

Sebastopol Independent Charter School Independent Study Policy

While Sebastopol Independent Charter School (“SICS” or the “Charter School”) is primarily dedicated to offering a classroom-based program, circumstances may arise for the option of short-term independent study. Because of these special circumstances, the Board of SICS authorizes Independent Study as an alternative instructional strategy for students enrolled in Kindergarten through Eighth Grades. Independent Study provides a means for students in certain circumstances to pursue curriculum objectives outside the regular classroom. Special circumstances are typically reserved for serious situations, such as medical emergencies and mandatory quarantine.

Independent study may be permitted, upon request, for all students who will be absent for a period of a minimum of one (1) school day and not more than fourteen (14) cumulative school days per school year, except in emergency conditions which, in the discretion of the Executive Director, authorize the Board of SICS to submit a Form J-13A to the State pursuant to Education Code section 46393 (further described below). 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.

To the extent possible, approval must be obtained from the Executive Director or designee in writing at least one (1) day before the commencement of the absence. Approving the start of independent study with less than one (1) day’s notice is under the discretion of the Executive Director or designee. The Executive Director or designee’s considerations may include, but are not limited to, the student’s current academic standing; the student’s grade level; the timing relative to the grading period; the purpose of the absence for which independent study is requested; previous participation in independent study; available information about medical condition(s) which limit participation in classroom instruction; and input from teachers, MTSS team or IEP team as applicable. The Executive Director or designee shall not deny a request for independent study on the basis of race, ethnicity, age, gender, mental or physical disability or on the basis of any other protected characteristic, either actual or perceived.

Independent study is conducted solely for the educational benefit for the students attending SICS as a means to encourage daily engagement in school work even during times of extended absence. Independent study is an optional educational alternative in which no pupil 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 pupils to complete their independent study successfully.

The SICS Board has adopted the following policies for implementation at the Charter School:

1. For pupils in all grade levels and programs offered by the Charter School, the maximum length of time that may elapse from the time an assignment is made and the date by which the pupil must complete the assigned work shall be five (5) school days.
2. The Executive Director or designee shall conduct an evaluation to determine whether it is in the best interests of the pupil to remain in independent study upon the following triggers:

- a. When any pupil fails to complete three (3) assignments during any period of five (5) school days.
- b. In the event the Student's educational progress falls below satisfactory levels as determined by the Charter School's Executive Director or Designee, who shall consider ALL of the following indicators:
 - i. The pupil's achievement and engagement in the independent study program, as indicated by the pupil's performance on applicable pupil-level measures of pupil achievement and pupil 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 pupil 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 pupil record. The record shall be maintained for a period of three years from the date of the evaluation and, if the pupil 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. A current written independent study master agreement shall be maintained on file for each independent study pupil, including, but not limited to all of the following:
 - a. The manner, time, frequency, and place for submitting a pupil's assignments, for reporting the pupil's academic progress, and for communicating with a pupil's parent or guardian regarding a pupil's academic progress.
 - b. The objectives and methods of study for the pupil'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 pupil. These resources shall include confirming or providing access to all pupils 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 pupil 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 pupil upon completion.
 - g. A statement detailing the academic and other supports that will be provided to

address the needs of pupils 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 pupil's individualized education program or plan pursuant to Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. Sec. 794), pupils in foster care or experiencing homelessness, and pupils 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 pupil 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 pupil through independent study only if the pupil is offered the alternative of classroom instruction.
 - i. As independent study is not offered for more than fourteen cumulative days in a school year (with the sole exception of emergency circumstances described below), each written agreement shall be signed within 10 school days of the commencement of the first day of the pupil's enrollment in independent study, 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. 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.
5. The Charter School shall comply with 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.
 6. The Executive Director shall establish regulations to implement these policies in accordance with the law.

Attendance Accounting:

SICS recognizes that families may not evenly distribute student's work assignments over weekdays. However, due to strict State law requirements for charter school attendance, SICS expects each student to be engaged in and document an educational activity required of them by SICS in the assignment on each weekday that SICS is in session. This should not be read to prohibit schoolwork on weekends and should not be read to dictate the manner in which a family distributes the assignments over the independent study period. SICS may claim apportionment for independent study only to the extent of the time value of pupil work products, as personally judged in each instance by a certificated teacher employed by SICS.

Administration of Independent Study

Each student's independent study shall be coordinated, evaluated and carried out under the general supervision of a certificated employee. General supervision" means the supervising teacher's (1) continuing oversight of the study design, implementation plan, allocation of resources, and evaluation of pupil or adult education student progress for any pupil's or adult education student's independent study; and (2) personal determination or personal review of the determination made by another certificated teacher of the time values for apportionment purposes of each pupil's or adult education student's work products.

The responsibilities of the certificated employee overseeing a student's independent study also shall be to:

- a. Ensure that the Charter School's independent study option is operated in accordance with law and SICS Board Policy.
- b. Facilitate the completion and execution of independent study written agreements.
- c. Complete or coordinate the preparation of all necessary records and reports.
- d. Establish and maintain in a systematic manner all records required by law and SICS Board policy.
- e. Monitor enrollment in independent study to stay within prescribed limits and to ensure the educational quality of independent study.
- f. Assure a smooth transition into and out of the independent study mode of instruction.

Independent Study of Fifteen (15) Cumulative School Days or More (Emergency Situations Only)

Pursuant to Education Code Section 46392-46393, independent study will be offered to any student impacted by any of the following conditions within 10 days of the first day of a school closure or material decrease in attendance:

1. Fire
2. Flood
3. Impassable roads
4. Epidemic
5. Earthquake
6. The imminence of a major safety hazard as determined by the local law enforcement agency
7. A strike involving transportation services to pupils provided by a non-school entity
8. Any other event which, in the discretion of the Executive Director, authorizes the Board of SICS to submit a Form J-13A to the State pursuant to Education Code Section 41422 and 46393.

Students with exceptional needs shall receive the services identified in their individualized education programs pursuant to Education Code Section 56345 and may participate in an independent study program.

SCIS shall re-open for in-person instruction as soon as possible unless prohibited under the direction of the local or state health officer.

Notwithstanding Education Code Section 51747(g)(9), if independent study of fifteen days or more is authorized under this emergency provision, SCIS shall obtain signed written independent study master agreements in a reasonable amount of time.

When providing independent study of fifteen days or more under emergency situations, SICS will

comply with the live interaction and/or synchronous instruction, tiered reengagement strategies, and transition back to in-person instruction requirements specified under Education Code Section 51747, and/or other applicable state laws as they may be amended from time to time.

When any student enrolled in classroom-based instruction is participating in independent study due to necessary medical treatment or inpatient treatment for mental health or substance abuse under the care of appropriately licensed professionals, the student shall be exempt from the live interaction and/or synchronous instruction, tiered reengagement strategies, and transition back to in-person instruction requirements specified under Education Code Section 51747. In such cases, evidence of the student's need to participate in independent study, from appropriately licensed professionals, shall be submitted to the Executive Director or designee. Under these circumstances, if the independent study exceeds fourteen cumulative days in a school year, each written agreement shall be signed, before the commencement of independent study, 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