A critical analysis of independent study

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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF
INDEPENDENT STUDY

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of The Requirements for the Degree
Masters of Arts
in
Educational Administration

by
Efrain M. Lopez
March 1995
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF INDEPENDENT STUDY

A Project
Presented to the Faculty of California State University, San Bernardino

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ABSTRACT

California public schools offer a wide range of alternative education programs designed to meet the diverse needs of the student population. One of those alternatives is independent study which offers individualized instruction tailored to the student learning abilities and needs.

This paper will aid you in what the legal requirements are for starting an independent study alternative at your school. It will also explain how to staff this alternative as well as the screening and enrollment procedures. Another focus of this paper is attendance accounting and the audit trail—a critical link to needed apportionment. It will explain the difference between academic and attendance credit and how a student earns each. Since independent study is an alternative instructional strategy and not an alternative curriculum, it will emphasize the teacher’s role in assessing the student’s progress in the independent study option.

By reading this paper, you should have a firm foundation for beginning an independent study alternative at your school site.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ................................................................. iii
Review of Literature ...................................................... 1
Chapter One: Introduction .............................................. 3
Instruction Through Independent Study ............................... 4
Chapter Two: Legal Requirements and Local Board Policy .... 6
The Consequences of Having Independent Study .................... 7
Administrative Regulations .............................................. 7
Chapter Three: Staffing .................................................. 10
Staffing Characteristics ............................................... 10
Independent Study Director ........................................... 11
Independent Study Coordinator ....................................... 12
Supervising Teacher ..................................................... 12
Adjust Staff ............................................................... 13
Additional Resource Personnel ........................................ 14
Staffing Ratios .......................................................... 14
Staff Development ....................................................... 15
Chapter Four: Ongoing Operations ................................... 16
Student Recruitment ..................................................... 16
Screening and Assessment of Potential Students ................. 17
Enrollment ............................................................... 18
Orientation ............................................................... 18
Teacher-Student Contacts ............................................. 19
Record Keeping .......................................................... 19
Chapter Five: Instruction and Curriculum .................. 20
Assessing the Student's Progress .............................. 23
Curriculum Standards ........................................... 25
Chapter Six: Attendance Accounting and the Audit Trail 27
Attendance Credit ............................................... 27
Attendance Registers .......................................... 29
Academic Credit ................................................. 29
Master Agreement ............................................... 30
Work Samples .................................................... 33
Lesson Plans ..................................................... 33
Appendix A ....................................................... 34
Appendix B ....................................................... 46
Appendix C ....................................................... 49
References ....................................................... 51
A common misconception about public education is that parents believe that they have little or no choice within the education system. Not only do people assume that children must attend the school in the area in which they reside, but they further presume that everyone at that school gets the same educational program, leaving parents little flexibility to pick the best educational opportunity for their child (Parker, 1993).

In fact, the public school system is a gathering of educational programs, each designed for a specific educational need, together providing a wide range of opportunities for the diverse needs of California students (Walberg, 1985). Many of these programs are designed for at-risk students; others are for gifted students or those who have special needs. They all serve the special needs of these students.

It is estimated that 35-45 percent of the 5.1 million public school students in California in 1991-1992 were in alternative schools or in some kind of other program being offered by the school district (Parker, 1993). In the 1991-1992 school year California had approximately 40,000 students, kindergarten through high school, in the independent study programs.

Independent study offers individualized instruction tailored to fit the need of the student which should allow the student to learn at his or her own pace outside of the regular classroom setting (Ingle, 1993). But, it has been
found that independent study is not for everyone. It is not necessarily appropriate for every pupil because some do not possess what it takes to succeed in the independent study option. The prerequisite for a pupil’s success in independent study includes factors such as the ability to receive instructions and information from an instructor and be able to complete the assignments given.

Another prerequisite is possession of sufficient self-discipline or self-direction to remain focused on the task long enough to complete the assignment (Bacon, 1990).

Independent study is a much-needed viable option for students to meet the compulsory education requirement. It allows for flexibility while still maintaining the same curriculum standards as its counterparts in the traditional classroom setting.
INTRODUCTION

Independent study was originally developed for child actors who, due to their filming schedule, could not attend a traditional classroom. The program has evolved into a multifaceted instructional strategy for students who, for a variety of reasons, cannot attend the traditional classroom.

Independent study is an alternative to classroom instruction consistent with the school district’s course of study and is not an alternative curriculum. It provides individual students with a choice of ways to acquire the values, skills, and knowledge that all students should gain as provided for in the written agreement. Independent study can be part of, separate from, or in addition to a regular classroom program.

The primary aim of independent study is to offer a means of individualizing the educational plan for pupils whose needs may be best met through study outside the regular classroom setting (Briscoe, 1977). All pupils who are motivated to achieve educationally as well as or better than they would in the regular classroom may choose independent study.

A contractual agreement is drawn among the certificated teacher, the student, and the parent or guardian. The written agreement defines the educational objectives, lists the curriculum (textbooks and resource materials) to be used, and addresses the activities and resources to be used. The
agreement must adhere to school board policy and legal requirements.

**Instruction Through Independent Study:**

1. Allows students to study at their own pace within the limits of the compulsory attendance requirements.
2. Creates a bridge between the school and the community.
3. Challenges each student to excel in his or her area of special interest and ability.
4. Provides an alternative for students to achieve competency and mastery in basic skills.
5. Allows children to be educated at home.
6. Encourages the student to be resourceful.
7. Facilitates the student's active participation in his or her own education.
8. Offers real flexibility in the design of an educational program.

For easy reference, Appendix A cites the relevant sections of the *Education Code* and the *California Code of Regulations, Title 5*, that authorize independent study. Enrollment in independent study must be voluntary; a choice made by the student and the teachers.

Because of the flexible nature of independent study, each site administrator has the opportunity to develop independent study options in his or her own way. Parents and students may also develop alternative forms of independent
study and propose them to the responsible educator or school board. The options are based on the kinds of students being served. The following are some of the ways in which independent study is organized:

1. School-within-a-school
2. District or county alternative in a community location
3. School-based independent study offered part time and full-time
4. Countywide home-based independent study offered by the county superintendent of schools
5. District dropout prevention centers at selected community sites
6. Curricular enrichment options offered to high school students with special abilities and interests, scheduling problems, or individual needs that cannot be met in the regular classroom.

Independent study can be operated on a traditional school calendar, or on a year-round calendar within a year-round school.
Before implementing independent study, one of the first concerns the district and governing board must consider is whether it will be offered as a separate school or as an alternative education strategy within a school. Considerations will vary with the size of the district, the extent of site enrollment, and the attitudes of concerned administrators and teachers. The district should gather as much information as possible about the requirements and implementation of this option. This can be achieved by becoming familiar with the Department of Education's Independent Study Operations Manual and visiting several different schools that offer independent study and observing their program. Representatives from the California Consortium on Independent Study would also be able to provide a wealth of information as well as the representatives from the State Department of Education in Sacramento.

The California Code of Regulations, Title 5, effective October 15, 1990, requires that the governing board consider, in a public hearing, the scope and purposes of its existing or prospective use of independent study. Before establishing independent study as an optional instructional strategy, the governing board must consider:
The Consequences Of Having Independent Study

1. Will the district lose or gain needed revenue based on average daily attendance (ADA) if it adopts the independent study option? Many schools have already discovered that by having an independent study option they can easily supplement the school’s revenue. There are many families who either have filed an affidavit with the State and are teaching their children at home using their own curriculum or they have their children enrolled in a religious-based home school program. By offering independent study, a district may be able to draw these families into the mainstream and gain additional revenue that would otherwise be lost to the private sector.

2. Will the district’s decision create positive or negative public relations?

3. Will independent study achieve improved staff morale through the process of staff selection? In other words, are the staff members voluntarily placed in independent study and are they the best qualified to service the students, or is independent study viewed as a "dumping ground" for problem students and staff alike?

Administrative Regulations

When a governing board adopts a policy to offer independent study, the board also needs to establish related
administrative regulations. Rules, regulations, procedures, and forms that are current and legally compliant provide the needed structure for efficient, high-quality instruction through independent study. The board should review the legal requirements before taking steps to establish or revise the administrative regulations. Periodic review of the board policy will enable the district to maintain a legally compliant and educationally effective independent study option in order to avoid legal entanglements or penalties for the school district. The following questions reflect factors for periodic review:

1. Are there any new or different needs related to independent study?
2. Is the district or county office able to respond to the needs for funding, staffing, facilities, equipment, materials, and community support?
3. Do the existing regulations satisfy those whom they directly affect: administrators, teachers, counselors, students, and parents.
4. Do the existing regulations reflect a philosophy about education that is in need of either revision or replacement?
5. Are the organizational structures appropriate for obtaining the desired results for all students?
6. Is independent study staffed with a sufficient number of qualified staff who have been voluntarily placed in this alternative option.
7. Do the required independent study forms need to be revised?

8. Do the requirements for handling permanent records and creating an audit trail reflect state law and regulations as well as district or county regulations? (See Section 11703 of the California Code of Regulations, Title 5, in Appendix A, page 45).

9. Do the administrative regulations address the specific groups or categories of students who are, or are not, eligible for independent study? Regulations should both protect students from unwarranted exclusion and standardize eligibility rules or criteria for enrollment.

