

**River Montessori Charter School  
Governing Board Policy  
Independent Study**

The Governing Board of the River Montessori Charter School (RMCS) authorizes independent study as a temporary, voluntarily optional, alternative instructional strategy by which students in grades 1-6 may reach curriculum objectives and fulfill promotion requirements. Independent study shall offer a means of individualizing the educational plan for students outside the regular classroom during travel, illness, voluntary community service, or other reasons for the student not to be at the school site.

RMCS' independent study option shall be substantially equivalent in quality and quantity to classroom instruction, thus enabling students temporarily enrolled in independent study to continue to complete RMCS' adopted course of study within the customary time frame. Students temporarily engaged in independent study shall have access to the same services and resources as are available to the other pupils in the school.

The Executive Director shall establish appropriate training and screening procedures of certificated teachers to ensure that the necessary level of understanding and preparation exists to meet the conditions of the independent study agreement prior to its approval by the designated certificated representative of RMCS. The designated certificated teacher responsible for each independent study contract shall use the same standards utilized in the classroom for each day claimed to evaluate the work completed for that contract.

No student shall be required to participate in independent study. Students shall always have the alternative of classroom instruction. No course shall be offered exclusively through independent study. For students in grades 1-6 the minimum number of consecutive days eligible to participate in independent study shall be one, and the maximum number of consecutive or cumulative days eligible to participate in independent study shall be no greater than 20% of the total instructional days of RMCS.

The Executive Director or designee shall determine that the prospective independent study student, and their parent(s)/guardian(s), understand and are prepared to meet RMCS' requirements for independent study. Independent study entails a commitment by both the parent/guardian and the student. As the student gets older, he/she assumes a greater portion of the responsibility involved.

Individuals with exceptional needs, as defined in Education Code 56026, may not participate in independent study unless his/her individualized education program (IEP) specifically provides for that participation.

Temporarily disabled students may not receive individual instruction pursuant to Education Code 48206.3 through independent study. However, if the temporarily disabled student's parent, caregiver, or guardian and RMCS agree, the student may receive instruction through independent study instead of receiving the "home and hospital" instruction provided pursuant to Education Code 48206.3.

No student may participate in independent study for more than 20% of the total instructional days of RMCS throughout the course of a school year. Only students who reside in Sonoma County or one of its adjoining counties – Lake, Marin, Mendocino, Napa, or Solano – may participate in independent study. RMCS shall not claim state funding for the independent study

of a pupil if RMCS has provided any funds or other thing of value to the pupil or his or her parent or guardian that a school district could not legally provide to a similarly situated pupil of the school district, or to his or her parent or guardian.

### **Written Agreements and Contracts**

The Executive Director or designee shall ensure that a written independent study agreement, as prescribed by law, exists for each participating student (Education Code 51747) and that the agreement is signed before the start of an independent study period. Individual independent study contracts must be consistent with RMCS' adopted course of study.

To foster each student's success in independent study, the maximum length of time which may elapse between the end date of an independent study contract period and the date by which the student must complete the assigned work is five school days (one week). However, when circumstances justify a longer time, the Executive Director or designee may extend the maximum length of an assignment.

When a student fails to complete five independent study assignments without valid reasons, the Executive Director or designee shall conduct an evaluation to determine whether it is in the student's best interest to be able to utilize independent study at some later date. The evaluation finding shall be kept in the student's permanent record and Independent Study documentation file.

### **Record Keeping and Attendance**

Each independent study contract, signed and dated, along with attached, signed, and dated completed work, becomes part of the student's permanent record and is filed in the student's file in the main office. Any evaluation finding, when a student has failed to complete five independent study assignments without valid reasons, shall be filed and 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.

When a completed and signed independent study contract is sent by the responsible teacher to the main office, the Executive Director or their designee will change the student's attendance status for the corresponding dates to 'independent study,' to be reported on the school's attendance reports that are submitted to the California Department of Education.

#### **Legal Reference:**

##### **EDUCATION CODE**

17289 Exemption for building

44865 Qualifications for home teachers and teachers in special classes and schools; consent to assignment

46300-46300.6 Methods of computing ADA

48220 Classes of children exempted

48340 Improvement of pupil attendance

51745-51749.3 Independent study programs

52000(e) Improvement of elementary and secondary education: legislative intent

52015 School Improvement plans: components of plan

56026 Individual with exceptional needs