

Independent Study Policy **Region(s): CA**

Rocketship Public Schools may offer independent study (or “I.S.”) to meet the educational needs of pupils enrolled in the charter school.¹ Independent study is an alternative education designed to teach the knowledge and skills of the core curriculum. Rocketship Public Schools shall provide appropriate existing services and resources to enable pupils to complete their independent study successfully. This policy has been adopted by the Board for implementation at Rocketship Public Schools schools. It covers time frame for completion of Independent Study assignments; requirements for the Independent Study Master Agreement; and additional requirements for Independent Study in accordance with California law, including the rights of I.S. students, restrictions on the use of I.S. in certain circumstances, obligations for teachers, procedures for collecting ADA, and recordkeeping.

I. Length of Assignments

For pupils in all grade levels offered by the 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 thirty (30) school days.²

When any pupil fails to complete five (5) assignments during any period of thirty (30) school days, the Principal or his or her designee shall conduct an evaluation to determine whether it is in the best interests of the pupil to remain in independent study. A written record of the findings of any evaluation conducted pursuant to this policy shall be treated as a mandatory interim pupil record. This 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.

II. Satisfactory Progress

Pursuant to Education Code 51747, a pupil must make satisfactory educational progress to remain eligible for independent study. Satisfactory educational progress shall be determined based on all of the following indicators:

- 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 paragraphs (4) and (5) of subdivision (d) of Section 52060.
- The completion of assignments, assessments, or other indicators that evidence that the pupil is working on assignments.
- Learning required concepts, as determined by the supervising teacher.
- Progressing toward successful completion of the course of study or individual course, as determined by the supervising teacher.

Should the pupil fail to make satisfactory educational progress as defined above, an evaluation will be conducted to determine whether it is in the best interests of the pupil to remain in independent study, or

¹ In accordance with Education Code 51745(a), Rocketship shall offer independent study for the 2021-22 school year, including individualized study for students whose health would be put at risk by in-person instruction, as determined by the student’s parent/guardian.

² This means that I.S. students must be turning in work at least every 30 days during I.S. periods that extend beyond 30 days. This does NOT mean that students automatically have a 30-day window to turn in work after it is assigned. For I.S. assignments that are shorter than 30 days, the work is due on the day the student returns, as described in Section III below.

whether the pupil should return to the regular school program. A written record of the findings of any evaluation made pursuant to this subdivision 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.

III. Master Agreement

A current written agreement shall be maintain on file for each independent study pupil, including but not limited to, all of the following:

- The manner, time, frequency, and place for submitting a pupil's assignments, and for reporting his or her progress, and for communicating with the parent/guardian regarding the pupil's academic progress. .
- The objectives and methods of study for the pupil's work, and the methods utilized to evaluate that work.
- 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.
- A statement of the policies adopted herein 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 prior to an evaluation of whether or not the pupil should be allowed to continue in independent study.
- The duration of the independent study agreement, including 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 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.
- Each written agreement shall be signed, prior to 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 Part 1.5 (commencing with Section 6550) of the Family Code.³ In accordance with Education Code 51747(g)(E), written agreements may be signed using an electronic

³ In accordance with Education Code 51747(g)(9)(F), written agreements for the 2021-22 school year must be signed no later than the first 30 days after instruction.

signature that complies with relevant state and federal standards.

Pursuant to Education Code 51747(h), before signing a written agreement, and upon the request of the parent or guardian of a pupil, the local educational agency shall conduct a phone, videoconference, or in-person pupil-parent-educator conference or other school meeting during which the pupil, parent or guardian, and, if requested by the pupil or parent, an education advocate, may ask questions about the educational options, including which curriculum offerings and nonacademic supports will be available to the pupil in independent study, before making the decision about enrollment or disenrollment in the various options for learning.

IV. Tiered Reengagement

Pursuant to Education Code 51747(d), Rocketship will employ tiered reengagement strategies for all pupils who are not generating attendance for more than three schooldays or 60 percent of the instructional days in a school week, or who are in violation of the written agreement described above. These procedures shall include, but are not necessarily limited to, all of the following:

- Verification of current contact information for each enrolled pupil.
- Notification to parents or guardians of lack of participation within one school day of the absence or lack of participation.
- Outreach from the school to determine pupil needs, including connection with health and social services as necessary.
- 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. The pupil-parent-educator conference shall include all parties who signed the Master Agreement described above.

These requirements do not apply to students whose Independent Study agreements are for fewer than fifteen (15) school days in a school year.

