

WILLOWS HIGH SCHOOL

LONG TERM INDEPENDENT STUDY PROGRAM

HANDBOOK

WHS Independent Study Program (9-12) is an alternative education program which helps students stay enrolled and connected to school. Our students meet the same requirements for standards, benchmarks, and promotion as do students enrolled in daily attendance schools throughout the district.

As an alternative to comprehensive classroom instruction, we offer an instructional strategy to assist students who choose to be educated at home. Student, parent, and teacher work as a team to respond to the student's specific educational needs, interests, aptitude, and abilities within the confines of state law and WUSD school board policy. Active participation by each member of the team is encouraged to facilitate a successful educational experience for the student. **Not all pupils make good candidates for this instructional strategy. Students who are successful in Independent Study are self-motivated, able to work independently, and adept with reading and comprehension skills.**

TEACHERS

All teachers are fully credentialed by the State of California and employed by the Willows Unified School District. Teacher assignments for individual students are based on teacher availability and an assessment to student/family needs.

Responsibilities of the teachers include:

- Meeting with the student at their weekly assigned appointment, as specified in WUSD board policy.
- Assessing the student's academic level and assigning curriculum to meet district and state guidelines.
- Writing and reviewing weekly Student Assignment Reports.
- Assessing student's work on a weekly basis.
- Assessing the time value of student assignments or work products before ADA is earned.
- Administering district and state mandated tests.
- Maintaining records of academic performance including, but not limited to a report card and portfolio of student work.
- Suggesting and/or providing activities which enrich the curriculum and provide students with some peer and/or group interaction.
- Informing students and parents/guardians of resources available throughout the school district.

PARENT/GUARDIANS

Parents/guardians play a pivotal role in the education of a successful independent study student. Students who succeed with this alternative instructional strategy need a strong support system to help balance the loss of daily contact with peers in a traditional school setting.

Additionally, parents/guardians need to be willing and able to offer tutorial help to their independent student students, who are meeting weekly, rather than daily, with a teacher. Parents/guardians should be cautioned that their student's compulsory school attendance is calculated according to weekly assignment completion.

Responsibilities of parents/guardians include:

- Providing a suitable environment for students to study at home.
- Taking an active interest in the student's daily learning and completion of assignments.
- Providing transportation, if necessary, for the student to make their regularly scheduled weekly appointment with the teacher.

- Notifying, in a timely manner, the teacher and/or administrator with any concerns regarding the educational progress of their student.
- Paying for costs and replacement of books, materials, equipment or other resources checked out to the student in the event they are lost or damaged beyond normal wear and tear.
- Ensuring the student's voluntary enrollment in and understanding of independent study, and facilitating the student's transfer to classroom instruction when appropriate or desired.

STUDENTS

WHS Independent Study Program provides an educational opportunity for students who cannot or choose not to attend school on a daily basis. Independent Study is a voluntary alternative option. That is, no student may be placed in independent study without their consent.

However, independent study is not appropriate for every student. **Strong reading and comprehension skills are required to complete weekly assignments.** With a minimum of teacher assistance, a support system of family and friends is a must. Students should be mature, self-motivated, and able to work independently.

Student responsibilities include:

- Attending regularly scheduled weekly appointments with your teacher as specified in the Master Agreement.
- Communicating with your teacher throughout the week, requesting help, if needed, in a timely manner. Coming into the center to receive additional help, if suggested.
- Working daily on your curricular assignments.
- Completing (and turning in for assessment) all assignments on your weekly assignment report by the due date and time of your next weekly meeting.
- Participating in all district and state mandated tests.

ENROLLMENT PROCEDURE

Pre-enrollment for student currently enrolled in WUSD:

The parent/guardian requests a referral from the counselor of the school.

A meeting will then take place between the counselor, parent/guardian, and student to discuss the requirements for WHS Independent Study. Parent/Guardian will be informed that their request has been received and, when space is available, student and parent/guardian will be invited to an orientation meeting.

Pre-enrollment for student currently enrolled outside WUSD:

If a student is new to the district, the parent/guardian will need to schedule a meeting with the counselor at WHS to discuss enrollment. Parent/Guardian should bring any school records for his/her student to that meeting (transcripts, exit grades, etc.).

