

## Walden Academy Policy and Procedure Manual

### Chapter 5000, Students

#### Section 80, Independent Study Policy

Date: Board Approved 11/24/23

Responsible Department: School Director

School Director Source Document: n/a

The Walden Academy Board of Trustees are committed to providing options for students and to establishing an Independent Study Program for The Walden Academy Board of Trustees are committed to providing options for students and to establishing an Independent Study Program for Walden Academy. The Independent Study Program shall provide as an alternative instructional strategy to regular classroom instruction for students enrolled in grades K-12 to reach curriculum objectives and fulfill graduation requirements. Independent Study shall offer a means of individualizing the educational plan for students who have difficulty functioning in a regular classroom environment.

The Superintendent/designee shall determine that the prospective independent study student and/or the parent or guardian understand and are prepared to meet the county office of education's requirements for independent study. Independent study entails a commitment by both the parent/guardian and the student. Independent study may be offered only to students who can achieve in this program as well as or better than they would in the regular classroom.

The Superintendent/designee shall ensure that a written independent study agreement, as prescribed by law, exists for each participating student. **To foster each student's success in independent study, the Board establishes the following maximum lengths of time which may elapse between the time an assignment is made and date by which the student must complete the assigned work shall be:**

- **2 weeks for all students grades TK-8.**

When circumstances justify a longer time, the Superintendent/designee may extend the maximum length of an assignment one additional week. For good cause, the Superintendent/designee may extend this period, up to four weeks. Such an extension may be made only pursuant to a written request with justification.

When any student fails to complete consecutive independent study assignments **consisting of 60% or more of total work**, an evaluation shall be conducted to determine whether it is in the student's best interest to remain in independent study. Evaluation findings shall be kept in the student's permanent record.

Upon satisfactory completion of the program objectives, the assigned teacher shall verify completion of work, grades, and earned credit, such credit to be entered into the student's permanent record. Credit given shall not exceed that which is available in the regular school for that student.

The Superintendent shall establish and provide the necessary and appropriate forms and regulations to carry out this policy.

## **Independent Study Instruction**

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Independent Study Walden Academy has adopted a policy to implement the requirements of AB 130. With the enactment of Assembly Bill No. 130 (Ch. 44, Stats. 2021, hereafter “AB 130”), school districts and county offices of education may offer independent study with limited exceptions.

This Regulation is intended to implement the additional requirements of AB 130.

## **Monitoring Student Progress**

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In addition to the number of missed assignments permitted by Walden Academy before an evaluation is conducted to determine whether it is in the best interest of a pupil to remain in independent study, or whether the pupil should return to the regular school program, the pupil’s level of satisfactory progress shall be considered.

Satisfactory educational progress shall be determined based on all of the following indicators:

1. 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, including but not limited to the student’s attendance and absenteeism.
2. The completion of assignments, assessments, or other indicators that evidence that the pupil is working on assignments.
3. Learning required concepts, as determined by the supervising teacher.
4. Progressing toward successful completion of the course of study or individual course, as determined by the supervising teacher.

## **Special Education Students Participating in Independent Study**

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Students enrolled in special education programs may participate in independent study if the Individual Education Plan (IEP) Team agrees and Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) can be established. The “certificated employee with responsibility for the student’s special education programming” must be a signatory to the written agreement.

## **Content Standards**

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The provision of content aligned to grade level standards that is provided to pupils in the independent study program shall be substantially equivalent to in-person instruction.

## **Re-engagement Strategies**

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Walden Academy employees will take measures to re-engage pupils who are not generating attendance for more than 10 percent of required minimum instructional time over four continuous weeks of approved instructional calendar, pupils found non-participatory in synchronous instructional offerings pursuant to 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 pupils who are in violation of their written agreement pursuant to Educational Code section 51747 (g), and this policy. Procedures for tiered re-engagement strategies shall include all of the following:

1. Verification of the pupil’s current contact information.

2. Notification to parents or guardians of lack of participation within one school day of the absence or lack of participation.
3. A plan for outreach to determine pupil needs, including connection with health and social services as necessary.
4. 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, consistent with the provisions of this policy regarding missed assignments and satisfactory education progress.

"Pupil-parent-educator conference" means a meeting involving, at a minimum, all parties who signed the pupil's written independent study agreement pursuant to subdivision (g) of Section 51747 or the written learning agreement pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 51749.6.

This section shall not apply to pupils that participate in an independent study program for fewer than 15 school days in a school year.

### **Instructional Delivery Methods**

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Instruction shall be provided to all pupils in the independent study program in accordance with the pupil's written agreement, and shall include the following:

1. For pupils in transitional kindergarten, kindergarten, and grades 1 to 3, inclusive, daily synchronous instruction shall be provided for all pupils throughout the school year.
2. Pupils in grades 4 to 8, inclusive, will be provided opportunities for both daily live interaction and at least weekly synchronous instruction for all pupils throughout the school year.
2. Pupils in grades 9 to 12, inclusive, will be provided opportunities for at least weekly synchronous instruction for all pupils throughout the school year.

"Live interaction" means interaction between the pupil and Walden Academy 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, provisions of services, and instruction. This interaction may take place in person, or in the form of internet or telephonic communication.

"Synchronous instruction" means 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 pursuant to Education Code Section 51747.5. A pupil who does not participate in independent study on a school day shall be documented as non-participatory for that school day for purposes of pupil participation reporting and tiered re-engagement pursuant to section 51447.

### **Returning to In-person Instruction**

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Pupils whose families wish to return to classroom-based instruction from independent study may notify the designated contact person, as set forth in the pupil's written agreement. Upon notice from the pupil's family that a return to in-person instruction is desired, the Site Administrator shall provide for the pupil's return to the school of the pupil's previous in-person attendance, or such other school as is appropriate for

the pupil's grade level and place of residence, no later than five instructional days after the request is received.

This section shall not apply to pupils that participate in an independent study program for fewer than 15 schooldays in a school year.

### **Independent Study Fewer Than Fifteen Days**

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Written agreements for independent study lasting fewer than 15 school days must be signed by parent/guardian within 10 days of enrollment in independent study.

### **Master Agreement**

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Each pupil's written agreement for independent study shall include, in addition to those provisions required by Walden Academy, the following:

1. The manner, time, frequency, and place for reporting the pupil's academic progress, and for communicating with a pupil's parent or guardian regarding the pupil's academic progress.
2. 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.
3. A statement of the level of satisfactory educational progress allowed before an evaluation of whether or not the pupil should be allowed to continue in independent study.
  3. A statement detailing the academic and other supports that will be provided to address the needs of the pupils 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.

Signed written agreements, supplemental agreements, assignment records, work samples, and attendance records assessing time value of work or evidence that an instructional activity occurred may be maintained as an electronic file. An electronic file includes a computer or electronic stored image of an original document, including, but not limited to, portable document format, JPEG, or other digital image file type, that may be sent via fax machine, email, or other electronic means. Either an original document or an electronic file of the original document is allowable for auditing purposes.

Written agreements may be signed using an electronic signature that complies with state and federal standards 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.

Each pupil's written agreement must be completed and signed by parent, student, and teacher prior to program commencement for programs scheduled for 15 days or more.

### **Independent Study Enrollment and Notice**

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Upon the request of the parent or guardian of a pupil, and before signing a written agreement with the pupil's parent or guardian, the Walden Academy staff may 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.

#### LEGAL REFERENCE

Education Code: 51745-51749 Independent Study Programs

Assembly Bill No. 130 (Ch. 44, Stats. 2021)

Assembly Bill No. 181 (Ch. 52, Stats. 2022)

Adopted: