

EXPERIENCE LEARNING

INDEPENDENT STUDY PLANNER



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WHAT'S INDEPENDENT STUDY & LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE?

Get credit for real life experience by turning your activities or work after school into an Independent Study project. You choose your activity, work, or project. To show the learning, you create a Portfolio of Work. Do it well, and earn Independent Study credit.

Independent study is common in college, but not in high school. Take advantage of this chance to build skills for success now—and for later!

- Gain valuable school credit
- Learn from doing, not just reading about it
- Build your resume
- Have fun working with friends

WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO DO? STEP BY STEP....

1. Identify afterschool activities that you learn from, such as a job, sports, clubs, child care, volunteering, or other. Or, think of issues or topics you're interested in, such as the environment, social justice, immigration, music, technology, sports, health, etc.
2. Spell out a learning agenda and develop a plan of action
3. Create and sign an Independent Study Contract that details what you'll do
4. Document what you do and the hours you spend
5. Meet with the Independent Study Coach or a peer study group once per week
6. Keep a Portfolio of Work with required documents
7. Submit the Portfolio for review for credit
8. Demonstrate and present your Independent Study learning



WHAT'S THE PORTFOLIO OF WORK?

The Portfolio is a compilation of documents and records that show what you've done, from the beginning planning stage, to the reviews, to the final presentation.

The Portfolio shows your ability in the higher level 21st Century Skills needed to succeed in college and to advance in careers. These include the ability to:

- Think creatively
- Develop a project, plan it, and follow-through independently
- Think critically about how the work is going, what you are getting out of it, and what may need to change
- Direct and lead your own learning, time, and effort
- Critically assess with others the quality of your work
- Take initiative
- Be accountable for deliverables
- Provide clear explanations, evidence, opinions, and rationales in writing and in presentations
- Use various means of communication effectively

WHAT'S IN THE PORTFOLIO OF WORK?

The contents of the Portfolio will be determined by the project, but would typically include some or all of the following, which will be agreed upon and noted in the Independent Study Contract.

- Independent Study Planner, showing initial brainstorming, thinking, and planning processes
- Independent Study Contract, showing commitment to the project, ability to clearly define the project, allocate time, specify tasks and activities, and understand requirements and accountability
- Time Logs, showing actual hours spent, with sign-offs as appropriate, demonstrating effort, reliability, and consistency, as well as accountability
- Reflections showing development and extension of learning beyond the doing of the activity, as well as ability to think critically about progress and revisions, if needed
- Research Component, with evidence of deepening the learning, and demonstrating ability to find reliable and relevant sources of information
- Mid-point Assessment documenting an assessment meeting, and showing self-assessment of progress, critical review with others of the project and the quality of work, and the ability to receive and use feedback
- Assessment Rubric showing application of judgment criteria to the work
- Plan for the demonstration or presentation to the group
- Other items you select to demonstrate work, learning, or skills, or other items required by the school for awarding credit



INDEPENDENT STUDY PLANNER

What will you do for Independent Study? Use this worksheet to help generate ideas, pick a direction, and plan the work. Talk it through with other students and the Independent Study Coach.

Keep this worksheet as part of your Portfolio. It shows thinking and planning skills!

TYPE OR AREA OF EXPERIENCE AFTER SCHOOL

Are you involved with afterschool clubs or do you have a job? Do you have family or household responsibilities? Are there projects or volunteer opportunities you'd like to be involved with?

EXPERIENCE AREA	WHAT I COULD LEARN	WHAT I COULD DO (describe more specifically)
Work		
Family		
Clubs/Sports		
Community		
Other		



INTEREST AREA PROJECTS

Make afternoons more interesting by creating an Independent Study project. Lead a film club for other students, write a grant for program funding, or take leadership in making improvements in the school or community.

