



## **Independent Study Policy**

### **Intent of Policy**

It is the intent of the Board to provide eligible students residing in San Bernardino County with the opportunity to enroll in Encore Junior & Senior High School's independent study program as an alternative to Encore's regular school program.

The Board adopts this policy with the awareness that excessive leniency in the terms and requirements for independent study can result in students falling so far behind their same-age peers as to increase, rather than decrease, the risk of their dropping out of school.

As such, Encore shall ensure that its independent study program:

1. Is substantially equivalent in quality and in quantity to classroom instruction, such that students will be enabled to complete Encore's adopted course of study within the customary time frame for completion of that course of study;
2. Provides students with the same access to existing services and resources as the other students of Encore in which the independent study student is enrolled; and
3. Ensure that students who choose to engage in independent study will have equality of rights and privileges with the students who choose to continue in Encore's regular school program.

### **Independent Study is Voluntary**

Participating in Encore's independent study program is voluntary. No student may be required or coerced to enroll, participate, or continue in the independent study program without his/her consent.

### **Eligibility**

Participation in independent study is at the discretion of Encore. A student shall not be permitted to engage in independent study if Encore's staff members operating the independent study program determine that independent study is not an appropriate alternative for the student.

### **Maximum Length of Independent Study Agreement**

No independent study agreement shall be valid for any period longer than one (1) school year.

### **Each Student Supervised by Certified Teacher**

Each student's independent study program shall be coordinated, evaluated, and under the general supervision of a credentialed employee of Encore.

All courses taught through independent study shall be under the general supervision of certified employees of Encore who hold the appropriate subject matter credential.

### **Maximum Length of Time for Assignments**

The maximum number of days that may elapse between the time an independent study assignment is made and the date by which the student must complete the assigned work shall be as follows:

1. For students in grades seven and eight will have seven (7) days to complete assignments
2. For students in grades nine, ten, eleven, and twelve will have ten (10) days to complete assignments

### **Conditions for Remaining in Independent Study**

Students enrolled in independent study are expected to complete assignments in a timely manner and comply with their written agreement for independent study. Students may be evaluated for continued participation in Encore's independent study program if they fail to meet any of the following criteria:

1. **Missed Assignments:** A student may be evaluated for continued participation in independent study if he/she misses three assignments within a month. "Missed assignment" means any specified independent study assignment that has not been turned in, or evidence as completed, by a student by the due date for the assignment.
2. **Student-Teacher Communication:** Student shall communicate in person, by telephone, or by any other live usual or audio connection with the assigned certificated employee no less than twice per calendar month in order to determine whether student is making satisfactory educational progress;



3. Student is required to come on campus at least once per week for three hours to turn in assignments, take tests, and meet with coordinator.
4. **Compliance With Written Agreement:** The CEO/Executive Director or designee, may establish additional criteria for continued participation in independent study. All criteria will be clearly specified in the written agreement for independent study. A student may be evaluated for continued participation if he/she fails to follow the terms of the written agreement.

### **Evaluation for Continued Participation**

When a student fails to meet any of the criteria set forth above, Encore shall conduct evaluation to determine whether it is in the best interests of the student to remain in Encore's independent study program, or whether he or she should return to the regular school program.

If Encore conducts an evaluation for the purposes of determining whether a student may remain in independent study, the written record of the findings of any evaluation shall be treated as a mandatory interim pupil record. The record shall be maintained for a period of three (3) years from the date of the evaluation and, if the student transfers to another California public school, the record shall be forwarded to that school.

### **Written Agreement for Independent Study**

Prior to being enrolled in Encore's independent study program, Encore shall fully execute a written agreement for independent study. The written agreement will be specific to each student and shall include all of the following:

1. The manner, time, frequency, and place by which the student shall submit assignments and by which his/her progress shall be reported;
2. The objectives and methods of study for the student's work, and the methods utilized to evaluate that work;
3. The specific resources, including materials and personnel, that will be made available to the student;
4. A statement of Encore's policies regarding:



- a. The maximum length of time allowed between the assignment and the completion of the student's assigned work. The CEO/Executive Director, or designee, may also include any special circumstances specific to the individual student that allow for greater time to complete assignments; and
  - b. The number of missed assignments allowed before an evaluation of whether or not the student should be allowed to continue in independent study.
5. The duration of the independent study agreement, including the beginning and ending dates for the student's participation in independent study under the agreement. No independent study agreement shall be valid for any period longer than one (1) school year;
  6. A statement of the number of course credits or, other measures of academic accomplishment appropriate to the agreement, to be earned by the student upon completion;
  7. A statement that participation in Encore's independent study program is an optional educational alternative in which no student may be required to participate. In the case of a student who is referred or assigned to any school, class, or program due to expulsion or suspension, the agreement shall include the statement that instruction may be provided to the student through independent study only if the student is offered the alternative of classroom instruction; and
  8. The written agreement must be signed and dated by the following individuals:
    - a. The student;
    - b. If the student is under 18 years of age, the student's parent, guardian, or caregiver;
    - c. The certified employee who Encore has designated as having responsibility for the general supervision of the student's independent study; and
    - d. All persons who have direct responsibility for providing assistance to the student.

### **Electronic File**

Encore may maintain the signed written agreement, supplemental agreements, assignment records, work samples, and attendance records assessing time value of work or evidence that an instructional activity occurred as an electronic file.



An “electronic file” includes a computer or electronic stored image of an original document, including, but not limited to, portable document format (PDF), JPEG, or other digital image file type, that may be sent via fax machine, email, or other electronic means.

Either an original document or an electronic file of the original document is allowable documentation for auditing purposes.

**Restrictions On Funding and/or Supplies**

No student shall be prohibited from participating in Encore’s independent study program solely on the basis that he or she does not have the materials, equipment, or Internet access that are necessary to participate in the independent study course.

Students participating in Encore’s independent study program may be provided with educational materials, equipment, etc., as needed to support them in their program. However, Encore shall not provide a student or his/her parent or guardian with funds or any other thing of value that a school district could not legally provide to a similarly situated pupil at Encore.

(Ed. Code, §§ 49915, 48917, 51747 *et seq.*; Title 5 Cal. Code Regs. §§ 11700 *et seq.*)