HSHMC Independent Study Policy

(For Board Approval 8/19/2026)

This policy specifies conditions and practices related to HSHMC's independent study programs, and that are aligned with applicable law, including Education Code section 51744 et seq. and 5 C.C.R. 11700 et seq. The Board recognizes that current HSHMC policies and practices are, and will continue to be, reviewed and updated subject to new and pending legal requirements.

1) Independent study is an option available to students as set forth in HSHMC's current charter and in accordance with applicable law. For each student in independent study, HSHMC will assign a certificated employee to coordinate, evaluate, and provide general supervision of the student's independent study instruction.
2) For students in independent study at any grade level, the maximum length of time that may elapse between the time an independent study assignment is made and the date by which the student must complete the assigned work is 20 school days.

3) When any student fails to complete two (2) assignments during any period of 20 school days or fails to make satisfactory educational progress (defined below), an evaluation is conducted to determine whether it is in the best interests of the student to remain in independent study, or whether the student should return to the regular school program. A 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 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.

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

   a) The student's achievement and engagement in the independent study program, as indicated by the student's performance on applicable student-level measures of student achievement and student engagement set forth in Education Code Section 52060(d)(4)-(5).
   b) The completion of assignments, assessments, or other indicators that evidence that the student is working on assignments.
   c) Learning required concepts, as determined by the supervising teacher.
   d) Progressing toward successful completion of the course of study or individual course, as determined by the supervising teacher.
4) HSHMC will provide content aligned to grade level standards that is substantially equivalent to in-person instruction. This shall include access to all courses offered by HSHMC for graduation and approved by the University of California or the California State University as creditable under the A–G admissions criteria.

5) HSHMC's Independent Study Program is an optional educational alternative for certain students whose needs may be best met through study outside of the regular classroom setting.

   a) Independent study offers a means of individualizing the educational plan to serve students whose health or other personal circumstances make classroom attendance difficult, for instance.

   b) As necessary to meet student needs, independent study may be offered on a full-time basis or on a part-time basis in conjunction with part- or full-time classroom study.

   c) Regarding students with individualized education programs (IEPs): A student with exceptional needs, as defined in EC § 56026, may participate in independent study if the student's IEP specifically provides for that participation. If a parent or guardian of an individual with exceptional needs requests independent study, the student's IEP team shall make an individualized determination as to whether the student can receive a free appropriate public education in an independent study placement. The student's inability to work independently, need for adult support, or need for special education or related services shall not preclude the IEP team from determining that the student can receive a free appropriate education in an independent study placement.

6) A student's participation in independent study shall be voluntary. Students participating in independent study shall have the right, at any time, to enter or return to the regular classroom mode of instruction. All students attending independent study have a seat reserved for them in regular, in-person classrooms.

7) For students who participate in Independent Study at HSHMC for at least sixteen (16) schooldays per year:

   7.1. If a student does not generate attendance for more than 10 percent of required minimum instructional time over four continuous weeks of HSHMC's approved instructional calendar, for students found not participatory in synchronous instructional offerings pursuant to Education Code Section 51747.5 for more than 50 percent of the scheduled times of synchronous instruction in a school month as applicable by grade span, or for students who are in violation of the written agreement, HSHMC shall implement procedures for tiered reengagement. These procedures shall include local programs intended to address chronic absenteeism, as applicable, with at least all the following:

   a) Verification of current contact information for each enrolled student.

   b) Notification to parents or guardians of lack of participation within one school day of the recording of a nonattendance day or lack of participation.

   c) Reach out to the student and/or parent(s) or guardian(s), including connection with health and social services as necessary, to determine the student's needs for reengagement.

   d) If the student has failed to complete two (2) assignments during any period of 20

school days or is failing to make satisfactory educational progress as defined in Section 3 herein, HSHMC will schedule a pupil-parent-educator conference (a meeting involving all individuals who signed the student's written agreement) to review the student's written agreement, and reconsider the independent study program's impact on the student's achievement and well-being.

7.2. For students in grades 9-12, their assigned teacher of record will schedule and offer opportunities for synchronous instruction at least as frequently as set forth in subsection a below.

"Synchronous instruction" means classroom-style instruction, designated small-group instruction, or one-on-one instruction delivered in person or in the form of internet or telephonic communications, by a teacher or teachers of record, and involving live two-way communication between the teacher and student.

a. For students in grades 9-12, inclusive, their assigned teacher of record will schedule and offer opportunities for weekly synchronous instruction.

HSHMC will document each student's participation in synchronous instruction on each school day, as applicable, in whole or in part, for which synchronous instruction is provided as part of the independent study program. A student who does not participate in scheduled synchronous instruction shall be documented as nonparticipatory for that school day for purposes of student participation reporting and tiered reengagement pursuant to Education Code Section 51747.

7.3. A student's parent or guardian may request their student return to in-person instruction from independent study by making a written request to the Principal or their assigned teacher(s) of record. HSHMC will transition the student within five school days.