PROJECT OR TOPIC AREA	WHAT I COULD LEARN	WHAT I COULD DO (describe more specifically)
Film Club		
Grant writing		
Website development		
Environment		
Create a vegetable garden		
Write a guide for immigrant students and parents		
Other		



AMOUNT OF TIME

TIME FOR PROJECT OR WORK

Schedule _____

Daily _____

Weekly _____

Number of weeks _____

TIME FOR CRITICAL THINKING

Check-ins

Schedule _____

Amount of time _____

Reflections

How often _____

Amount of time _____

Study group ☐ Yes ☐ No

Schedule _____

Amount of time _____



LEARNING AGENDA

1. WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO LEARN FROM YOUR EXPERIENCE?

2. SET YOUR LEARNING OBJECTIVES.

These can include building skills or gaining knowledge, such as

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Research skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Writing skills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Critical or analytical thinking | <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation skills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership | <input type="checkbox"/> Global learning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Technology skills or knowledge | <input type="checkbox"/> Presenting data |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communication skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Work habits |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creativity | <input type="checkbox"/> College prep |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Career prep | |

Objectives may start with:

Learn more about [topic] _____

Learn how to [skills] _____

Become better at [skills] _____

It should include *how*.

...by working at

...by working with

...by doing [activity] for [amount of time]

...by writing at least a paragraph each week



3. BUILD IN A RESEARCH COMPONENT

Independent Study may include a research component.

What do you want to learn more about?

What could be your research question? For example, if you have a job, your research questions might be: 'Who sets the minimum wage? Is it enough to live on?'

What kind of research do you like to do?

- ☐ Interviews and surveys, then analyzing and showing results
- ☐ Gathering information on the web, and writing a report with your analysis
- ☐ Reading books or articles on a topic
- ☐ Other ideas: _____

Finalize your research question, methods of research, time frame for work and due dates.

DEMONSTRATION OF LEARNING

1. DEMONSTRATION OF LEARNING

With Independent Study and learning from experience, you don't take a test—you show what you've learned.

The demonstration is not a list of activities, "I did this and then this and then this." It actually demonstrates or shows what you learned.

What best fits your work?

Check ones you might use.

- ☐ Make a video
- ☐ Write a special essay
- ☐ Create a skit
- ☐ Write a song and perform
- ☐ Build a sculpture
- ☐ Create a photo journal
- ☐ Write and draw a comic
- ☐ Organize an event
- ☐ Write a grant
- ☐ Create and administer a mini-quiz
- ☐ Build your own resume of experiences
- ☐ Hold a training orientation to pass along your skills
- ☐ Create some charts and graphs
- ☐ Make a speech
- ☐ Maintain a blog
- ☐ Create a website
- ☐ Other ideas:

DEMONSTRATIONS OF LEARNING

EXAMPLE

ACTIVITY: Child care

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **UNDERSTAND PARENTING SKILLS**
Show by: Research, final demo skits
2. **LEARN ABOUT CHILD DEVELOPMENT**
Show by: Research summary
3. **BUILD TECHNICAL SKILLS**
Show by: Use internet for research, cite web sources
4. **COMMUNICATION**
Show by: Final demo and presentation
5. **CREATIVITY**
Show by: Create and produce funny skits for final demo



What will your demonstration be?

FEASIBILITY CHECK

Can you do this in the time available?

Do you need any help or support? What? Who?

Do you need to set deadlines along the way? What are they?

2. PRESENTATION

At the end of the program, you will be asked to present to the group. Your demonstration may actually be a presentation, such as a skit. If your demonstration is creation of a product, such as a video, PowerPoint®, photo journal, you can present that to the group and talk about what you learned. If your demonstration was doing something, or a process, like keeping a blog or organizing an event, you can explain how it went and what you learned. For example, "I kept a blog for three months and found that I couldn't get anyone to read it. So I tried different ways to get to people...."

How will you present or share your learning with others?

AUDIENCE WILL BE:

- Afterschool program
- An invited audience
- A combination
- An outside audience
- Other _____



3. PUTTING IT TOGETHER FOR CREDIT

CHECK-INS

- Check in with the Independent Study Coach and with peer study groups or others to see how you're doing along the way
- Check in with your Peer Study Group, if you're part of one
- Stick to your scheduled reviews
- Schedule and stick with the mid-point assessment

HELP AND SUPPORT

Think about and use help and support available.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Peer study group | <input type="checkbox"/> Friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers | <input type="checkbox"/> Independent Study Coach |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parents | <input type="checkbox"/> Family members |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employers | <input type="checkbox"/> Community leaders |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |

