the school site for my child.
- I will participate in necessary and appropriate meetings regarding my child(ren)'s program of study.
- I have the right to appeal to the school administrator any decision about my child's placement or school program in accordance with the school district's procedures.

Parent/Guardian's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Penn Valley Union Elementary School District  
 INDEPENDENT STUDY PROGRAM ASSIGNMENT SHEET**

Student \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Contract Dates \_\_\_\_\_ Return of Work \_\_\_\_\_

Work time Required: Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Min/Hrs \_\_\_\_\_ Spring Break (3/26-3/30)

<b>SUBJECT TITLE – DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>ASSIGNED TIME</b> *TOTAL calculated: Hrs and Min multiplied by Days*	<b>EARNED TIME</b> *TOTAL calculated: Hrs and Min multiplied by Days*	<b>GRADE</b>
Reading:	Hrs:____ Min:____ Days:____ TOTAL:	Hrs:____ Min:____ Days:____ TOTAL:	
Language Arts/Writing/Spelling:	Hrs:____ Min:____ Days:____ TOTAL:	Hrs:____ Min:____ Days:____ TOTAL:	
Math:	Hrs:____ Min:____ Days:____ TOTAL:	Hrs:____ Min:____ Days:____ TOTAL:	
Social Studies:	Hrs:____ Min:____ Days:____ TOTAL:	Hrs:____ Min:____ Days:____ TOTAL:	
Science/Health:	Hrs:____ Min:____ Days:____ TOTAL:	Hrs:____ Min:____ Days:____ TOTAL:	
PE:	Hrs:____ Min:____ Days:____ TOTAL:	Hrs:____ Min:____ Days:____ TOTAL:	
Fine Arts:	Hrs:____ Min:____ Days:____ TOTAL:	Hrs:____ Min:____ Days:____ TOTAL:	
Other:	Hrs:____ Min:____ Days:____ TOTAL:	Hrs:____ Min:____ Days:____ TOTAL:	
<b>TOTAL ATTENDANCE HOURS/DAYS</b> *Total is calculated: Hrs and Min divided by number of days on independent study *	Hrs:____ + Min:____ ÷ _____ Days TOTAL:	Hrs:____ + Min:____ ÷ _____ Days TOTAL:	

**\*\*\*If student has an active IEP, consult with case manager and case manager will sign this page\*\*\***  
 Reviewed by Case Manager Sign Here: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_