

VISTA CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

601 North Fairview Street
Santa Ana, CA 92703
T: (714) 881-7407 | F: (714) 988-2747
www.vistacharterpublicschools.org

Collin Felch, Ed.D., Superintendent
Karen Amaya, Assistant Superintendent



INDEPENDENT STUDY POLICY

Vista Charter Public Schools (“Charter School”) may offer independent study to meet the short-term 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 Principal or designee retains discretion to approve independent study written agreements for students. Families interested in independent study should contact the Principal or the main office.

The Charter School shall provide appropriate existing services and resources to enable students to complete their independent study successfully. The following written policies have been adopted by the Charter School 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 thirty (30) school days.
- 2) The Principal or designee shall conduct an evaluation to determine whether it is in the best interests of the student to remain in independent study upon the following triggers:
 - a) When any student fails to complete three (3) assignments during any period of thirty (30) school days.
 - b) In the event a student’s educational progress falls below satisfactory levels as determined by 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. For high school grade levels this shall include access to all courses offered by the Charter School for graduation and approved by the UC or CSU as creditable under the A-

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G admissions criteria.

- 4) The Charter School has adopted tiered reengagement strategies* for the following students:
- a) All students 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) 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
 - c) Students 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 student.
 - b) Notification to parents or guardians of lack of participation within one (1) school day of the recording of a nonattendance day or lack of participation, (e.g., via email, message, text, telephone, letter, etc.);
 - c) Reach out to the student directly and/or parents or guardians, as well as health and social services as necessary, to determine student's needs for reengagement;
 - d) A clear standard for requiring a student-parent-educator conference to review a student's written agreement, and reconsider the independent study program's impact on the student's achievement and well-being, consistent with the policies adopted pursuant to paragraph (4) of subdivision (g) of Education Code Section 51747.
- 5) Based on each student's grade level, their teacher(s) of record will schedule and offer opportunities for synchronous instruction and daily live interaction at least as frequently as set forth in subsections a-c below. in place in accordance with Education Code Section 51747(e) for synchronous instruction and live interaction* below.

"Live interaction" means interaction between the student and Charter School staff, and may include peers, to maintain school connectedness. Examples of live interaction include check-ins, progress monitoring, provision of services, and instruction, and live interaction can be in-person or in the form of internet or telephonic communication.

"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 communication by the student's assigned teacher(s) of record, and involving live two-way communication. (EC § 51745.5.)

- a) For students in transitional kindergarten through grade 3, inclusive, the Charter School shall provide opportunities for daily synchronous instruction for all students throughout the school year by each student's teacher or teachers of record.

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- b) For students in grades 4-8, inclusive, the Charter School shall provide opportunities for daily live interaction between the student and a certificated or non-certificated employee of the Charter School and at least weekly synchronous instruction for all students throughout the school year by each student's teacher or teachers of record.
- c) For students in grades 9-12, inclusive, the Charter School shall provide opportunities for at least weekly synchronous instruction for all students throughout the school year by each student's teacher or teachers of record.

Charter School will document each student's participation in live interaction and synchronous instruction on each schoolday, as applicable, in whole or in part, for which live interaction or synchronous instruction is provided as part of the independent study program. A student who does not participate in scheduled live interaction or synchronous instruction on a schoolday will be documented as nonparticipatory for that schoolday for purposes of student participation reporting and tiered reengagement

- 6) The Charter School shall transition students whose families wish to return to in-person instruction from independent study expeditiously, and, in no case, later than five instructional days.*

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

- a. students who participate in an independent study program for fewer than 16 schooldays in a school year;
- b. students 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 students 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 students 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) The Charter School may offer independent study to meet the short- or long-term educational needs of students enrolled in the Charter School as needed in the case of emergency conditions as described in Education Code Sections 46392 and 46393 (e.g., fire, flood, impassable roads, epidemic, earthquake, epidemic, war, imminent safety hazard determined by local law enforcement). Independent study shall be offered to any student impacted by any of the emergency conditions set forth in Education Code Sections 46392 and 46393 within ten (10) days of the first day of a school closure or material decrease in attendance. In the event of emergency conditions set forth in Education Code Sections 46392 and 46393, in which instruction or services, or both, cannot be provided to the student either at the school or in person for more than ten (10) school days, students who are individuals with exceptional needs shall receive the services identified in their IEP for emergency conditions and may participate in an independent study program pursuant to this policy.

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- 8) 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.
 - 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 subdivisions (a) and (b) of Education Code Section 51747 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) Independent study agreements shall be fully executed as follows:
 - i) Signatures on the independent study agreement shall include 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. 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.

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- ii) 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.
 - iii) For a student 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.
 - iv) For a student participating in an independent study program that is scheduled for 15 schooldays or fewer, each written agreement shall be signed, during the school year in which the independent study program takes place. 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 students be provided the agreement at or before the beginning of the school year.
- 9) The Charter School shall comply with the Education Code sections 51744 through 51749.3 and the provisions of the Charter Schools Act of 1992 and the State Board of Education regulations adopted there under.
- 10) The Superintendent may establish regulations to implement these policies in accordance with the law.

Amendments to the Independent Study Written Agreement During Term of Agreement

If a material change to the student's independent study program occurs during the term of the independent study written agreement, the Charter School shall provide written notification of the change.

A "material change" may include but is not limited to the following:

- Change of course(s);
- Change of teacher or teachers of record;
- Change of certificated employee responsible for special education programming;
- Change of grade level;

Required Notification

Written notification shall be provided to:

1. All individuals who signed the original independent study written agreement;
2. Any newly assigned teacher or teachers of record; and
3. Any newly assigned certificated employee responsible for the student's special education programming, if applicable.

Such written notification shall be in an electronic form and shall describe the change and the effective date

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of the modification.

No Requirement for Re-Execution

Unless otherwise required by law or regulation, changes to the student's independent study program during the term of an agreement shall not require the execution of a new independent study written agreement, nor an addendum to the agreement. The written notification described above shall serve to document the modification.

Maintenance of Records

The School shall maintain documentation of any written notifications of modifications to the independent study written agreement in the student's educational record.

Additional Independent Study Requirements

- 1) Charter School will not provide any funds or other thing of value to the student or his or her parent or guardian that a school district could not legally provide to a similarly situated student of the school district, or to his or her parent or guardian.
- 2) 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. A student's inability to work independently, the student's need for adult support, or the student's 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.
- 3) Charter School 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 Charter School, or the combined time value of student work product and student participation in synchronous instruction.
- 4) Charter School will maintain 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 live interaction and synchronous instruction as described above in Section 5.
- 5) Records of the independent study program will be maintained for audit purposes and shall include the following:
 - a) A copy of the independent study board policies.
 - b) A separate listing of the students, by grade level who have participated in independent study identifying units of the curriculum attempted (also known as the "course of study") and units of the curriculum completed by students, as specified in their written agreements.
 - c) A file of all written agreements, with representative samples of each student's work products and a signed acknowledgement by the supervising teacher indicating that the teacher(s) of record has

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personally evaluated the work or that teacher(s) of record has personally reviewed the evaluations made by another certificated teacher.