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Elevate School - Independent Study Policy

In the interest of maintaining a student's academic progress and minimizing disruption to the educational program, Elevate School ("Elevate" or the "Charter School") may offer Independent Study to meet the educational needs of students enrolled in the Charter School. Independent study is an optional educational alternative in which no student may be required to participate and is designed to teach the knowledge and skills of the core curriculum. The Charter School shall provide appropriate existing services and resources to enable students to complete their independent study successfully.

Short-term independent study is available for students who are unable to participate in classroom instruction for a minimum of three (3) consecutive school days to a **maximum of fifteen (15) school days**. The purpose of independent study is to accommodate extended illness, quarantine, or other extenuating circumstances that prohibit the student from accessing on-campus instruction. In cases of unavoidable travel, Independent Study contracts will only be issued when the duration is five (5) or more days. Families are encouraged to plan vacations during school breaks.

In special circumstances and only upon prior written approval by the Executive Director, a student may be approved to participate in independent study for longer than the fifteen (15) cumulative school days permitted by this Policy. Such requests will be granted on a case-by-case basis at the sole direction of the Executive Director, for reasons including but not limited to, healthcare provider or county office of public health quarantine instructions, medical fragility, or extended illness. If a student is not approved for an extension of the fifteen (15) day cumulative maximum, further absences will be addressed in accordance with the Charter School's attendance policy and may be considered unexcused and/or lead to truancy prevention measures, depending on the nature of the absence. *Participation in independent study shall be limited to staffing capacity and shall be maintained to be lower than 20% of the attendance at Elevate at any given time.* Should interest in independent study exceed capacity, participation shall be determined by public random drawing. All requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Any use of independent study shall be restricted to occasional, incidental instances of extended absences, and shall fully comply with all applicable independent study laws and regulations. Students' attendance records and overall performance records will be considered in granting independent study applications. Priority for independent study shall be provided to those students with written documentation from a physician that states that a student cannot safely attend school in-person even with appropriate safety measures as required by the local, state, and federal departments of health.

The following written policies have been adopted by the Elevate Board of Directors for implementation at Charter School:

1. For students in all grade levels and programs offered by the Charter School, the **maximum length of time** that may elapse between the time an assignment is made and the date by which the student must complete the assigned work shall be ten (10) school days.
2. The Executive Director or designee shall conduct an evaluation to determine whether it is in the best interest of the student to remain in independent study upon the following triggers:

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- a. When any student fails to complete more than 50% of assignments during any period of ten (10) school days.
- b. In the event a student's educational progress falls below satisfactory levels as determined by Elevate's School Success Team process which considers ALL of the following indicators:
 - i. 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) paragraphs (4) and (5).
 - ii. The completion of assignments, assessments, or other indicators that evidence that the student is working on assignments.
 - iii. Learning required concepts, as determined by the supervising teacher.
 - iv. Progressing toward successful completion of the course of study or individual course, as determined by the supervising teacher.

A written record of the findings of any evaluation conducted pursuant to this policy shall be treated as a mandatory interim student 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.

3. The Charter School shall provide content aligned to grade level standards that is substantially equivalent to in-person instruction.
4. The Charter School has adopted tiered reengagement strategies* for the following pupils:
 - a. All pupils who are not generating attendance for more than 10 percent of required minimum instructional time over four continuous weeks of the Charter School's approved instructional calendar;
 - b. Pupils 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
 - c. Pupils who are in violation of the written agreement pursuant to Education Code Section 51747(g).

These procedures shall include local programs intended to address chronic absenteeism, as applicable, with at least all of the following:

- a. Verification of current contact information for each enrolled pupil;
- b. Notification to parents or guardians of lack of participation within one (1) school day of the recording of a non-attendance day or lack of participation;
- c. A plan for outreach from the Charter School to determine pupil needs including connection with health and social services as necessary;
- d. A clear standard for requiring a pupil-parent-educator conference to review a pupil's written agreement and reconsider the independent study program's impact on the pupil's achievement and

well-being consistent with the policies adopted pursuant to paragraph (4) of subdivision (g) of Education Code Section 51747.

