



## Independent Study Policy

The Cottonwood School ("TCS" or the "Charter School") may offer independent study to meet the educational needs of pupils enrolled in the charter school. Independent study is an optional educational alternative in which no pupil may be required to participate and is designed to teach 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 TCS Board of Directors for implementation at Charter School:

**1. Time in Which an Assignment Must Be Completed:** 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, the date by which the pupil must complete the assigned work shall be thirty-five days (35).

**2. Placement Determination:**

The Director of Instruction and Assessment or their designee shall conduct an evaluation to determine whether it is in the pupil's best interest to remain in independent study upon the following triggers:

- a) When any pupil fails to complete two (2) assignments during any period of thirty-five (35) school days.
- b) In the event Student's educational progress falls below satisfactory levels as determined by 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. 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.

3. **Academic Content:** 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. 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 credible under the A-G admissions criteria.
4. **Tiered Re-engagement Strategies:** The Charter School has adopted tiered re-engagement strategies for the following pupils:
  - a) 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 10 percent of required minimum instructional time over four continuous weeks of the Charter School's approved instructional calendar;
  - b) Pupils found not participatory pursuant to Education Code Section 51747.5 for more than the greater of three schooldays or 60 percent of the scheduled days of synchronous instruction in a school month as applicable by grade span; or
  - c) Pupils who are in violation of the written agreement pursuant to Education Code Section 51747(g).

These procedures shall include, but are not necessarily limited to, all of the following:

- a. Verification of current contact information for each enrolled pupil;
- b. Notification to parents or guardians of lack of participation within one (1) school day of the recording of a non-attendance day or lack of participation;
- c. A plan for outreach from the Charter School to determine pupil needs, including connection with health and social services as necessary;
- d. 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 policies adopted pursuant to paragraph (4) of subdivision (g) of Education Code Section 51747. This conference shall be a meeting involving, at a minimum, all parties who signed the pupil's written independent study agreement.

- e. TCS may conduct push surveys to determine whether any obstacles exist in a student's ability to access independent study and what additional interventions may be appropriate.

**5. Synchronous Instruction and Live Interaction:** 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: TCS shall make available daily "Interaction/Instruction Time" for instruction with supervising teacher.
- 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: TCS shall make available daily "Interaction/Instruction Time" for instruction with supervising teacher.
- c. For pupils in grades 9-12, inclusive, the plan to provide opportunities for at least weekly synchronous instruction for all pupils throughout the school year by each pupil's assigned supervising teacher shall be as follows: TCS shall make available daily "Interaction/Instruction Time" for instruction with supervising teacher.

**6. Transition Plan:** 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. TCS operates a site-based high school program serving students in grades 9-12. Space is limited, but families wishing to transition to on-site instruction from the independent study program may apply for a spot in this program.
- b. For students in grades K-8 and/or and students in grades 9-12 who are unable to secure a seat in the TCS site-based high school program due to limited space: No student may be required to attend the Charter School. The Charter School shall support families to transition student whose families wish to return to in-person instruction from independent study by providing families with options for in-person instruction in their school district of residence or surrounding area.

**7. Current Written Agreement:** A current written agreement shall be 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 and reporting his or her progress.
- b. The objectives and methods of study for the pupil's work, and the methods utilized, to evaluate that work. Academic evaluations will be designated on the Assignment and Work Record (AWR) and are incorporated herein. Other acceptable methods of evaluation include, but are not limited to: Teacher Made Tests, Student Conferences, Progress/Report Cards, Chapter/Unit Tests, Work Samples, Observations, Portfolios, State Standards Testing, Learning Journals, Presentations, Quizzes, Labs, Finals. Academic progress is reported verbally and/or written to parents/guardians at the end

of each learning period, quarterly, at the end of each semester, and/or when a parent requests.

- c. The specific resources, including materials and personnel, 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. Students are provided the technology they need to participate in Independent Study and complete assignments.
- d. 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 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.
- e. 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.
- 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 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.
- i. 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 under 18 years of age, the certificated employee who has been designated as having responsibility or 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. A pupil parent educator conference is available upon request before the Master Agreement is signed.
  - 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.

- For the 2021–22 school year only, the Charter School shall obtain a signed written agreement for an independent study program of any length of time no later than 30 days after the first day of instruction in an independent study program or October 15, whichever date comes later.

**8. Average Daily Attendance:** It is the policy of this Board that each student is, at a minimum, expected to accomplish the following in order for the student to be counted as present/attending for Average Daily Attendance (ADA) purposes:

- a. Students will initial the "Monthly Independent Study Log" on the school days where they have completed schoolwork Monday through Fridays that are not school holidays. Parents/guardians will sign the monthly log under the following statement: "By signing this log, I verify that my student completed schoolwork on these days. "

**9. Compliance with the Education Code:** The Charter School shall comply with the Education Code Sections 51745 through 51749.3, and the provision of the Charter School's Act and the State Board of Education regulation adopted thereunder.

**10. Implementation of Independent Study Policy:** The Executive Director or designee may establish regulations to implement these policies in accordance with the law.