Eligibility rules should include clear statements about expected aptitudes and readiness and specify grounds that cannot be used to exclude students from participation. It is illegal to exclude a pupil from an alternative school on the basis of his or her previous classroom performance whether it be academic or behavioral (E.C. Section 58504) as well as on the basis of race, sex, or ethnic characteristics.
Since independent study is designed to meet specific student and school needs, organization and staffing will differ from traditional schools. When it comes to staffing, it is considered to be one of the most important issues. The school board must consider the student population characteristics, especially learning styles and needs, program size, facilities, budget, and resources when staffing independent study. Various levels and categories of employed staff can be considered for independent study. Clerical support is imperative not only for successful office management but also for the maintenance of students files, transcripts, and a complete audit trail.

A sure way to have a successful program is to staff independent study with individuals who understand and appreciate the purpose and importance of independent study. The staff must be skilled in the tutorial/counseling relationship with students and be at ease in dealing with parents, guardians, and others in a partnership kind of relationship. Independent study must also have an appropriately qualified, credentialed employee designated as the representative of the governing board such as the independent study director, principal, or supervising teacher.

Staffing Characteristics

Because of the nature of independent study, all employ-
ees, certificated as well as classified, should possess the following attributes in order to implement an effective program:

- Empathetic toward all students, especially the underachievers
- Strong in curriculum development with a lot of creativity
- Flexible in dealing with the wide variety of students
- Able to interact with and provide in-service assistance for parents
- Reliable, self-motivated, and self-directed
- Good listeners and skilled counselors
- Academically prepared in several areas (i.e., English, mathematics, social studies, science, work experience)
- Familiar with community resources that can be used
- Skilled in record keeping and accurate with paperwork
- Proficient in meeting deadlines and keeping schedules
- Enthusiastic

**Independent Study Director**

The individual selected to oversee the program should have the responsibility for general supervision of development, operations, and evaluation at the policy-making level. That individual is responsible for the implementation of board policy and administrative rules and regulations and for the coordination and evaluation of independent study for all the students. Oftentimes the responsibility may be suitable
for the person responsible for the direction of alternative education, such as the Director of Continuation Education in a unified or high school district, or the key administrator for instructional services at the elementary level. It would be counterproductive to diffuse the responsibility for administration of independent study through several offices because the function becomes a low priority.

**Independent Study Coordinator**

It doesn't matter whether the coordinator is an administrator or a lead teacher. That individual should have his/her duties clearly stated and specifically assigned as to the functions which are essential in a legally compliant and quality educational alternative. Some of these functions include responsibility for the written agreement with each student and for the documents, such as work samples, that become the legal record of the student's effort and achievement which are mandated for an audit trail. The coordinator is also responsible for implementation of assigned policy and administrative regulations on a continuing basis. The position of coordinator should be undertaken by someone who voluntarily accepts the assignment and who possesses the attitudes and abilities to handle multiple duties without losing sight of the student's educational needs and goals.

**Supervising Teacher**

The supervising teacher must be an employee of the
district, possess a valid teaching credential, and be voluntarily assigned to the position. This position does not require the usual grade level and subject specification as is required for all other teaching positions (i.e. single subject at the secondary level or liberal arts for elementary education). A more detailed job description of the supervising teacher is located in the Ongoing Operations chapter of this critique.

**Adjunct Staff**

Counseling services are an integral part of the independent study strategy. Since most independent study students have a close relationship with their independent study teacher because of the one-to-one contact, they often approach their supervising teacher with personal, academic, or career concerns. Therefore, it is important to employ independent study teachers who are trained in appropriate counseling techniques if enrollment and budget constraints don't warrant a full-time counselor.

The specific types of counseling services will vary depending on the needs of the student population. Students in kindergarten through grade 8 may have socialization needs which are not being met through independent study. This is often the case at the elementary level and, therefore, personal counseling may be necessary to build self-esteem and other interpersonal skills. Secondary students, on the other hand, may need extensive career guidance counseling. Some of
the areas of counseling services which should be included in the program and offered to all students are: 1) academic counseling, 2) assessment services (i.e. Individualized Education Program), 3) personal counseling, 4) career awareness and job counseling, and 5) staff in-service assistance.

Other adjunct staff are also necessary to perform a variety of duties depending on the size of the enrollment and the abilities and time constraints of the certificated staff. For example, instructional aides could assist in tutoring students and clerical staff could maintain student records, follow up on student absences and compile attendance accounting, reproduce instructional materials, assist with enrollment and exiting procedures, as well as handle the general office duties.

**Additional Resource Personnel**

It takes a variety of other available personnel to assist in the effective implementation of an independent study strategy. School and other librarians could assist with issuance of textbooks; retired teachers might be willing to assist as volunteers; there may be employers who see the value of “hands-on-learning” and who will cooperate with a work experience program; and retired tradesmen who could offer instruction and training in a particular field.

**Staffing Ratios**

Staffing ratios for independent study students to
certificated employees of the school district should not exceed the equivalent ratio for all other education programs, including the traditional classroom, operated by the district. The law (Education Code Section 51745.6, Appendix A, page 41) sets a limit on the student-to-teacher ratio which is usually 25:1 up to 30:1. Assigning more students per teacher tends to result in diminished academic effort and reduced satisfaction on the part of the teachers, students, and parents or guardians concerned. Also, higher ratios do not produce increased revenue based on average daily attendance (ADA) than ratios in the optimum range.

**Staff Development**

By far, one of the most important items in the implementation of an effective and quality independent study program is having adequate in-service training, supervision, and support for the staff. All new staff should attend an orientation of the policies and procedures which govern the independent study strategy and have training services available to them. Many districts have written a handbook based on the California Department of Education's Operations Manual on Independent Study and their respective district's administrative rules and regulations.
Student Recruitment

To establish a new independent study program, the district needs to inform the community of the services and benefits it can provide to families through the independent study alternative. This can be done through various ways: 1) intradistrict information dissemination and staff development, 2) publicity through local newspapers, flyers, and radio, and 3) by word of mouth. Many parents and students who have been previously involved in an independent study alternative are eager to share their success stories with other parents and students. Unfortunately, often times the information is incorrectly given by well-meaning parents.

To ensure the proper dissemination of information and to attract good students, it’s important to include the following concepts in the recruitment materials.

- It is an optional educational strategy in which no student may be required to attend.
- There are regular meetings scheduled between parent or guardian, student, and the supervising teacher.
- Independent study curriculum satisfies the requirements for high school graduation.
- Independent study gives students an opportunity to pursue a given project on their own.
- Independent study helps students become better learners.
These materials could be in the form of a flyer or brochure, or perhaps several documents available at an orientation meeting for all interested parents and students.

**Screening and Assessment of Potential Students**

It is important to screen and assess potential students to determine if they have the maturity and basic skills necessary to be successful in the program. Equally important is for independent study administrators and teachers to guard against involuntary or inappropriate referrals to independent study. Before the screening session, the supervising teacher should review the student’s cumulative file to obtain achievement records, especially mathematics and reading scores; an individualized education program (IEP), if appropriate; and any other assessment tests to determine if the student has the basic skills necessary.

At the screening session, the student and parent must both be present. This is especially true in the case of students interested in the home independent study alternative. Students and parents must be in agreement with the placement into independent study and both must have a clear understanding of their own responsibilities and expectations in achieving their goals. It must also be clearly explained to the student and parent what the conditions and terms of the master agreement are.
Enrollment

Once it is determined by the screening process that independent study is an appropriate placement, the student must then enroll in the option. If the independent study alternative has been established as a school of its own, then the student would enroll in that school. If the independent study alternative has been established as an alternative strategy with the existing school, as is the case in a "host school" concept, then the student would enroll in that school if he or she hasn't already done so. The host school may establish a procedure to "transfer" the student to independent study for record keeping purposes.

At the time of the enrollment, the student and parent must both be present to sign the written agreement and other related documents signifying their willing participation in independent study and agreement to the terms and conditions set forth in the written agreement. An appointment time is also set for regularly scheduled meetings between the student, parent or guardian, and the supervising teacher in which the student's progress can be assessed and evaluated.

Orientation

The orientation meeting serves several purposes: 1) explain the roles and responsibilities of the teacher, student, and parent, 2) answer questions or concerns, 3) explain the purpose and frequency of the meetings, 4) determine the educational plan and review the lesson plans, 5) explain the
teacher's assessment of the student's work, and 6) distribute textbooks, if necessary.

**Teacher-Student Contacts**

The supervising teacher is responsible for meeting with the student and parent or guardian on a regular basis to evaluate and assess the assigned work and assign lesson plans for the next time period. Initially, the supervising teacher should meet with the parent/guardian and pupil or student to determine the educational needs and goals of the pupil or student. At that meeting, it should be determined whether the pupil or student is at or below grade level and an appropriate lesson plan should be developed based on the State's framework of curriculum.

**Record Keeping**

Where feasible, the options in the state regulations should be supplemented by regulations of local choice. Records may be located at the central district or county office or at the school or independent study center off-site.