ASSESSMENTS AND REVIEWS

- Look at the Assessment Rubric to understand the judgment criteria
- Look at the Mid-point Assessment document ahead of time

PORTFOLIO DOCUMENTS

- ☐ Independent Study Planner
- ☐ Time Log
- ☐ Independent Study Contract
- ☐ Reviews
- ☐ Mid-point Assessment
- ☐ Assessment Rubric
- ☐ Reflections
- ☐ Research Component
- ☐ Other _____



THINKING IT THROUGH

EXAMPLE 1: KID CARE

WORK OR ACTIVITY: I take care of my little brother and sister

HOW MUCH TIME: About 10 hours a week

WHAT COULD YOU LEARN?

- How to be a good sister or a good parent
- How children grow and what they need to grow up well
- Child development
- Nutrition and health

WHAT COULD YOU DO?

- Learn more about child development or child psychology
- See if I can tell what stages and behaviors my sister and brother show
- Give examples of what I should do as a good parent or good sister or brother to help them grow up well
- Find out what other people my age think good parenting, big-sistering or big-brothering is
- Prepare a position paper on, what young adults should learn and know about little kids and how to raise them
- Do a set of skits on little kid behavior and parent or sibling responses

EXAMPLE 2: ENVIRONMENT

INTEREST AREA TOPIC: Taking care of the environment

HOW MUCH TIME CAN YOU PUT IN?

About 10 hours per week

WHAT COULD YOU LEARN?

- How to clean up the environment
- Things to do in my neighborhood that would make a difference
- Why it's important to take care of the environment
- Which organizations or companies are committed to this cause
- What is already in place
- What materials are considered "green" or environmentally safe

WHAT COULD YOU DO?

- Learn more about causes of pollution
- Organize a group of my friends to clean up a park
- Make and distribute flyers about the importance of recycling
- Prepare a research paper that reflects my position on cleaning up the planet
- Give a PowerPoint® presentation of neighborhood areas showing environmental distress, and areas that are positive for the environment.



INDEPENDENT STUDY CONTRACT

Name: _____

Date: _____

Homeroom (class designation or ID #): _____

1. INDEPENDENT STUDY WORK, ACTIVITY, OR PROJECT

Description _____

2. AMOUNT OF TIME

Total hours and schedule _____

3. LEARNING AGENDA

Objectives (knowledge, skills to gain) _____

Research question(s) _____

4. DEMONSTRATION OF LEARNING

INITIAL IDEAS FOR DEMONSTRATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

This should be revisited and can be changed at the mid-point assessment.



AGREEMENT LEARNER

I agree to complete the above outlined work to the best of my ability.

I understand that to qualify for credit, the Portfolio of Work must contain (complete where applicable):

ITEM	TARGET DATE	COMPLETED
1. Planner (Handouts Step—)		
2. Time Log (specify frequency)		
3. Record of check-ins with dates and notes		
4. Mid-point Assessment plus reflection		
5. Reflections (specify number of frequency)		
6. Notes from study group		
7. Assessment		
8. Other Items		

INDEPENDENT STUDY COACH AGREES TO:

- ☐ Be available to discuss work/project/portfolio conditions, progress and problems
- ☐ Provide guidance for Portfolio pieces or other records
- ☐ Review experience and learning with learner on agreed schedule and as needed
- ☐ Attend the presentation
- ☐ Assess the quality of the work with the student
- ☐ Communicate with classroom teachers as needed
- ☐ Provide classroom teacher with recommendations for the award of credit

TEACHER AGREES TO:

- ☐ Establish clear requirements and standards for the award of credit
- ☐ Establish the amount of credit
- ☐ Provide supporting materials needed to complete requirements (e.g. texts, readings, computer access)
- ☐ Provide, as possible, feedback and support for student learning
- ☐ Maintain communication with Independent Study Coach

AGREED BY:

_____	_____	_____	_____
Learner	Date	Independent Study Coach	Date
_____	_____	_____	_____
Teacher		Principal	



TIME LOG

Include dates of meetings with your Independent Study Coach, study groups, or other associated activities.