V. Synchronous Instruction

In accordance with Education Code 51747(e), Rocketship's Independent Study program shall include synchronous instruction, defined as classroom-style instruction or designated small group or one-on-one instruction delivered in person, or in the form of internet or telephonic communications, and involving live two-way communication between the teacher and pupil. Synchronous instruction shall be provided by the teacher of record for that pupil

For pupils in grades transitional kindergarten and grades 1 through 3, inclusive, synchronous instruction shall be daily. For pupils in grades 4 and 5, synchronous instruction shall be at least weekly. Students in grades 4 and 5 shall also receive daily live interaction, defined as interaction between the pupil and classified or certificated staff, and may include peers, provided for the purpose of maintaining school connectedness, including, but not limited to, wellness checks, progress monitoring, provision of services, and instruction. This interaction may take place in person, or in the form of internet or telephonic communication.

Pursuant to Education Code 51747.5(c) and (d), Rocketship shall document each pupil's participation in live interaction and synchronous instruction pursuant to Section 51747 on each schoolday, as applicable, in whole or in part, for which independent study is provided. A pupil who does not participate in independent study on a schoolday shall be documented as nonparticipatory for that schoolday. Rocketship shall also maintain written or computer-based evidence of pupil 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.

These requirements do not apply to students whose Independent Study agreements are for fewer than fifteen (15) school days in a school year.

VI. Additional Requirements for the Use of Independent Study

Any student who wishes to pursue an Independent Study agreement must first receive approval from the Principal in accordance with this Policy. Rocketship Public Schools shall abide by the following requirements under California law:

- The Independent Study program will be equivalent in quality and quantity to classroom instruction. (5 CCR 11701.5(a)) The provision of content shall be aligned to grade level standards that are provided at a level of quality and intellectual challenge substantially equivalent to in-person instruction (EC 51747(c))
- I.S. students shall have the same access to existing services and resources as other students in the school in which the I.S. student is enrolled. (EC 51746, 5 CCR 11701.5(b))
- I.S. students shall have equal rights and privileges as students in the classroom program. EC 51746, 5 CCR 11701.5(c)
- An I.S. student shall be assigned a full day's worth of work equivalent to that which he/she would be assigned in a classroom setting. (5 CCR 11701.5(a))
- A certificated teacher shall generally supervise, coordinate, and evaluate the work of each I.S. student. (EC 51747.5)
- Rocketship schools shall not claim ADA for any I.S. student who is not a resident of the county in which the apportionment claim is reported or an adjoining county. (EC 46300.2 and 51747.3(b))
- Rocketship schools shall not provide I.S. students or their parents/guardians with funds or any other things of value that a school district could not legally provide to students who attend regular classes. (EC 51747.3(a)) . Providing access to connectivity and Rocketship-owned devices adequate to participate in an independent study program and complete assigned work,, or to participate in an independent study course, shall not be considered funds or other things of value for these purposes.
- Special education students shall not begin I.S. without an IEP (Individualized Education Program) that specifically provides for I.S. (EC 51745(c))
- Rocketship schools shall not claim ADA for a student's independent study prior to the date of the last required signature on the student's I.S. Agreement.
- Rocketship schools shall not claim ADA for any student if the time value of the student's work products for each assignment has not been personally judged by a certificated teacher (EC 51747.5(b))
- Assignments are **due on the day the student returns** from I.S., notwithstanding Section I above. However, Rocketship schools may accept I.S. assignments **up to five (5)** school days after the student returns from I.S. Assignments that are turned in more than five (5) school days after the student returns from I.S. will NOT be counted.
- Rocketship schools shall maintain files for each I.S. student containing the following:
 - All I.S. Agreements, including documents incorporated by reference (e.g., subsidiary agreements, assignment sheets, work records, grade level objectives, etc. as applicable). (5 CCR 11703(b)(3))
 - Representative work samples, with signed or initialed notations by the certificated teacher who made and evaluated the assignment and, if not one in the same, the supervising teacher. (5 CCR 11703(b)(3))
- Rocketship schools shall maintain a record of all I.S. students' attendance which is separate from

classroom instruction attendance. (5 CCR 11703(b)(4))

- Rocketship schools shall maintain a list of I.S. teachers that includes their teaching assignments is maintained so that auditors can determine the teacher-to-ADA ratio. (EC 51745.6)
- All auditable materials are maintained for I.S. students for three years excluding the current fiscal year, except in the case of unresolved audit exceptions. (5 CCR 11700(l) and 11703(b))
- The school principal shall create a plan 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 (EC 51747(f))

Rocketship Public Schools shall comply with the Education Code Sections 51745 through 51749.3 and the provisions of the Charter School's Act and the State Board of Education regulations adopted there under.

The Principal shall establish regulations to implement these policies in accordance with the law.