Good record keeping is not only required but also necessary for the success of the student and the program as a whole. Students and supervisors need to know what work has been accomplished and what remains to be done. Most importantly, good record keeping must be maintained for auditing purposes to support average daily attendance reports.
INSTRUCTION AND CURRICULUM

Independent study is an alternative instructional strategy, not an alternative curriculum. Independent study will provide the opportunity to design a program of study that is more responsive to the academic, personal and social needs of the individual students than some traditional approaches. This option allows students the freedom to explore, research, and to develop skills based on their individual needs and interests. The student’s needs and interests will be reflected in the written agreement that is drawn up for each and every student before they start the program. Both the student and the parent can have input into the kinds of completed work assignments for which the student will be held responsible and which will demonstrate what has been learned, what skill or competency has been acquired, or what knowledge has been gained.

Curriculum development for independent study should be undertaken with the understanding that its purpose is not to develop a separate curriculum but to provide an instructional alternative for quality education consistent with district guidelines. Independent study students may need a different approach to the educational process that takes into consideration their learning styles, interest, and ages, but basically the students are no different from other students in similar situations. Evaluating the work is necessary for ADA purposes; academic credit is based on the completed work and
the level of mastery that the student displays. To simply say "Complete this book and you will earn one unit of credit" does not meet quality guidelines. The student needs to complete the activities that go with assigned readings and demonstrate through an appropriate assessment process that learning has taken place; that is, skills have been learned, knowledge has been obtained, and positive attitudes have been developed. The student needs to demonstrate competency in the subject area that indicates the student is ready for the next step in the educational process.

Significant resources for curriculum development and instructional improvement are the State’s framework and model curriculum guides. The curriculum adopted, or developed for independent study must reflect the established standards and be evident in student’s results. The curriculum for independent study will typically have flexible components because, ideally, each lesson plan is tailored to the student’s particular learning style.

One of the many goals of independent study is to help meet the demands of the workplace. It is the school’s responsibility to insure that the educational program prepares students to be responsible citizens and to be productive employees and to also help them develop the social skills to be able to function in society. It is important that students are able to see the connection between school and the world of work. Curriculum developers must understand the knowledge
and skill levels needed in the workplace and the expectations that employers have and incorporate that information into the curriculum planning. The course content should prepare them for college, but must also provide for the non-college-bound students.

Assignments need to be structured so that they can be reviewed and evaluated in terms of the student’s competencies and productivity. One way to implement this process is to employ teachers who have classroom experience who write curriculum for and to supervise students. These teachers would have standards based on classroom experience by which to develop or adapt curriculum. Clear learning objectives should be outlined for every student and group of students.

Often a school’s size, needs, and budget will determine what courses will be offered. These conditions may necessitate finding alternative ways to deliver the curriculum. For example, a regular classroom foreign language teacher could teach foreign language on an as-needed basis after the regular school day. Foreign language could then be added to the independent study course offerings without requiring extensive curriculum development or making other expensive purchases. If other courses need extensive curriculum development, mentor teachers may be brought in to do this as part of their mentor assignments.

Teachers need a variety of options to develop a curriculum that will appeal to the students while it expands their knowledge, increase their competencies, and at the same time
meets traditional goals. Independent study is the ideal medium for rekindling the curiosity of a bored teen, or helping the returning student develop real-life skills while earning credits toward a high school diploma. The California Department of Education’s curriculum frameworks and related publications can and should be used in achieving flexible and imaginative curricula. Independent study teachers can work with vocational and the business community people to develop curricula to assist student’s transition to the world of work. They could also develop specialized curricula to assist work experience students in gaining the knowledge and skills they need to become successful in their chosen vocational fields.

One other very important factor to keep in mind when considering the curriculum for an independent study program is to ensure that the instruction maintains the same standards as the traditional school. So that the student will be able to attend college if he or she wishes to do so.

Assessing The Student’s Progress

In the business world, employees are valued for the tasks or projects they complete, their ability to work well with others, and their responses to problem situations. In order to prepare students for future success, both curriculum and assessment must be performance-based so that students have the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge and skills by performing tasks directly related to established standards.
Although at times multiple-choice tests are appropriate, more emphasis needs to be placed on assessment of skills which requires students to demonstrate more explicitly that they can use their knowledge to solve problems and communicate the results of their learning. With an emphasis on writing across the curriculum, courses besides English could include assessments by oral, written, or audiovisual presentations, essays, portfolios, projects, photographic journals, and laboratory reports.

The assessment process must ensure that student progress is measurable and that the teacher can document that learning has occurred. The curriculum must include activities which promote the development of critical thinking and problem solving abilities. The assessments should measure the development of these processes and abilities.

Also essential to successful assessment in independent studies is the appropriate and effective use of student portfolios. Portfolios can provide:

- Evidence of performance beyond factual knowledge gained
- Assessment records that reflect the emphases of a good instructional program
- A permanent and long-term record of a student’s progress, and reflecting the lifelong nature of learning
- A clear and understandable picture, instead of a mysterious test score number.
• Opportunities for improved student self-image as a result of showing accomplishments rather than deficiencies.
• Recognition of different learning styles, making assessment less culture dependent and less biased.
• An active role for students in assessing and selecting their work.

The teacher should look at many different portfolios before trying to establish a standard of assessment. Because portfolios should reflect the instructional goals of each situation, the detailed description will vary from portfolio to portfolio.

Curriculum Standards

A course traditionally is a unit of work that a student completes in a semester or during a prescribed period of time. Learning activities should enable a student to complete the course objectives and earn credit or receive a grade-level promotion at a rate equal to that of the average student in the traditional classroom. Credits are awarded on the basis of the equivalent to a semester period or the content equivalent to a semester period. (California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Section 1600.)

Some of the following could be required as part of the evaluation process before credit or grade-level promotion is given.
• Demonstration of mastery of the subject at the appropriate level
• An oral or written test, report or project
• A student’s portfolio
ATTENDANCE ACCOUNTING
AND THE AUDIT TRAIL

Attendance Credit

Until the student agrees to the study objectives and the master agreement is dated and signed by all the required participants, no attendance can be claimed. Since there is no seat time in independent study, the only item that counts for independent study attendance credit is evaluated work that was completed and submitted by the due dates established in the written agreement. When the student submits or demonstrates the evidence of work accomplished in the achievement of set objectives, the teacher credits the student with attendance. No credit for attendance can be reported for ADA purposes until the work is done. When a student is learning or otherwise actively engaged in anything related to his or her attainment of the objectives of the signed written agreement such as taking a test, discussing or correcting an assignment, viewing pertinent videotapes, listening to audiotapes, or working on a computer, the time may be counted for attendance purposes on the basis of what the student has accomplished.

Attendance for the independent study must be recorded in a separate register (California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Section 11703(b)(4), Appendix A, page 45). The district’s procedures must prevent the claiming of any combination of classroom and independent study attendance credits that would
exceed one day apportionment credit per day of instruction in the school’s calendar (Education Code Section 46300(e), Appendix A, page 38).

Examples of a combination program include: when a high school student in independent study needs to take a course that is not offered through independent study, such as a laboratory science; or when a graduating senior needs a course that cannot be included in the schedule in a classroom instructional mode, but can be taken through independent study.

The combination of independent study and classroom study to make up a day of attendance will create an administrative challenge when both must be counted to total at least a minimum day of attendance credit. When a student is enrolled predominantly in independent study, attendance accounting will be more manageable in most situations if a course that is taught in a classroom setting is handled as student study and the resulting accomplishments are recorded as part of independent study thereby avoiding dual recording and reporting.

Students who submit completed work over and above the required assignment may not "bank" that attendance credit for any future assignments not completed. Likewise, students may not make up missed work for a previous assignment period in order to receive attendance credit. However, academic credit should be given for all completed assignments.

There are no excused absences in independent study because students are able to work at any time during that
assignment period. In the event a student is ill and unable to work, academic credit may be granted for any work which is "made-up", but no credit may be given for attendance.

**Attendance Registers**

Teachers are responsible for maintaining accurate attendance records for ADA purposes. After the teacher meets with the student and collects the assigned work, the teacher records the number of hours for attendance credit based on the amount of work submitted by the student. At that time the teacher also evaluates and assesses the student's work and records the academic credit (grade) as well. It is up to the teacher's discretion to give the appropriate amount of attendance credit based on the amount of completed work submitted. If only half of the assignment was completed, the teacher may only give half of the attendance credit. Credit may only be given in full-day increments. For example, a student completing half of an assignment (equalling 10 hours at task) may only be credited on the attendance register with eight hours of attendance credit. Therefore any student not completing the full assignment is short-changing him- or herself. Attendance credit may not be made up, however, the work can be made up for academic credit.

**Academic Credit**

Confusion between attendance credit and academic credit must be avoided. Attendance credit, reported by the school district or county office in average daily attendance (ADA)
units or, for some programs, in hours, generates an appor-
tionment of revenue for that district or county office. The
credit is based on minimum requirements for a student’s
presence in school. Academic credit is based on academic
achievement, assessed in terms of competency or knowledge
and skills achieved and demonstrated according to the
criteria that have been determined in advance. And though
both are called credit, attendance credit leads to appor-
tionment or revenue for the district, and academic credit
leads to a record of progress or promotion toward high school
graduation requirements.

**Master Agreement**

The basic and most important document contained in the
student’s file for the audit trail is the written master
agreement. The written agreement serves as authorization for
the student to participate in independent study in lieu of
the regular classroom. It also designates the certificated
person who is directly responsible for the student as well as
the student’s and parent’s or guardian’s responsibilities.
The agreement must include the following:

1) The “*time, manner, and frequency*” per *Education
Code 51747* of the regular meetings between the
student, parent or guardian, and the supervising
teacher. The law does not require weekly meetings,
but rather planned and scheduled reporting times be
arranged based on the student’s and/or parent’s
needs. Some students are very responsible and work
very well independently and, therefore, may not need to meet as often as a first-time parent with a first-grade student. The first-time parent and student may need a lot of help with teaching techniques and may need to meet with the supervising teacher more often. It is strongly suggested that a weekly face-to-face meeting be required of all participants. This allows the supervising teacher to quickly evaluate and assess each student’s work progress and adjust lesson plans to meet the student’s needs. It also provides for better accountability between the district and the community.

2) **The objectives for the course of study.** If the district has a clearly defined course objectives document, then a brief statement referencing that document will satisfy this requirement. If not, a document containing the objectives based on the State framework should be included as part of, or an addendum to, the written master agreement.

3) **The method of study** can include field trips, art or science fairs, special activities, and in-services.

4) **The specific resources,** including materials and personnel available to the student. This list must include the textbooks, supplemental books, and instructional materials and supplies to be used by the student. These should be items that would normally be offered to students in the classroom for the same grade level.
5) **The method of evaluation** used by the teacher to assess the student's progress. A checklist format is acceptable, but it should include space for written comments by the teacher.

6) **The assignment due date.** The agreement should state the number of days or weeks allowed between the date the assignment is given and the date the work is to be completed. Also to be included is the number of missed assignments and/or meetings which will be allowed before the student is dropped from independent study.

7) **The duration of the agreement.** This should include the beginning and ending dates of the student's participation. This period is not to exceed one semester or six-months if on year-round school. Each semester or six-month period, a new written master agreement must be executed by all participating individuals.

8) **The number of course credits** to be earned if the student reaches all of the outlined objectives.

9) **A statement that independent study is an optional educational alternative** and that the student has the option of returning to the classroom at any given time.

10) **Signatures** of the student, parent/guardian, certificated person, and any other persons having responsibility for providing assistance to the student. All of the above documents are to be kept for a period
of 3 years. The student's cumulative file is to be kept permanently.

**Lesson Plans**

Lesson plans are to be written by the teacher, not the parent or student. These plans are to correspond to the district's course of study and are important for the student to meet the objectives set forth by the district for completion of the respective grade level. Some parents in the home study environment want to write their own lesson plans to include religious teachings, but this is clearly illegal and not to be allowed. Parents can, and should, have input into their child's education and can work together with the teacher to come up with a lesson plan that will best suit their child's needs.

**Work Samples**

Work samples are an integral part of the teacher's assessment of the student's progress as well as an important determinant in claiming apportionment. These samples, one from each subject matter, should be collected regularly and kept in the student's file. It is not necessary to keep all of the completed work submitted by the student but rather a random sampling of the student's abilities. Some teachers keep all of the completed assignments in the event a student later has a question about his or her grade, but it is not necessary for auditing purposes.
Legal Citations for Independent Study

California Constitution
California Constitution, Article IX, Section 6
California Constitution, Article IX, Section 8

Education Code
33031. Rules and regulations
35160. Authority of governing boards commencing January 1, 1976
35256. School accountability report card
39141.9. Exemption for facilities used for independent study; requirements; duration of exemption
41976.2. Independent study programs; funding
44809. School register
44865. Qualifications for home teachers and teachers in special classes and schools; consent to assignment
46100. Length of school day
46147. Exemption for certain pupils in grade 12 to attend less than minimum school day
46201. Apportionment per unit of average daily attendance; formulas
46300(e). [Authority for claiming independent study ADA]
46300.1. Restrictions affecting adults on independent study
46300.2. Community school and independent study ADA apportionment of funds; residence requirements
46300.3. Independent study pupils; apportionment for concurrent enrollment in adult education
46300.4. Independent study pupils; eligible adult education coursework
46300.6. Restrictions on apportionment of funds for independent study program pupils
46300.7. Permission of parents or guardians of independent study program pupils; requirements
48206.3 Pupils with temporary disabilities [individual instruction; definitions]
48340. Legislative intent; proposals and procedures [pupil attendance]
51225.3. Requirements for graduation commencing with 1988-89 school year
52206. [GATE] Program approaches; minimum time; academic component

Article 5.5 Independent Study
51745. Independent study authorized; curriculum; restrictions
51745.6 Ratio of independent study pupils to certificated employees responsible for independent study
51746. Services and resources
51747. Apportionments for independent study pupils; policy requirements
51747.3. Restrictions on apportionments; residency requirements
51747.5. Coordination, evaluation, and supervision of independent study; apportionment credit
51748. Written records for apportionments
51749. Statewide profile of independent study pupils
51749.3. Rules and regulations
51749.5. Operative date of article

Chapter 6.5 County Community Schools
1980. Maintenance by county board of education
1981. Enrollment of pupils
1983. Courses of study; classes and programs

California Code of Regulations, Title 5
Subchapter 13. Independent Study Programs
11700. Definition
11701. District Responsibilities
11702. Agreements
11703. Records
California Constitution

California Constitution, Article IX, Section 6

No school or college or any other part of the Public School System shall be, directly or indirectly, transferred from the Public School System or placed under the jurisdiction of any authority other than one included within the Public School System.

California Constitution, Article IX, Section 8

No public money shall ever be appropriated for the support of any sectarian or denominational school, or any school not under the exclusive control of the officers of the public schools.

Education Code

33031. Rules and regulations

The board shall adopt rules and regulations not inconsistent with the laws of this state (a) for its own government, (b) for the government of its appointees and employees, (c) for the government of the day and evening elementary schools, the day and evening secondary schools, and the technical and vocational schools of the state, and (d) for the government of other schools, excepting the University of California, the California State University, and the California Community Colleges, as may receive in whole or in part financial support from the state.

The rules and regulations adopted shall be published for distribution as soon as practicable after adoption.

(Amended by Stats. 1983, c. 143, § 19; Stats. 1990, c. 1372 (SB 1854) § 185.)

35160. Authority of governing boards commencing January 1, 1976

On and after January 1, 1976, the governing board of any school district may initiate and carry on any program, activity, or may otherwise act in any manner which is not in conflict with or inconsistent with, or preempted by, any law and which is not in conflict with the purposes for which school districts are established.

(Stats. 1976, c. 1010, § 2.)

35256. School accountability report card

The governing board of each school district maintaining an elementary or secondary school shall by September 30, 1989, or the beginning of the school year develop and cause to be implemented for each school in the school district a School Accountability Report Card.

(a) The School Accountability Report Card shall include, but is not limited to, the conditions listed in Education Code Section 33216.

(b) Not less than triennially, the governing board of each school district shall compare the content of the school district’s School Accountability Report Card adopted by the State Board of Education. Variances among school districts shall be permitted where necessary to account for local needs.

(c) The Governing Board of each school district shall annually issue a School Accountability Report Card for each school in the school district, publicize such reports, and notify parents or guardians of students that a copy will be provided upon request. (Added by Initiative Measure (Prop. 98) approved by the electors, Nov. 8, 1988.)

39141.9. Exemptions for facilities used for independent study; requirements; duration of exemption

In order to provide alternative, community-based educational opportunities through independent study, any school district or county office of education may request an exemption from the State Allocation Board for a building or structure, or portion of a building or structure, from the definition of “school buildings” within the meaning of Section 39141. The exemptions may be granted for no longer than two years and exemptions are renewable. An exemption may only be granted if the school district or county office of education demonstrates to the satisfaction of the State Allocation Board all of the following:

(a) The building or structure, or portion of building or structure, satisfies all of the following:

(1) It is not located on a regular school site.

(2) It complies with all applicable local building standards and all relevant local health and safety standards in the community in which it is located.

(3) It is used for independent study.

(4) It serves fewer than 25 pupils enrolled in kindergarten or any of the grades 1 to 12, inclusive, at any one time in the building or structure, or in a portion of a building or structure where the remainder of the building or structure is not used for instructional purposes.

(b) The use of the building or structure is critical to providing an effective alternative, community-based program.

(c) The use of other buildings or structures that would meet seismic safety standards for school facilities is not practical.

(Added by Stats. 1989, c. 1089, § 2.)

41976.2. Independent study programs; funding

Notwithstanding Section 41976, a school district may offer adult education courses and classes if the school district received funding in the 1991-92 fiscal year to conduct programs through independent study for persons 21 years of age or older and persons 19 years of age or older who have not been continuously enrolled in kindergarten, or any of grades 1 to 12, inclusive, since their 18th birthday.

(Added by Stats. 1992, c. 1195 (AB 1891), § 2.)
44809. School register

(a) A state school register shall be kept by every teacher in the public elementary schools, except a teacher in:

(1) A school in which the state school register of each teacher is kept on behalf of the teacher in a central office by an employee of the school district.

(2) A school in which a central file of individual records of pupil enrollment, absence, and attendance is maintained on forms containing at least the minimum information prescribed by the State Department of Education, and whose principal submits periodic reports of pupil personnel data to the city or district superintendent of schools, or, if no superintendent is employed in the district, to the county superintendent of schools on forms approved by the State Department of Education.