7.4. Sections 7.1, 7.2, and 7.3 of this policy do not apply to students who, under the care of appropriately licensed professionals, participate in independent study due to necessary medical treatments or inpatient treatment for mental health care or substance abuse. HSHMC shall obtain evidence from appropriately licensed professionals of the need for students to participate in Independent Study pursuant to this Section 7.4.

8) HSHMC's Principal or designee shall ensure that a written master agreement is maintained on file for each participating student as prescribed by applicable law. Each written agreement will contain the following:

a) The manner, time, frequency, and place for submitting a student's assignments, for reporting the student's academic progress, and for communicating with a student's parent or guardian regarding a student's academic progress.

b) The objectives and methods of study for the student's work, and the methods used to evaluate that work.

c) The specific resources, including materials and personnel, that will be made available to the student. These resources shall include confirming or providing access to all students to the connectivity and devices adequate to participate in the educational program and complete assigned work.

d) A statement of the policies adopted herein regarding the maximum length of time allowed between the assignment and the completion of a student's assigned work, the level of satisfactory educational progress, and the number of missed assignments allowed prior to an evaluation of whether or not the student should be allowed to continue in independent study.

e) 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 school year.

f) 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.

g) A statement detailing the academic and other supports that will be provided to address the needs of students who are not performing at grade level, or need support in other areas, such as English learners, individuals with exceptional needs in order to be consistent with the student's IEP or plan pursuant to Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. Sec. 794), students in foster care or experiencing homelessness, and students requiring mental health supports.

h) The inclusion of a statement in each independent study agreement that independent study 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 pursuant to Education Code Section 48915 or 48917, the agreement also 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.

i) HSHMC will comply with the written independent study agreement signature requirements set forth in Education Code Section 51747(g)(9), including:

   1. For a student participating in independent study that is scheduled for sixteen (16) or more school days: Each written agreement shall be signed, prior to the commencement of independent study, by the student, the student's parent, legal guardian, or caregiver, if the student is less than 18 years of age, the certificated employee who has been designated as having responsibility for the general supervision of independent study, and the certificated employee designated as having responsibility for the special education programming of the student, as applicable.

2. For a student participating in independent study that is scheduled for fifteen (15) or fewer school days: Each written agreement shall be signed by the student, the student's parent, legal guardian, or caregiver, if the student is less than 18 years of age, the certificated employee who has been designated as having responsibility for the general supervision of independent study, and the certificated employee designated as having responsibility for the special education programming of the student, as applicable, during the school year in which the independent study program takes place. It is the intent of the Board that parents or guardians of students will be provided the template agreement at or before the beginning of the school year.
3. For purposes of this policy, "caregiver" means a person who has met the requirements of Part 1.5 (commencing with Section 6550) of Division 11 of the Family Code.
4. Signed written agreements, supplemental agreements, assignment records, work samples, and attendance records assessing time value of work or evidence that an instructional activity occurred may be maintained as an electronic file.
5. For purposes of this section, 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.
6. Either an original document or an electronic file of the original document is allowable documentation for auditing purposes.
7. Written agreements may be signed using an electronic signature that complies with state and federal standards, as determined by the department, that may be a marking that is either computer generated or produced by electronic means and is intended by the signatory to have the same effect as a handwritten signature. The use of an electronic signature shall have the same force and effect as the use of a manual signature if the requirements for digital signatures and their acceptable technology, as provided in Section 16.5 of the Government Code and in Chapter 10 (commencing with Section 22000) of Division 7 of Title 2 of the California Code of Regulations, are satisfied.

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

k) HSHMC may claim apportionment credit for independent study only to the extent of

the time value of student work products, as personally judged in each instance by a certificated teacher employed by HSHMC, or the combined time value of student work product and student participation in synchronous instruction.

1. For purposes of this section, "student work products" may include the daily time value spent by a student engaged in asynchronous instruction, including work completed on an online or computer-based instructional activity, regardless of whether student work products are produced, if the computer program documents student participation. HSHMC shall maintain documentation of each hour or fraction of an hour of both student work products (i.e., by assigning a time value to student work products) and the time that the student engaged in asynchronous instruction (e.g., tracking of time spent in asynchronous instruction).
2. For purposes of this section, "student participation in synchronous instruction" may include, but is not limited to, student work produced or performed, or documentation that the student participated in an instructional period either visually or verbally, as verified by a certificated employee and maintained by HSHMC for each hour or fraction thereof of the synchronous instructional offering.

l) HSHMC will comply with all applicable law regarding independent study, including but not limited to ADA-to-certificated teacher ratio requirements.

m) HSHMC will comply with all applicable recordkeeping requirements for independent study. This includes maintaining written or computer-based evidence of student engagement that includes, but is not limited to, a grade book or summary document that, for each class, lists all assignments, assessments, and associated grades. This includes documenting each student's participation in synchronous instruction as described above in Section 7.2, as applicable.