



INDEPENDENT STUDY POLICY

Highland Academy Charter School (“Charter School”) may offer independent study to meet the short-term educational needs of pupils enrolled in the Charter School. Short-term independent study is available for students who are unable to participate in classroom instruction for no more than twenty (20) total school days in a school year. Independent study must be pre-approved by the Executive Director. 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 following written policies have been adopted by the Charter School Board of Directors for implementation at Charter School:

1. For pupils 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 pupil must complete the assigned work shall be the number of school days they are on Independent Study.
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 25% of assignments during any period of 5 school days.
 - b. In the event Student’s educational progress falls below satisfactory levels as determined by the Charter School’s Executive or Assistant Director which considers 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 provided at a level of quality and intellectual challenge substantially equivalent to in-person instruction.
4. The Charter School has adopted tiered reengagement strategies for all pupils who are not generating attendance for more than three (3) school days or 60% of the instructional days in a school week, or who are in violation of the written agreement pursuant to Education Code Section 51747(g). These procedures are as follow:
 - a. Verification of current contact information for each enrolled pupil;
 - b. Notification to parents or guardians of lack of participation within one school day of the absence or lack of participation;
 - c. Outreach from the Charter School to determine pupil needs including connection with health and social services as necessary;
 - d. When the evaluation described above under paragraph 2.b.iv. is triggered to consider whether remaining in independent study is in the best interest of the pupil, a pupil-parent-education conference shall be required to review a pupil's written agreement and reconsider the independent study program's impact on the pupil's achievement and well-being. This conference shall be a meeting involving, at a minimum, all parties who signed the pupil's written independent study agreement.¹
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, the plan to provide opportunities for daily synchronous instruction for all pupils throughout the school year by each pupil's assigned supervising teacher shall be as follows: Daily online instruction during in-person classes by classroom teachers via Zoom.
 - b. For pupils in grades 4-8, inclusive, the plan to 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 assigned supervising teacher shall be as follows: Daily online instruction during in-person classes by classroom teachers via Zoom.
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:
 - a. The student's seat in their respective classroom will be held during the period of their independent study.
 - b. Upon the end date of a student's independent study term and/or a parent's notice to the Executive Director to return their student to in-person instruction, the Executive Director shall work with the student's teacher to ensure that the student

¹ The tiered reengagement strategies shall not apply to pupils that participate in an independent study program for fewer than 15 schooldays in a school year.

can return to in-person instruction expeditiously, upon the end date of a student's independent study term and no later than five instructional days from the date of the parent's notice to the Executive Director.²

7. A current written 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(a) and (b) regarding the maximum length of time allowed between the assignment and the completion of a pupil'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 pupil'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 pupil may be required to participate. In the case of a pupil who is referred or assigned to any school, class, or program pursuant to Education Code Sections 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.

² The plan to transition pupils whose families wish to return to in-person instruction shall not apply to pupils that participate in an independent study program for fewer than 15 schooldays in a school year.

- i. 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 all persons who have direct responsibility for providing assistance to the pupil. For purposes of this paragraph "caregiver" means a person who has met the requirements of Family Code Section 6550. For the 2021-22 school year only, this written agreement shall be signed no later than 30 days after the first day of instruction.
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 shall establish regulations to implement these policies in accordance with the law.