(b) There shall be recorded in each state school register the absence and attendance of each pupil enrolled in the classes taught by the teacher keeping the register or on whose behalf the register is kept and any additional information required by the State Department of Education.

(Stats. 1976, c. 101, § 2.)

44865. Qualifications for home teachers and teachers in special classes and schools; consent to assignment

A valid teaching credential issued by the State Board of Education or the Commission for Teacher Preparation and Licensing, based on a bachelor's degree, student teaching, and special fitness to perform, shall be deemed qualifying for assignment as a teacher in the following assignments, provided that the assignment of a teacher to a position for which qualifications are prescribed by this section shall be made only with the consent of the teacher:

(a) Home teacher.
(b) Classes organized primarily for adults.
(c) Hospital classes.
(d) Necessary small high schools.
(e) Continuation schools.
(f) Alternative schools.
(g) Opportunity schools.
(h) Juvenile court schools.
(i) County community schools.

(Stats. 1976, c. 101, § 2.)

46147. Exemption for certain pupils in grade 12 to attend less than minimum school day

Notwithstanding the 180-minute minimum day requirement of Section 46144, the governing board of any school district may permit a 12th-grade pupil in his or her last semester or quarter, as the case may be, before graduation, who is enrolled in a work experience education program approved under the provisions of Article 7 (commencing with Section 51760) of Chapter 5 of Part 28 and who would complete all of the requirements for graduation by attending high school, except courses of physical education, for less than 180 minutes each day, to attend high school for less than a minimum day of 180 minutes, upon the written request of a parent or legal guardian or upon his or her own request if the pupil is 18 years of age or over. If a pupil attends classes for less than 180 minutes per day pursuant to this section, the number of minutes actually attended per day shall be rounded down to the nearest multiple of 60. The average daily attendance allowed for that pupil's attendance shall bear the same proportion to one day of attendance as the number of minutes of attendance per day bears to 180.

(Stats. 1981, c. 1021, § 1; Stats. 1983, c. 498, § 79, eff. July 28, 1983.)

46201. Apportionment per unit of average daily attendance; formulas

(a) In each of the 1984-85, 1985-86, and 1986-87 fiscal years, for each school district that certifies to the Superintendent of Public Instruction that it offers at least the amount of instructional time specified in this subdivision at a grade level or levels, the Superintendent of Public Instruction shall determine an amount equal to twenty dollars ($20) per unit of current year second principal apportionment regular average daily attendance in kindergarten and grades 1 to 8, inclusive, and forty dollars ($40) per unit of current year second principal apportionment regular average daily attendance in grades 9 to 12, inclusive. This section shall not apply to adult average daily attendance, the average daily attendance for pupils attending summer school, alternative school, regional occupational centers and programs, continuation high schools, or opportunity schools, and the attendance of pupils while participating in community college or independent study programs.

(1) In the 1984-85 fiscal year, for kindergarten and each of grades 1 to 12, inclusive, the sum of subparagraphs (A) and (B):

(A) The number of instructional minutes offered at that grade level in the 1982-83 fiscal year.

(B) One-third of the difference between the number of minutes specified for that grade level in paragraph (3) and the number of instructional minutes offered at that grade level in the 1982-83 fiscal year.
(2) In the 1985-86 fiscal year, for kindergarten and each of grades 1 to 12, inclusive, the sum of subparagraphs (A) and (B):

(A) The number of instructional minutes offered at that grade level in the 1982-83 fiscal year.

(B) Two-thirds of the difference between the number of minutes specified for that grade level in paragraph (3) and the number of instructional minutes offered at that grade level in the 1982-83 fiscal year.

(3) In the 1986-87 fiscal year:

(A) Thirty-six thousand minutes in kindergarten.

(B) Fifty thousand four hundred minutes in grades 1 to 3, inclusive.

(C) Fifty-four thousand minutes in grades 4 to 8, inclusive.

(D) Sixty-four thousand eight hundred minutes in grades 9 to 12, inclusive.

(4) In any fiscal year, each school district that receives an apportionment pursuant to subdivision (a) for average daily attendance in grades 9 to 12, inclusive, shall offer a program of instruction that allows each student to receive at least 24 course years of instruction, or the equivalent, during grades 9 to 12, inclusive.

(5) For any school site at which programs are operated in more than one of the grade levels enumerated in subparagraph (B) or (C) of paragraph (3), the school district may calculate a weighted average of minutes for those grade levels at that school site for purposes of making the certification authorized by this subdivision.

(b) If any of the amounts of instructional time specified in paragraph (3) of subdivision (a) is a lesser number of minutes for that grade level than actually provided by the district in the same grade in the 1982-83 fiscal year, the 1982-83 fiscal year number of minutes for that grade level shall instead be the requirement for the purposes of subdivision paragraphs (1), (2), and (3) of (a).

(c) For any school district that receives an apportionment pursuant to subdivision (a) in the 1984-85 fiscal year and that reduces the amount of instructional time offered below the minimum amounts specified in paragraph (1) of subdivision (a) in the 1985-86 fiscal year or any fiscal year thereafter, the Superintendent of Public Instruction shall reduce the base revenue limit per unit of average daily attendance for the fiscal year in which the reduction occurs by an amount attributable to the increase in the 1987-88 fiscal year base revenue limit per unit of average daily attendance for the fiscal year in which the reduction occurs by an amount attributable to the increase in the 1986-87 fiscal year base revenue limit per unit of average daily attendance for the fiscal year in which the reduction occurs by an amount attributable to the increase in the 1987-88 fiscal year base revenue limit per unit of average daily attendance pursuant to paragraph (4) of subdivision (b) of Section 42238, as adjusted in the 1987-88 fiscal year and fiscal years thereafter.

For each school district that receives an apportionment pursuant to subdivision (a) in the 1985-86 fiscal year and that reduces the amount of instructional time offered below the minimum amounts specified in paragraph (2) of subdivision (a) in the 1986-87 fiscal year or any fiscal year thereafter, the Superintendent of Public Instruction shall reduce the base revenue limit per unit of average daily attendance for the fiscal year in which the reduction occurs by an amount attributable to the increase in the 1986-87 fiscal year base revenue limit per unit of average daily attendance pursuant to paragraph (4) of subdivision (b) of Section 42238, as adjusted in the 1986-87 fiscal year and fiscal years thereafter.

For each school district that receives an apportionment pursuant to subdivision (a) in the 1985-86 fiscal year and that reduces the amount of instructional time offered below the minimum amounts specified in paragraph (2) of subdivision (a) in the 1986-87 fiscal year or any fiscal year thereafter, the Superintendent of Public Instruction shall reduce the base revenue limit per unit of average daily attendance for the fiscal year in which the reduction occurs by an amount attributable to the increase in the 1987-88 fiscal year base revenue limit per unit of average daily attendance for the fiscal year in which the reduction occurs by an amount attributable to the increase in the 1986-87 fiscal year base revenue limit per unit of average daily attendance for the fiscal year in which the reduction occurs by an amount attributable to the increase in the 1987-88 fiscal year base revenue limit per unit of average daily attendance pursuant to paragraph (4) of subdivision (b) of Section 42238, as adjusted in the 1987-88 fiscal year and fiscal years thereafter.

(Stats. 1991, c. 756 (AB 675), § 17, eff. Oct. 9, 1991; Stats. 1992, c. 427 (AB 3355), Section 27.)

46300. Method of computing ADA

(e) In computing the average daily attendance of a school district, there shall also be included the attendance of pupils participating in independent study conducted pursuant to Article 5.5 (commencing with § 51745) of Chapter 5 of Part 28.

A pupil enrolled in independent study shall not be credited with more than one day of attendance per calendar day.


46300.1. Restrictions affecting adults on independent study

Text of section operative until July 1, 1993

(a) For the 1990-91 and 1991-92 fiscal years, no school district or county office of education may receive apportionments for independent study by pupils 21 years of age or older, or by pupils 19 years of age or older who have not been continuously enrolled in kindergarten or any of grades 1 to 12, inclusive, since their 18th birthday for average daily attendance in excess of the number of units of average daily attendance generated by such pupils in the 1988-89 fiscal year.

(b) Commencing with the 1990-91 fiscal year, apportionments for pupils 21 years of age or older, and for pupils 19 years of age or older who have not been continuously enrolled in kindergarten or any of grades 1 to 12, inclusive, since their 18th birthday in independent study under Article 5.5 (commencing with Section 51745) of Chapter 5 of Part 28, who are enrolled in kindergarten or any of the grades 1
to 12, inclusive, shall be reduced over a two-year period to the statewide average level per average daily attendance paid for pupils in adult education according to the following schedule:

1. For the 1990-91 fiscal year, independent study pupils 21 years of age or older, and pupils 19 years of age or older who have not been continuously enrolled in kindergarten or any of grades 1 to 12, inclusive, since their 18th birthday generate a revenue limit equivalent to 166 percent of the statewide average level per unit of average daily attendance paid for pupils in adult education.

2. For the 1991-92 fiscal year, independent study pupils 21 years of age or older, and pupils 19 years of age or older who have not been continuously enrolled in kindergarten or any of grades 1 to 12, inclusive, since their 18th birthday generate a revenue limit equivalent to 132 percent of the average adult education revenue limit.