WEEKLY LOG		WEEK OF: _____
		NOTES OR SIGN-OFFS
MONDAY Activity: _____ Time Spent: _____	_____ _____ _____ _____	
TUESDAY Activity: _____ Time Spent: _____	_____ _____ _____ _____	
WEDNESDAY Activity: _____ Time Spent: _____	_____ _____ _____ _____	
THURSDAY Activity: _____ Time Spent: _____	_____ _____ _____ _____	
FRIDAY Activity: _____ Time Spent: _____	_____ _____ _____ _____	
SATURDAY Activity: _____ Time Spent: _____	_____ _____ _____ _____	
SUNDAY Activity: _____ Time Spent: _____	_____ _____ _____ _____	



REFLECTIONS

Date: _____

(May include notes or reflections from cohort meetings)

Take a few minutes to think about your experience. Write down some of your observations and thoughts. It might help to use one of these starters for your reflection.

THIS EXPERIENCE IS... _____

I AM INTERESTED IN... _____

I LEARN BEST WHEN... _____

THE MOST DIFFICULT PART OF THIS FOR ME IS... _____



HIGHER LEVEL 21ST CENTURY SKILLS IN ACTION

CRITICAL THINKING

1. Reason effectively. Use different kinds of thinking, drawing on different kinds of evidence. Find similarities, patterns, differences, compare, make observations, develop concepts, ideas, and conclusions.
2. Collect and consider range of views. Gather, listen to, evaluate, and integrate into analysis of diverse points of view.
3. Question effectively. Develop and ask significant questions that clarify information, deepen understanding, and lead to greater knowledge or better solutions.
4. Analyze. Consider, test, weigh, and evaluate evidence and information, including facts, contexts, arguments, and opinions. Determine how pieces interact with and affect each other.
5. Reflect on experience. Draw on evidence from lived practice and experience to inform thinking, new learning, and processes.
6. Make reasoned judgments and decisions. Assess information, form opinions, draw conclusions, and make decisions.
7. Solve problems. Identify and recognize problems; apply reason and strategic thinking to address and solve problems.

INITIATIVE, SELF-DIRECTION, AND LEADERSHIP

1. Develop goals and outcomes. Set goals with short, medium, and long-term time frames, and identify criteria for success, targets, results, outcomes, and/or products associated with different time horizons.
2. Work independently. Define, prioritize, monitor progress, and complete tasks without direct oversight.
3. Manage time. Balance short, medium, and long term goals, analyze time requirements to reach results, and manage workload to reach maximum results efficiently.
4. Develop knowledge and skills through self-directed learning. Actively and independently expand and deepen learning and experience to gain greater knowledge and understanding, to master skills, and to advance personally and professionally.



5. Guide, lead, and inspire others. Identify and use strengths of others to accomplish shared goals, demonstrate by example the highest standards of work and achievement, and use interpersonal and problem-solving skills to influence, inspire, and guide others to achieve outcomes.
6. Demonstrate accountability as a leader. Adhere to the highest ethical standards, use influence and power for the benefit of achieving the best possible results, and act responsibly in the interest of the larger community.

PRODUCTIVITY, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND RESPONSIBILITY

1. Manage projects to achieve goals. Prioritize, manage time, and align efforts to achieve goals, whether single or multiple projects.
2. Fulfill responsibilities. Follow through with agreed-upon work and schedules, adhere to highest standards of ethics and professionalism, fulfill responsibilities to teams, and demonstrate reliability and punctuality.
3. Commit to achieving goals and results. Assume appropriate responsibility and accountability for reaching goals, outcomes, and results, whether in individual or team projects.
4. Conduct oneself professionally. Work respectfully, positively, collaboratively, and cooperatively, and present oneself with the appropriate etiquette for the culture and situation.

COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

1. Express thoughts and ideas clearly in diverse contexts. Use written, spoken, non-verbal, media, and technology-mediated methods appropriately, skillfully, and effectively in a variety of settings with diverse (including linguistically) populations.
2. Listen effectively. Listen carefully, respectfully, and analytically to understand information, viewpoints, values, emotions, and intentions.
3. Communicate purposefully. Understand the purpose of communication (to inform, instruct, motivate, inspire, persuade, etc.), and use appropriate content and methods.
4. Interact effectively. Know when it is appropriate and useful to listen and when to speak, monitor and assess processes and results of communication, and use technology-mediated interaction skillfully.
5. Work with diverse teams. Work productively and respectfully with people of different cultures, with different beliefs and viewpoints, and from different backgrounds.
6. Collaborate effectively. Assume shared responsibility for outcomes, listen and contribute respectfully and effectively, demonstrate flexibility and ability to compromise, and leverage different contributions to create, innovate, and lead to high quality results.



MID-POINT ASSESSMENT

CONDUCTED BETWEEN STUDENT AND INDEPENDENT STUDY COACH
REVIEWED BY CONTENT AREA TEACHER, IF APPLICABLE

Date: _____

- Review the Planner (or Planning handouts) and the Contract
- Discuss objectives, work plans, and where the student is with respect to fulfilling the terms and the learning agenda
- Discuss the unexpected learning that has taken place
- Discuss study groups or other supports
- Consider and discuss changes

TO BE COMPLETED BY STUDENT

1. Should you revise or add to your objectives? _____

2. Look at your plan for demonstrating learning. Does it still work? _____

3. Look at your timetable and Independent Study requirements. Are you on track? What else is needed?

4. What challenges are you finding? _____

5. What kind of help do you need to address the challenges? _____

INDEPENDENT STUDY COACH RECOMMENDATIONS _____

STUDENT REFLECTIONS, REQUESTS, OR RECOMMENDATIONS _____



ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

CRITERIA	EXCELLENT=4	GOOD=3	FAIR=2	WEAK=1
RESEARCH COMPONENT	Comprehensive research connects with the project and research question. Length is appropriate for the topic. Sources are clearly cited. Document is neatly presented.	Research is good but could be more thorough. Most connections to the project and research question are clear. Sources are cited.	Unclear how research connects to the topic area or project. More research is needed. Less than 1–2 pages. Identification of sources should be clearer.	Incomplete research. No identification of sources.
Comments:				
REFLECTION PAPER	Reflection includes personal reflections that are descriptive, important, and insightful. Reviews both strengths and weaknesses Demonstrates critical thinking	Reflection includes 3 of the following: Personal reactions; clear description; evidence of insight. Reviews both strengths & weaknesses Demonstrates critical thinking	Reflection includes 2 of the following: Personal reactions; clear description; evidence of insight. Reviews both strengths & weaknesses Demonstrates critical thinking	No reflection submitted; superficial statement of actions without a reflective element. Reflection has superficial personal reactions, little description or shows limited insight.
Comments:				
PARTICIPATION IN STUDY GROUP	Played leadership role. Provided supportive feedback and accepted constructive criticism. Actively planned and participated in group activities.	Participated in group, sought and provided feedback to peers. Participated in group activities.	Was present, but did not seek or provide feedback. Did not participate in Cohort.	Did not participate in Cohort. Did not participate in study group.
Comments:				



CRITERIA	EXCELLENT=4	GOOD=3	FAIR=2	WEAK=1
DEMONSTRATION OF LEARNING				
PRESENTATION (CONTENT)	Insightful, a "complete package", shows grasp of content, context, and implications.	Strong, coherent summary of content; some attention to broader content or meaning.	Understandable summary of content.	Scattered, incomplete and disorganized content.
PRESENTATION (ORAL PRESENTATION)	Presenter spoke clearly, made appropriate eye contact with audience and accurately answered questions.	Presenter spoke relatively clearly, made appropriate eye contact with audience and answered questions.	Presenter spoke relatively clearly most of the time, made eye contact with the audience and was able to answer some questions.	Presenter spoke unclearly, seldom made eye contact with audience and had difficulty answering questions.
PRESENTATION (VISUAL PRESENTATION)	Strong visual or other display of information. Main points appropriately emphasized by visual or other display.	Consideration given to ability of audience to see/hear presentation; Consistent use of graphics, sound, etc.	Inconsistent format or design detracts from content. Limited consideration given to ability of audience to see/hear presentation.	No use of supporting presentation materials. Haphazardly organized presentation support materials.
Comments:				

Learner Name: _____

Final Score: _____

