Independent Study Policy for TEACH Public Schools

Applies to: TEACH Prep Academy, TEACH Academy of Technologies, TEACH Tech Charter High School

Policy Number	2370	**Name of Policy**	Independent Study

Original Adoption: September 23, 2025 | Revised: _____, 2026 | Effective: 2026-27 School Year

I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy governs Independent Study ("IS") offered at TEACH Prep Elementary, TEACH Academy of Technologies and TEACH Tech Charter High School. Independent Study is a voluntary educational alternative to classroom-based instruction, available on a short-term or long-term, full-time or part-time basis, for individual courses or combinations of courses.

Independent Study shall remain aligned to the School's adopted course of study and substantially equivalent in quality and quantity to classroom-based instruction. No student may be required to participate in Independent Study, and Independent Study shall not be used as an alternative curriculum or a disciplinary placement, except as specifically authorized by law.

II. VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND ELIGIBILITY

Participation in Independent Study is voluntary. A student may choose to participate, and a parent, guardian, or caregiver may request participation for a student under 18.

The School shall not impose a GPA, attendance-history, behavioral, or demonstrated-independence requirement, or any other eligibility condition, as a prerequisite to Independent Study unless that condition is required by applicable law or the student's individualized education program (IEP). A student may request to return to classroom-based instruction at any time, consistent with Section VIII.

A student with an IEP may participate in Independent Study only when the IEP specifically provides for Independent Study and the IEP team has determined that the student can receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) through that placement. Students with Section 504 plans, English learners, and other students shall continue to receive the services and supports to which they are otherwise entitled.

III. SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM INDEPENDENT STUDY

- Short-term Independent Study means participation for 1–15 cumulative schooldays during a school year.
- Long-term Independent Study means participation for 16 or more cumulative schooldays during a school year.

The additional statutory requirements for tiered reengagement, synchronous instruction and live interaction, and return-to-classroom transition timelines described in Sections VII and VIII apply to long-term Independent Study and do not apply to short-term Independent Study, except where another provision of law makes a particular requirement applicable.

Short-term Independent Study shall nonetheless include an appropriate course of study, assigned work, a method for evaluating and documenting participation, an appropriately certificated supervising employee, and a written agreement containing the information required by law.

IV. WRITTEN INDEPENDENT STUDY AGREEMENT

Each student participating in Independent Study shall have a current written Independent Study agreement, valid for no longer than one school year, that includes at minimum:

1. The course of study, learning objectives, and methods of study and evaluation;
2. The manner, time, frequency, and place for submitting assignments and reporting academic progress, and the manner and frequency of communication regarding academic progress with the student's parent, guardian, or caregiver;
3. The specific resources available to the student, including materials, personnel, and technology and connectivity adequate to participate;
4. The maximum time between the date an assignment is made and the date it is due, which shall not exceed 15 schooldays unless a shorter period is established for an individual assignment;
5. The standard for satisfactory educational progress and the number of missed assignments that triggers an evaluation of whether continued Independent Study remains in the student's best educational interest, which shall be: two consecutive missed assignment due dates, or failure to complete three assigned work products within any four-continuous-week period;
6. The beginning and ending dates and the duration of the agreement;
7. The number of course credits or other measures of academic accomplishment to be earned;
8. Academic and other supports available to the student, including a student who is not performing at grade level; and
9. A statement that Independent Study is voluntary and that the student is not required to participate.

For long-term Independent Study, all legally required signatures shall be obtained before Independent Study instruction begins. For short-term Independent Study, signatures may be obtained at any point during the school year in which the Independent Study occurs, provided all requirements applicable to the student's participation are established and implemented when the student begins participation.

The written agreement shall be signed by: the student; the student's parent, guardian, or caregiver if the student is under 18; the certificated employee responsible for general supervision of the student's Independent Study; and the certificated employee responsible for the student's special education programming, if applicable. Agreements, related records, and signatures may be maintained and executed electronically where legally permissible.

V. ATTENDANCE

Attendance for apportionment purposes shall be based on the time value of completed student work products and other qualifying instructional activity, as personally evaluated by a certificated employee, consistent with Education Code section 51747.5. A student shall not generate more than one day of attendance for any calendar day on which school is in session.