3. For the 1992-93 fiscal year and each fiscal year thereafter, independent study pupils 21 years of age or older, and pupils 19 years of age or older who have not been continuously enrolled in kindergarten or any of grades 1 to 12, inclusive, since their 18th birthday generate a revenue limit equivalent to 100 percent of the average adult education revenue limit.


46300.4. Independent study pupils; eligible adult education coursework

If a pupil 21 years of age or older, or pupils 19 years of age or older who have not been continuously enrolled in kindergarten or any of grades 1 to 12, inclusive, since his or her 18th birthday, any attendance credit for course work he or she is pursuing through independent study shall be eligible for apportionment only if it is one or more of the types of courses set forth in paragraph (1) of subdivision (a) of Section 51225.3.

This section shall become operative on July 1, 1990.

(Added by Stats. 1989, c. 1089, §3.5, operative July 1, 1990. Amended by Stats. 1990, c. 1263 (AB 2875), §17.)

46300.6. Restrictions on apportionment of funds for independent study program pupils

The State Department of Education shall not apportion funds to a local education agency for a pupil in the independent study program if that agency has provided any funds or other things of value to the pupil or his or her parent or guardian that the agency does not provide to pupils who attend regular classes or to their parents or guardians.

(Added by Stats. 1993, c. 66 (SB 399), §28, eff. June 30, 1993.)

46300.7. Permission of parents or guardians of independent study program pupils; requirements

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no school district or county office of education shall receive apportionments for any pupil in independent study unless that entity receives written permission from the parent or guardian of the pupil prior to the commencement of independent study by that pupil. The written permission shall specify the actual dates of participation, the methods of study and evaluation, and the resources to be made available for the independent study program for the pupil.

(Added by Stats. 1993, c. 66 (SB 399), §29, eff. June 30, 1993.)

48206.3. Pupils with temporary disabilities; individual instruction; definitions

(a) Except for those pupils receiving individual instruction provided pursuant to Section 48206.5, a pupil with a temporary disability which makes attendance in the regular day classes or alternative education program in which the pupil is enrolled impossible or inadvisable shall receive individual instruction provided by the district in which the pupil is deemed to reside.

39
(b) For purposes of this section and Sections 48206.5, 48207, and 48208, the following terms have the following meanings:

(1) "Individual instruction" means instruction provided to an individual pupil in the pupil's home, in a hospital or other residential health facility, excluding state hospitals, or under other circumstances prescribed by regulations adopted for that purpose by the State Board of Education.

(2) "Temporary disability" means a physical, mental, or emotional disability incurred while a pupil is enrolled in regular day classes or an alternative education program, and after which the pupil can reasonably be expected to return to regular day classes or the alternative education program without special intervention. A temporary disability shall not include a disability for which a pupil is identified as an individual with exceptional needs pursuant to Section 56026.

(c)(1) For purposes of computing averaged daily attendance pursuant to Section 42238.5, each clock hour of teaching time devoted to individual instruction shall count as one day of attendance.

(2) No pupil shall be credited with more than five days of attendance per calendar week, or more than the total number of calendar days that regular classes are maintained by the district in any fiscal year.

(d) Notice of the availability of individualized instruction shall be given pursuant to Section 48980.

48340. Legislative intent; proposals and procedures

In enacting this article it is the intent of the Legislature to encourage school districts and county offices of education maintaining any classes in kindergarten and grades 1 to 12, inclusive, to adopt pupil attendance policies based on the active involvement of parents, pupils, teachers, administrators, other personnel, and community members which include proposals and procedures for the following:

(a) Notifying parents of pupil absences, including notification of parents on the day of each absence.

(b) Increasing parent and pupil awareness of the importance of regular pupil attendance.

(c) Auditing and accountability of pupil attendance.

(d) Staff development for certificated and classified personnel.

(e) Alternative learning programs designed to respond to the different ways pupils learn, such as independent study.

(f) Joint efforts between law enforcement and schools, such as school level attendance review teams and periodic efforts to return truant pupils to school.

(Added by Stats. 1980, c. 1329, p. 4655, § 10.)

51225.3. Requirements for graduation commencing with 1988-89 school year

(a) Commencing with the 1988-89 school year, no pupil shall receive a diploma of graduation from high school who, while in grades 9 to 12, inclusive, has not completed all of the following:

(1) At least the following numbers of courses in the subjects specified, each course having a duration of one year, unless otherwise specified.

(A) Three courses in English.

(B) Two courses in mathematics.

(C) Two courses in science, including biological and physical sciences.

(D) Three courses in social studies, including United States history and geography; world history, culture, and geography; a one-semester course in American government and civics, and a one-semester course in economics.

(E) One course in visual or performing arts or foreign language. For the purposes of satisfying the requirement specified in this subparagraph, a course in American Sign Language shall be deemed a course in foreign language.

(F) Two courses in physical education, unless the pupil has been exempted pursuant to the provisions of this code.

(2) Such other coursework as the governing board of the school district may by rule specify.

(b) The governing board, with the active involvement of parents, administrators, teachers, and pupils, shall adopt alternative means for pupils to complete the prescribed course of study which may include practical demonstration of skills and competencies, supervised work experience or other outside school experience, vocational education classes offered in high schools, courses offered by regional occupational centers or programs, interdisciplinary study, independent study, and credit earned at a postsecondary institution.

Requirements for graduation and specified alternative modes for completing the prescribed course of study shall be made available to pupils, parents, and the public.

(Added by Stats. 1990, c. 1105 (SB 1947), § 1.)

Article 5.5 Independent Study

Article 5.5 operative July 1, 1990.

51745. Independent study authorized; curriculum; restrictions

(a) Commencing with the 1990-91 school year, the governing board of a school district or a county office of education may offer independent study to meet the educational needs of pupils in accordance with the requirements of this article. Educational opportunities offered through independent study may include, but shall not be limited to, the following:

(1) Special assignments extending the content of regular courses of instruction.

(2) Individualized study in a particular area of interest or in a subject not currently available in the regular school curriculum.

(3) Individualized alternative education designed to teach the knowledge and skills of the core curriculum. Independent study shall not be provided as an alternative curriculum.

(4) Continuing and special study during travel.
(5) Volunteer community service activities that support and strengthen pupil achievement.

(b) Not more than 10 percent of the pupils participating in an opportunity school or program, or a continuation high school, calculated as specified by the State Department of Education, shall be eligible for apportionment credit for independent study pursuant to this article.

(c) No individual with exceptional needs, as defined in Section 56026, may participate in independent study, unless his or her individualized education program developed pursuant to Article 3 (commencing with Section 56340) of Chapter 4 of Part 30 specifically provides for that participation.

(d) No temporarily disabled pupil may receive individual instruction pursuant to Section 48206.3 through independent study.

(e) No course included among the courses required for high school graduation under Section 51225.3 shall be offered exclusively through independent study.

(Added by Stats. 1989, c. 1089, §5.)

51745.6 Ratio of independent study pupils to certificated employees responsible for independent study

(a) The ratio of average daily attendance for independent study pupils 18 years of age or less to school district full-time equivalent certificated employees responsible for independent study, calculated as specified by the State Department of Education, shall not exceed the equivalent ratio of pupils to full-time certificated employees for all other education programs operated by the school district. The ratio of average daily attendance for independent study pupils 18 years of age or less to county office of education full-time equivalent certificated employees responsible for independent study, to be calculated in a manner prescribed by the State Department of Education, shall not exceed the equivalent ratio of pupils to full-time certificated employees for all other education programs operated by the high school or unified school district with the largest average daily attendance of pupils in that county. The computation of those ratios shall be performed annually by the reporting agency at the time of, and in connection with, the second principal apportionment report to the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

(b) Only those units of average daily attendance for independent study that reflect a pupil-teacher ratio that does not exceed the ratio described in subdivision (a) shall be eligible for apportionment pursuant to Section 42238.5, for school districts, and Section 2558, for county offices of education. Nothing in this section shall prevent a school district or county office of education from serving additional units of average daily attendance greater than the ratio described in subdivision (a), except that those additional units shall not be funded pursuant to Section 42238.5 or Section 2558.

(c) The calculations performed for purposes of this section shall not include either of the following:

1. The average daily attendance generated by special education pupils enrolled in special day classes on a full-time basis, or the teachers of those classes.

2. The average daily attendance or teachers in necessary small schools that are eligible to receive funding pursuant to Article 4 (commencing with Section 42280) of Chapter 7 of Part 24.

(Added by Stats. 1990, c. 1263 (AB 2875), § 19.)

51746. Services and resources

It is the intent of the Legislature that school districts and county offices of education offering independent study shall provide appropriate existing services and resources to enable pupils to complete their independent study successfully and shall ensure the same access to all existing services and resources in the school in which the pupil is enrolled pursuant to Section 51748 as is available to all other pupils in the school. In addition, the services and resources may include, but need not be limited to, any of the following:

(a) A designated learning center or study area staffed by appropriately trained personnel.

(b) The services of qualified personnel to assess the achievement, abilities, interests, aptitudes, and needs of participating pupils to determine each of the following:

1. Whether full-time independent study is the most appropriate alternative for the pupil being referred.

2. If the answer to paragraph (1) is affirmative, the determination of the most appropriate individualized plan and resources to be made available to pupils enrolled in full-time independent study.

(Added by Stats. 1989, c. 1089, §5.)