The teacher of record in coordination with school leadership will implement additional reengagement strategies, including but not limited to phone calls, home visits, and missed assignment notices to support student learning and engagement.

5. The following plan shall be in place in accordance with Education Code Section 51747(e) for synchronous instruction and live interaction*:
 - a. For pupils in transitional kindergarten through grade 3, inclusive, Charter School shall provide opportunities for daily synchronous instruction for all pupils throughout the school year by each pupil's teacher of record. Charter School will provide opportunity for daily synchronous instruction in math and language arts via Zoom with a credentialed teacher.
 - b. For pupils in grades 4-5, inclusive, Charter School shall provide opportunities for daily live interaction between the pupil and a certificated or non-certificated employee of the Charter School and at least weekly synchronous instruction for all pupils throughout the school year by each pupil's teacher(s) of record. Charter School will provide opportunity for daily "wellness checks" and progress monitoring with RTI staff, and daily opportunity for synchronous instruction in math and language arts via Zoom with the supervising teacher.
 - c. For pupils in grades 6-8, inclusive, Charter School shall provide opportunities for daily live interaction between the pupil and a certificated or non-certificated employee of the Charter School and at least weekly synchronous instruction for all pupils throughout the school year by each pupil's teacher(s) of record. Charter School will provide opportunity for daily "wellness checks" and progress monitoring with RTI staff, and weekly opportunity for synchronous instruction in math and language arts via Zoom with the supervising teacher.

6. The following plan* shall be utilized to transition pupils whose families wish to return to in person instruction from independent study expeditiously, and, in no case, later than five instructional days: Families who wish to return to in-person instruction from independent may contact the Charter School Executive Director, who shall convene a meeting with parent and student to facilitate transition.

* The tiered reengagement strategies, plan for synchronous instruction and live interaction, and plan to transition pupils whose families wish to return to in-person instruction (paragraphs 4, 5, and 6 above) shall not apply to:

- a. pupils who participate in an independent study program for fewer than 16 schooldays in a school year;
- b. pupils enrolled in a comprehensive school for classroom-based instruction 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. Local educational agencies shall obtain evidence from appropriately licensed professionals of the need for pupils to participate in independent study pursuant to this subdivision; or
- c. independent study offered due to school closure or material decrease in attendance for 15 school days or less for affected pupils under one or more of the circumstances described in Education Code Sections 41422 and/or 46392, and 46393 for which the Charter School files an affidavit seeking an allowance of attendance due to emergency conditions.

7. A current written agreement shall be maintained on file for each independent study student, including but not limited to, all of 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..

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- 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 pursuant to Education Code Section 51747, subdivisions (a) and (b) 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 before 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, for the elementary grades, 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 individualized education program 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 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. For a pupil participating in an independent study program that is scheduled for more than 15 school days, each written agreement shall be signed, before 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 pupil, as applicable. For a pupil participating in an independent study program that is scheduled for 15 school days or fewer, each written agreement shall be signed during the school year in which the independent study takes program takes place, by the pupil, the pupil's parent, legal guardian, or caregiver, if the pupil is less than 18 years of age, the certificated employee who has been designated as having responsibility for the general supervision of independent study, and the certificated employee designated as having responsibility for the special education programming of the pupil, as applicable. The written agreement may be signed at any time during the school year, but it is the intent of the Legislature that parents or guardians of pupils be provided the agreement at or before the beginning of the school year. For purposes of this paragraph "caregiver" means a person who has met the requirements of Part 1.5 (commencing with Section 6550) of Division 11 of the Family Code.
- j. Written agreements may be signed using an electronic signature that complies with state and federal standards, as determined by the California Department of Education, 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.

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8. The Charter School shall comply with the Education Code sections 51745 through 51749.3 and the provisions of the Charter Schools Act of 1992 and the State Board of Education regulations adopted there under.
9. The Executive Director may establish regulations to implement these policies in accordance with the law.

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