

Darnall Charter School
Board Policy
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Independent Study

General Statement of Policy

Darnall Charter School recognizes the need for students to be able to use independent study as an optional, alternative instructional strategy for those whose needs may be best met through study outside of the regular classroom setting. Independent study offers a means of individualizing an educational plan to serve students whose health or other personal circumstances make classroom attendance difficult. As necessary to meet student needs, independent study may be offered on a full-time basis or on a part-time basis in conjunction with part or full time classroom study. For students who participate in independent study, Darnall Charter School will provide appropriate services, technology, and resources to enable pupils to complete their independent study successfully.

Actions and Policies

The executive director or designee may provide a variety of independent study opportunities. A student's participation in independent study shall be voluntary. The executive director or designee may approve independent study for an individual student only upon determining that the student is prepared to meet the requirements for independent study and is likely to succeed in independent study. A student with disabilities may participate in independent study if the student's individualized education program ("IEP") specifically provides for that participation. (Ed. Code, § 51745(c).) 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. The minimum period of time for any independent study option is one (1) school day.

The following independent study policies have been adopted in accordance with Education Code Section 51747:

- For each student in independent study, Darnall Charter School will assign a certificated employee to coordinate, evaluate, and provide general supervision of the student's independent study instruction.
- For students in all grade levels offered at Darnall Charter School, the maximum length of time allowed between the date an assignment is made and the date the assignment is due is twenty (20) school days.

- When any student fails to complete more than five assignments during any period of twenty (20) school days or fails to make satisfactory educational progress (defined below and in the Master Agreement), Darnall Charter School will conduct an evaluation to determine whether it is in the best interests of the student to remain in independent study, or whether the student should return to or otherwise be placed in a regular in-person school program. 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 student transfers to another California public school, the record will be forwarded to that school.
- For purposes of this policy a student is deemed to be making satisfactory educational progress if the student is on track to enter the next grade level at the completion of the current school year and/or progressing toward their goals pursuant to their IEP. The executive director or designee is responsible for making this determination based on all of the following indicators:
 - The student's achievement and engagement in the independent study program, as indicated by the student's performance on student-level measures of student achievement and student engagement set forth in Education Code Section 52060(d)(4)-(5).
 - The completion of assignments, assessments, or other indicators that show the student 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.
- Darnall Charter School will provide content to independent study students that is aligned to grade-level standards and substantially equivalent to in-person instruction.
- For students who participate in independent study at Darnall Charter School for sixteen (16) school days or more per school year:
 - If a student does not generate attendance for more than 10 percent of required minimum instructional time over four continuous weeks of the Darnall Charter School approved instructional calendar, a student is 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 a student is in violation of their Master Agreement, Darnall Charter School will engage in the following tiered reengagement procedures:
 - Verify student's current contact information.

- Notify parents or guardians of the student's lack of participation within one (1) school day of the student's recording of a non-attendance day or lack of participation (e.g., via email, message, text, telephone, letter, etc.).
 - Reach out to the student directly and/or parents or guardians, to determine student's needs for reengagement, including connection with health and social services as may be necessary.
 - If the student fails to complete five assignments during any period of twenty (20) school days or is failing to make satisfactory educational progress as defined in the section above and in the Master Agreement, Darnall Charter School will schedule a student-parent-educator conference (a meeting involving all individuals who signed the student's Master Agreement) to review the student's Master Agreement and reconsider the independent study program's impact on the student's achievement and well-being and implement any school programs intended to address chronic absenteeism, as applicable.
- Based on each student's grade level, Darnall Charter School will schedule and offer opportunities for synchronous instruction and daily live interaction at least as frequently as set forth in the sections below.
- "Live interaction" means interaction between the student and Darnall Charter School staff, and may include peers, to maintain school connectedness. Examples of live interaction include, but are not limited to, 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.
 - For students in grades TK-3, inclusive, an assigned teacher(s) of record will schedule and offer opportunities for daily synchronous instruction throughout the school year.
 - For students in grades 4-8, inclusive, an assigned teacher(s) of record will schedule and offer opportunities for at least weekly synchronous instruction and Darnall Charter School will schedule and offer daily live interaction throughout the school year.
- Darnall Charter School will document each student's participation in live interaction and synchronous instruction pursuant to Education Code Section 51747 on each school day,

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 school day will be documented as non-participatory for that school day for purposes of pupil participation reporting and tiered reengagement pursuant to Education Code Section 51747.

- A student's parent or guardian may request that their student return to in-person instruction from independent study by making a written request to the executive director or designee or their assigned teacher(s) of record. The student will be returned to in-person instruction within five (5) school days, pending space available. If there is not space in Darnall Charter School's in-person program at the student's grade level, Darnall Charter School will offer to help the student enroll in the in-person program offered by their district of residence and offer the student an opportunity to join Darnall Charter School's waitlist within five schooldays.

The above sections of this policy do not apply to students 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. Darnall Charter School shall obtain evidence from appropriately licensed professionals of the need for students to participate in independent study pursuant to this section.

The executive director or designee shall ensure that a Master Agreement is in place between Darnall Charter School and the student as prescribed by law, and each agreement shall include the following:

- 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.
- The objectives and methods of study for the student's work, and the methods utilized to evaluate that work.
- 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.
- A statement of the policies adopted herein 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

prior to an evaluation of whether or not the student should be allowed to continue in independent study.

- The duration of the Master Agreement, including the beginning and ending dates for the student's participation in independent study under the agreement. No Master 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 student upon completion.
- 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 IEP 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.
- The inclusion of a statement in each Master 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 Education Code 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.

Darnall Charter School will comply with the written independent study agreement signature requirements set forth in Education Code Section 51747(g)(9), including:

- For a student participating in independent study that is scheduled for sixteen (16) or more school days: Each Master Agreement shall be signed, prior to the commencement of independent study, by 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 a student participating in independent study that is scheduled for fifteen (15) or fewer school days: Each Master Agreement shall be signed during the school year in which the independent study program takes place by 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 policy, “caregiver” means a person who has met the requirements of Part 1.5 (commencing with Section 6550) of Division 11 of the Family Code.

Before signing a Master Agreement, the parent or guardian of a student may request that Darnall Charter School conduct a telephone, videoconference, or in-person student-parent-educator conference or other school meeting during which the student, parent or guardian, and, if requested by the student or parent, an education advocate, may ask questions about the educational options, including which curriculum offerings and nonacademic supports will be available to the student in independent study, before making the decision about enrollment or disenrollment in the various options for learning.

Teachers are expected to monitor student progress and work closely with each student to determine the amount and type of contact needed for the student to be successful in the program.

The executive director or designee shall track and review data related to independent study, including ongoing progression of student performance, especially related to classroom-based instruction, and the number and proportion of independent study students who graduate or successfully complete independent study. Based on the program evaluation, the executive director or designee will determine areas for program improvement as needed.

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Effective: July, 2025