51747. Apportionments for independent study by pupils; policy requirements

A school district or county office of education shall not be eligible to receive apportionments for independent study by pupils, regardless of age, unless it has adopted written policies, pursuant to rules and regulations adopted by the Superintendent of Public Instruction, which include, but shall not be limited to, each of the following:

(a) The maximum length of time, by grade level and type of program, which may elapse between the time an independent study assignment is made and the date by which the pupil must complete the assigned work.

(b) The number of missed assignments which will be allowed before an evaluation is conducted to determine whether it is in the best interests of the pupil to remain in independent study, or whether he or she should return to the regular school program. A written record of the findings of any evaluation made pursuant to this subsection shall be maintained in the pupil's permanent record.
A requirement that a current written agreement for each independent study pupil shall be maintained on file including, but not limited to, all of the following:

1. The manner, time, frequency, and place for submitting a pupil’s assignments and for reporting his or her progress.
2. The objectives and methods of study for the pupil’s work, and the methods utilized to evaluate the pupil’s work.
3. The specific resources, including materials and personnel, which will be made available to the pupil.
4. A statement of the policies adopted pursuant to subdivisions (a) and (b) regarding the maximum length of time allowed between the assignment and the completion of a pupil’s assigned work, and the number of missed assignments which will require an evaluation of whether or not the pupil should be allowed to continue in independent study.

5. The duration of the independent study agreement, including the beginning and ending dates for the pupil’s participation under the agreement. No independent study agreement shall be valid for any period longer than one semester or one-half year for a school on a year-round calendar.
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. 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 . . . 48917, the agreement shall also 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.
8. Each written agreement shall be signed, prior to the commencement of independent study, by the pupil, the pupil’s parent or legal guardian 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 all persons who have direct responsibility for providing assistance to the pupil.

(Added by Stats. 1989, c. 1089, §5; amended by Stats. 1992, c. 759, § 21.)

51747.3. Restrictions on apportionments; residency requirements

(a) No local education agency may claim state funding for the independent study of a pupil, whether characterized as home study or otherwise, if the agency has provided any funds or other thing of value to the pupil or his or her parent or guardian that the agency does not provide to students who attend regular classes or to their parents or guardians.

(b) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, community school and independent study average daily attendance shall be claimed by school districts and county superintendents of schools only for pupils who are residents of the county in which the apportionment claim is reported, or who are residents of a county immediately adjacent to the county in which the apportionment claim is reported.

(c) The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall not apportion funds for reported average daily attendance, through full-time independent study, of pupils who are enrolled in school pursuant to subdivision (f) of Section 48204.

(d) In conformity with Provisions 25 and 28 of Section 2.00 of the Budget Act of 1992, this section is applicable to average daily attendance reported for apportionment purposes beginning July 1, 1992. The provisions of this section are not subject to waiver by the State Board of Education, by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, or under any provision of Part 26.8 (commencing with Section 47600).

(Added by Stats. 1993, c. 66 (SB 399) § 32, eff. June 30, 1993.)

51747.5. Coordination, evaluation and supervision of independent study; apportionment credit

(a) The independent study by each pupil or student shall be coordinated, evaluated, and, notwithstanding subdivision (a) of Section 46300, shall be under the general supervision of an employee of the school district or county office of education who possesses a valid certification document pursuant to Section 44865, registered as required by law.

(b) School districts and county offices of education may claim apportionment credit for independent study only to the extent of the time value of pupil or student work products, as personally judged in each instance by a certificated teacher.


51747.6. Ratio of average daily attendance by independent study pupils to certificated employees

(Repealed by Stats. 1991, c. 756 (AB 675), Sec. 27, effective Oct. 9, 1991.)

51748. Written records for apportionments

School districts and county offices of education shall not be eligible to receive apportionment for independent study attendance by any pupil who is not otherwise identified in the written records of the district or county board by grade level, program placement, and the school in which he or she is enrolled.

(Added by Stats. 1989, c. 1989, § 5.)
51749. Statewide profile of independent study pupils
The Superintendent of Public Instruction, upon the next revision of the California Basic Educational Data System, or its equivalent, following the effective date of this article, shall include all data collection elements necessary to compile an annual statewide profile of pupils participating in independent study, including data on the number and percentage of pupils pursuing their coursework through independent study who successfully complete the requirements for a high school diploma.
(Added by Stats. 1989, c. 1089, § 5.)

51749.3. Rules and regulations
The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall establish rules and regulations for the purposes of implementing this article. A public hearing on the rules and regulations shall be held on or before March 15, 1990. The rules and regulations shall be adopted on or before June 30, 1990.
(Added by Stats. 1989, c. 1089, § 5.)

51749.5. Operative date of article
This article shall become operative on July 1, 1990.
(Added by Stats. 1989, c. 1089, § 5.)

52206. [GATE] Program approaches; minimum time; academic component
The governing boards of school districts that provide programs pursuant to this chapter may establish programs for gifted and talented pupils consisting of special day classes, part-time grouping, enrichment activities, cluster grouping, independent study, acceleration, postsecondary education opportunities, and other program approaches as proposed by the governing board and consistent with the regulations of the State Board of Education. If the district establishes any of these programs, the district shall provide them to identified pupils for an amount of time each week that shall average a minimum of one class equivalent to 200 minutes per week for 30 weeks of the school year. The time requirements may be waived upon approval of the State Board of Education. [Emphasis added.]

Each participating governing board shall determine the most appropriate curricular components for participating pupils within its district.

For all program for gifted and talented pupils, including programs for pupils with high creative capabilities and talents in the performing and visual arts, each participating governing board shall concentrate part of its curriculum on providing participating pupils with an academic component and, where appropriate, with instruction in basic skills.
(Added by Stats. 1989, c. 494, § 2, eff. Sept. 18, 1989. Former wording repealed.)

Chapter 6.5 County Community Schools
1980. Maintenance by county board of education
A county board of education may establish and maintain one or more community schools.

1981. Enrollment of pupils
The county board of education may enroll in community schools any of the following:
(a) Pupils who have been expelled from a school district, except those pupils who are expelled pursuant to subdivision (a) of Section 48915 under one or both of the following circumstances:
(1) While attending continuation classes, opportunity classes, or alternative classes.
(2) On one or more of the grounds set forth in subdivisions (a) to (e), inclusive, of Section 48900.
(b) Pupils who have been referred to county community schools by a school district as a result of the recommendation by a school attendance review board or pupils whose school districts of attendance have, at the request of the pupil’s parent or guardian, approved the pupil’s enrollment in a county community school.
(c) Pupils who are probation-refereed pursuant to Sections 300, 601, 602, and 654 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, or who are on probation or parole and who are not in attendance in any school, or who are expelled pursuant to subdivision (a) or (b) of Section 48915.
(d) Homeless children.
(Added by Stats. 1977, c. 992, § 1. Amended by Stats. 1982, c. 1201, p. 4343, § 1, eff. Sept. 22, 1982; Stats. 1984, c. 482, § 1.7, eff. July 11, 1984; Stats. 1990, c. 1415 (SB 606), § 1; Stats. 1991, c. 884 (SB 648), § 1; Stats. 1993, c. 1255 (AB 342), § 1, eff. Oct. 11, 1993; Stats. 1993, c. 1256 (SB 1198), § 1; Stats. 1993, c. 1257 (SB 1130), § 1.3.)

1983. Courses of study; classes and programs
(a) Pupils enrolled in county community schools shall be assigned to classes or programs deemed most appropriate for reinforcing or reestablishing educational development.
(b) Such classes or programs may include, but need not be limited to, basic educational skill development, on-the-job training, tutorial assistance, independent study requirements, and individual guidance activities.
(c) An individually planned educational program based upon an educational assessment shall be prescribed for each pupil.
(d) The course of study of a county community school shall be adopted by the county board of education and shall enable each pupil to continue academic work leading to the completion of a regular high school program.
California Code of Regulations
Title 5. Education
Chapter 11. Special Programs
Subchapter 13. Independent Study Programs

(These regulations are effective October 15, 1990)

11700. Definition

(a) "Independent Study" means an alternative to classroom instruction consistent with the district's course of study.

(b) "Type of program" means the "educational opportunities" as set out in Education Code Section 51745(a).

(c) "Missed assignment" means any specified independent study assignment that has not been turned in, or evidenced as completed, by a pupil by the due date for the assignment.

(d) "Regular school program" means the classroom-based instructional program or its equivalent in which a pupil would have attended had the pupil not elected the independent study.

(e) "The method utilized to evaluate" means any method by which the supervising teacher assesses the extent to which achievement of the pupil meets the goals and objectives specified in the written agreement.

(f) "Supervising teacher" means the employee of the school district or county office of education who possesses a valid certification document and who has been assigned, in the written agreement, the responsibility for coordinating, evaluating and providing general supervision of a pupil's independent study pursuant to Education Code Section 51747.

(g) "Specific resources" may not be construed to exclude resources normally available to all pupils on the same terms that they are normally available to all pupils, and shall be construed to include resources needed to achieve the objectives in the written agreement.

(h) "An optional educational alternative" means an uncoerced option that is an alternative to regular school attendance.

(i) "General supervision" means the supervising teacher's (1) continuing oversight of the study design, implementation plan, allocation of resources, and evaluation of pupil progress for any pupil's independent study; and (2) review, on at least a monthly sampling basis, of determinations of the time values for apportionment purposes of each pupil's completed assignments.