VI. SYNCHRONOUS INSTRUCTION AND LIVE INTERACTION (LONG-TERM INDEPENDENT STUDY)

For students in long-term Independent Study, the School shall offer and make reasonably accessible opportunities for synchronous instruction and live interaction at least at the following minimum frequencies:

Grade Span	Minimum Live Interaction	Minimum Synchronous Instruction
TK–3	No separate live-interaction requirement	Daily
4–8	Daily	At least weekly
9–12	No separate live-interaction requirement	At least weekly

A student's nonparticipation in an individual offered opportunity does not, by itself, constitute an absence or truancy and does not automatically terminate the student's Independent Study participation. The School shall document participation and nonparticipation in scheduled opportunities.

VII. TIERED REENGAGEMENT AND RETURN TO CLASSROOM-BASED INSTRUCTION

For students in long-term Independent Study, the School shall initiate tiered reengagement when a student:

- fails to generate attendance for more than 10 percent of required minimum instructional time over four continuous weeks;
- does not participate in more than 50 percent of scheduled synchronous instruction opportunities during a school month; or
- violates the written Independent Study agreement.

Reengagement shall include: verification of the student's current contact information; notification of the parent, guardian, or caregiver within one school day; outreach to identify barriers to participation and connect the student to supports; and a student-parent-educator conference when required. All reengagement activity shall be documented. A reengagement trigger does not automatically terminate a student's Independent Study participation.

A student, or the student's parent, guardian, or caregiver, may request to return to available classroom-based instruction at any time. The School shall provide a plan to transition the student to classroom-based instruction no later than five instructional days after the request, and no minimum period of prior Independent Study participation shall be required before a student may request return.

VIII. RECORDS

The School shall maintain records sufficient to substantiate Independent Study participation and attendance/apportionment claims, including the written agreement and required signatures; assignment,

evaluation, and time-value records; attendance documentation; synchronous instruction, live interaction, and reengagement records; and applicable special education, Section 504, and residency records. Records shall be retained for the period required by law, regulation, and the annual audit guide, and may be maintained electronically.

IX. RATIO OF STUDENTS TO CERTIFICATED EMPLOYEES

The School shall maintain the ratio of Independent Study average daily attendance to full-time-equivalent certificated employees responsible for Independent Study supervision, instruction, and evaluation required by Education Code section 51745.6, using the charter-school ratio option of 25 pupils to one full-time-equivalent certificated employee, or another ratio method authorized by law. Independent Study attendance exceeding the applicable ratio shall not be claimed for apportionment.

X. FUNDING CONDITIONS: NO ENHANCED BENEFITS; RESIDENCY

Consistent with Education Code section 51747.3, the School shall not provide a student, or the student's parent, guardian, or caregiver, participating in Independent Study any funds or other thing of value that the School does not provide to students attending regular classroom-based instruction. Providing access to connectivity and School-owned devices adequate to participate in Independent Study is not considered funds or a thing of value for this purpose.

Independent Study attendance shall be claimed for apportionment only for students who reside in the county in which the apportionment claim is reported, or in a county immediately adjacent to that county, and only as otherwise permitted by law.

XI. NO ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS

Except as required by this policy or by applicable California or federal law, the School shall not impose additional eligibility, participation, attendance, curriculum, meeting, assignment, technology, or return-to-classroom requirements on Independent Study students, including a minimum GPA, a minimum period of prior enrollment or Independent Study participation, required daily campus attendance, or a requirement that a parent be physically present while the student works.

XIII. ADMINISTRATION

The CASI or designee is authorized to establish administrative guidelines, forms, and procedures — including the TEACH Independent Study Guidelines and the Independent Study Agreement — necessary to implement this policy. Administrative guidelines may exceed, but shall not fall below, the requirements of this policy or applicable law, and shall not impose restrictions on Independent Study participation beyond those authorized by this policy or by law. If an administrative procedure conflicts with this policy or applicable law, this policy and applicable law control.

XIV. LEGAL AUTHORITY

This policy is adopted consistent with California Education Code sections 46300, 47612, 47612.5, 49501.5 and applicable school nutrition program requirements, and 51744 through 51749.6 (including sections 51745, 51745.5, 51745.6, 51747, 51747.3, and 51747.5); Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations, sections 11700

through 11705; the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act; and the School's approved charter petition(s).

XV. REVIEW

The governing body shall review this policy at least every five years, or sooner when changes to California law materially affect Independent Study.

Board Approved:	**Effective Date:**
_____	2026-27 School Year

Related Documents:

TEACH Tech Charter High School Course Offerings