ENROLLMENT

An enrollment conference will take place as a general orientation meeting or as a meeting with the supervising teacher. During the meeting, the student and parent/guardian will complete all necessary paperwork, including an Independent Study contract. A regular weekly appointment time will be established for the student's meetings with the teacher.

Initial Meeting with Supervising Teacher

Upon enrollment, the student will meet with their supervising teacher at a regularly established time and day. During the first meeting, conduct assessments to determine the student's ability level and learning style, and discuss the student's course of study. The student will be given a week's worth of assignments along with the appropriate educational materials to complete such. This work will also be used by the supervising teacher to identify student's academic abilities and interests.

Additional Classes

When appropriate, and on a space available basis, students may take additional classes not offered in independent study at WHS, or at a post-secondary institution. These classes and any required homework are in addition to the weekly assignments given by the Independent Study supervising teacher. Students or parents/guardians must meet with their counselor to request such classes.

Enrollment Termination

Independent Study is a voluntary alternative educational strategy as developed by the California Department of Education. As such, no student can be assigned, transferred or referred to Independent Study without all parties concerned being in agreement and supportive of that educational placement.

Conversely, if any member of the "team partnership" (i.e. administrator, teacher, parent/guardian or student) feel that effective educational achievement is no longer occurring, and/or that independent study requirements and responsibilities are no longer being honored, enrollment will be terminated. A closing appointment with the counselor is essential **before the student is referred back to his/her school of residence**. This appointment gives all parties the opportunity to discuss the change in the student's educational placement and provides the staff appropriate time to close out the final assignment report and collect books and materials. Unreturned items will result in holding student files, and billing or collection procedures.

Transfer Back to Comprehensive or Another Alternative Setting

High school students (9-12) who are transferring from WHS Independent Study to another alternative education setting within the district must have a referral conference with the principal and parent/guardian. At that conference, student needs/progress will be reviewed.

ATTENDANCE ACCOUNTING

As an alternative educational strategy, the Independent Study Program cannot legally claim attendance credit in the same manner as is claimed at a comprehensive classroom-based setting. The state required method for attendance accounting is referred to as a **student performance based system**. That is, the supervising teacher determines the time value of completed assignments or work products so that attendance credit can be earned.

Consideration of student ability levels, along with district and state requirements will determine the criteria for contracted work achievement. As a result, students who are highly skilled would be expected to accomplish more than others who may be less able. Only evaluated work or work products that are complete and submitted by the due dates previously established in the Student Assignment Report count for attendance credit. Attendance credit cannot be claimed simply because the student "showed up" for an appointment. No credit for attendance can be claimed until the assigned work is submitted and assessed by the supervising teacher.

School Calendar

The WHS Independent Study Program follows the traditional school calendar in grades 9-12. Copies of the school calendar can be obtained at the WUSD website or by calling the Willows District Office 530-934-6600.

Grades and Report Cards

Students in grades 9-12 are assigned credits for all work completed. The supervising teacher will evaluate the student's work and assign grades at each weekly visit to be averaged at the end of each session.

Transcripts are provided to students and parents/guardians every six weeks for review with the supervising teacher. Students who do not meet the minimum attendance requirement will be referred to a daily school setting.

HOW TO ENROLL

Step 1: Make an appointment and talk with your counselor.

Tom Bryant

Junior/Senior Counselor

tbryant@willowsunified.org

Amy Steele

Freshmen/Sophomore Counselor

asteele@willowsunified.org

Step 2: Arrange a meeting with your counselor, parent/guardian and student to discuss if **Independent Study** is right for the student.

Step 3: Fill out necessary enrollment paperwork.

Step 4: Students CONTINUE TO ATTEND YOUR REGULAR WILLOWS HIGH SCHOOL CLASSES while you wait to be contacted by the counseling office of an available opening in the Independent Study Program.

TEACHER

Katie Jones

530-934-6611, ext. 7503

kjones@willowsunified.org

LOCATION

Willows High School Room 503

HOURS

Independent Study - 5th Period Gold Days