(j) "Full-time equivalent certificated employees" means any combination of full-time certificated employees and part-time certificated employee assignments that aggregate to the amount of instructional time specified in the contract of a full-time certificated classroom teacher of the district or county office of education.

Note: Authority cited: Sections 33031, 51745, and 51749.3, Education Code.

Reference: Sections 51745, 51746, 51747, and 51747.6, Education Code.

History:

1. New Chapter 15 (Sections 11700-11703) filed 10-22-76; (Register 76, No. 43).
2. Amendment of section and NOTE filed 9-23-77; (Register 77, No. 39).
3. Renumbering of Chapter 15 (Sections 11700-11703) to Chapter 13 filed 11-7-79; (Register 79, No. 45).
4. Amendment filed 4-13-83; (Register 83, No. 16)

11701. District responsibilities

In setting policy pursuant to subdivisions (a) and (b) of Education Code Section 51747, the local governing board shall consider, in a public hearing, the scope of its existing or prospective use of independent study as an instructional strategy, its purposes in authorizing independent study, and factors bearing specifically on the maximum realistic lengths of assignments and acceptable number of missed assignments for specific populations of pupils. Adopted policies shall reflect an awareness that excessive leniency in their terms can result in pupils falling so far behind their age peers as to increase, rather than decrease, the risk of their dropping out of school.

Note: Authority cited: Sections 51747 and 51749.3, Education Code.

Reference: Section 51747(a) and (b), Education Code.

History:

1. Repealer filed 4-13-83. (Register 83, No. 16).
2. Amendment filed 10-16-90.

11702. Agreements

(a) Independent study shall be based on a written agreement signed by the pupil, the pupil's parents or legal guardian 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 all persons who have direct responsibility for providing assistance to the pupil.

(b) This agreement shall include, but shall not be limited to, each of the following:

(1) The manner, frequency, time, and place for submitting a pupil's assignments and for reporting his or her progress.
(2) The title and statement of the major objectives of the course of study to be undertaken.

(3) The specific resources, including materials and personnel, which will be made available to the pupil.

(4) The method utilized to evaluate the pupil's work.

(5) A statement of the policies adopted by the district or county office governing board, 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, and the number of missed assignments which will require an evaluation of whether or not the pupil should be allowed to continue in independent study.

(6) The duration of the independent study agreement. No independent study agreement shall be valid for any period longer than one semester or one-half year for a school on a year-round calendar.

(7) 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.

(8) A statement that independent study is an optional educational alternative in which no pupil may be required to participate.

Note: Authority cited: Sections 51745 and 51749.3, Education Code.
Reference: Sections 51745, 51746, and 51747, Education Code.

History:
1. Amendment filed 4-13-83; (Register 83, No. 16).

11703. Records

(a) Maintaining records to meet audit requirements is the responsibility of the local district or county superintendent's office. These records may be on site(s).

(b) Records shall include but not be limited to the following:

(1) A copy of the adopted school board policy and procedures.

(2) A file of all agreements, including representative samples of each pupil's completed and evaluated student assignments as determined by the school district or county superintendent's office, as appropriate.

(3) A list of pupils who have participated that shows credits attempted by and awarded to each pupil per agreement.

(4) An attendance register separate from other attendance records.

Note: Authority cited: Sections 51745 and 51749.3, Education Code.
Reference: Section 51747, Education Code.

History:
1. Amendment filed 11-7-79; (Register 79, No. 45).
2. Amendment filed 4-13-83; (Register 83, No. 16).

Before the end of 1994, it is expected that revised Title 5 regulations (sections 11700 through 11703, inclusive) will be adopted and distributed. It is expected that these 1994 changes will include some revisions in the definitions in Section 11700, the addition of a new Section 11701.5 related to Education Code Section 51747.3(a), the deletion of the existing language of Section 11702 (because it duplicates Education Code Section 51745), the insertion of new language regarding requirements for agreements, and revisions in Section 11703. Copies of the proposed changes were distributed to all superintendents of school districts and county offices of education in April 1994. Additional copies of the proposed revised regulations are obtainable from the California Department of Education, School Interventions and Educational Options Unit, P.O. Box 944272, Sacramento, CA 94244-2720, telephone (916) 324-3637.
APPENDIX B
High School Master Agreement for Independent Study

Name: [Student number: ] Grade: 
Address: Age: Birth date: 
City: ZIP code: Phone: ( )
Location(s): Social Security number: – –
Duration: Entry date: Exit date:

Agreement: We have read both sides of this agreement and hereby agree to all the conditions set forth within.

Signatures:
Student Date
Parent/Guardian Date
Teacher Date
Program Administrator Date
Other Date

Objective: The student will complete the courses listed below during the semester as they are outlined in the ___________ School District course descriptions. All course objectives will be consistent with the established district guidelines. Assignment and work-record forms will include additional descriptions of the major objectives and activities of the course of study covered by the agreement. It is understood that:

• The purpose of this agreement is to enable the student to successfully reach the objectives and complete the assignments identified in the assignment and work-record forms that will be part of this agreement.
• According to district policy for independent study in grades nine through twelve, no more than _________ may elapse between the date an assignment is made by the teacher and the date it is due, unless an exception is made in accordance with district policy.
• The Unified/Joint Union School District will provide the teacher services, instructional materials, and other necessary items and resources as specified for each assignment.
• The student agrees to meet with or report to the teacher regularly, in accordance with the frequency, date, time, and location specified in the course contract or the assignment and work-record form.

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<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
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Certification of completed course work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Course code number</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Credits earned</th>
<th>Teacher's initials</th>
<th>Date</th>
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Total credits _________ Date recorded __________ Teacher’s signature __________
Student:

I understand that:

- Independent study is an optional educational alternative that I have voluntarily selected.
- By entering _____________ High School I have not waived any rights as a student, and I am entitled to all _____________ School District services and resources.

If I am a student with an individualized education program (IEP), my IEP must specifically provide for my enrollment in Independent Study.

- I must follow all the discipline code and behavior guidelines of the _____________ School District.

Any violation of these guidelines or failure to meet school/district requirements could result in dismissal from _____________ High School.

- Visitation on any other school campus requires permission from that school.
- If I achieve only minimum study requirements, I will complete the equivalent of only one semester course a month, or a minimum of 25 credits a semester. A regular high school program is 30 credits a semester.

I agree to:

- Be supervised by _____________ and/or other approved resource personnel.
- Meet regularly with the assigned staff member. I understand that failure to complete _____ assignments will result in an evaluation to determine if I should remain in independent study and may also result in one or more of the following:
  1. A letter of concern to me and my parent, if appropriate
  2. A specially scheduled appointment
  3. A special meeting with the teacher and/or counselor
  4. A meeting with the administrator, including my parent or guardian, if appropriate
  5. Placement on probation
  6. Increase in the amount of time I must be on campus or in an equivalent supervised situation
  7. Revocation of any work permit issued until my school work is satisfactorily completed
  8. Termination of the agreement and my return to a regular classroom program of instruction or other appropriate alternative

- Meet weekly with the Outside Work Experience (OWE) coordinator if I am enrolled in work experience.
- Obtain transportation to scheduled meetings.

I understand that lack of transportation to the school site is not an acceptable reason for failing to meet with my teacher and/or supervisor to submit my completed assignments.

- Complete my assigned work and achieve at least the minimum performance requirements of the course of study. I understand that credit, which is based on mastery of learning, can only be issued after I have successfully completed an activity and it has been evaluated. I realize that a minimum of _____ hours of work is needed for each unit of credit.

Student's signature: ____________________________

Parent/Guardian:

I understand that the major objective of Independent Study is to provide a voluntary educational alternative for my son or daughter.

I agree to the above conditions listed under “Student.” I also understand that:

- Individual course objectives are consistent with and evaluated in the same manner that they would be if he or she were enrolled in a traditional school program.
- I am liable for the cost of replacement or repair for wilfully damaged or destroyed books and other school property checked out to my son or daughter.
- Unless otherwise indicated, a teacher or supervisor will meet with my son or daughter 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 the supervisor in consultation with my son or daughter.
- I am expected to encourage him or her to do more than the minimum study requirements and be involved in an Outside Work Experience (OWE), a Regional Occupational Program (ROP), community volunteer work, or a directed project.
- I have the right to appeal any decision about my son’s or daughter’s placement, school program, or transfer according to the school district’s procedures.

Parent's/Guardian’s signature: ____________________________
APPENDIX C
## High School Assignment and Work Record Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Subject</th>
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<tr>
<td>Objective (Short term):</td>
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<tr>
<td>Start date</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due date</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Study methods:         |         |
|                       |         |

| Resources:             |         |
|                       |         |

| Evaluation method:     |         |
|                       |         |

| Teacher's signature:   | Student's signature: |
|                       |                     |

| Teacher comments/grade:|         |
|                       |         |

| Attendance credit:     |         |
|                       |         |

| Objective (Short term): |         |
|                       |         |

| Study methods:         |         |
|                       |         |

| Resources:             |         |
|                       |         |

| Evaluation method:     |         |
|                       |         |

| Teacher's signature:   | Student's signature: |
|                       |                     |

| Teacher comments/grade:|         |
|                       |         |

| Attendance credit:     |         |
|                       |         |
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