



Student Handbook for 2026-2027

Orcutt School for Independent Study

1220 Oak Knoll Road
Santa Maria, CA 93455
(805) 938-8500

Katherine Adler, **Principal**
Deedra Garcia, **Office Manager**
Michelle Convington, **Office Support Assistant**

Message from the Principal

It is my absolute pleasure to welcome you to a new school year at OSIS! Whether you are returning or joining us for the first time, we are so excited to partner with you for a year of discovery and achievement.

At OSIS, we operate on a simple but powerful belief: every student has the ability to succeed and achieve at high levels when supported by a strong, caring, and inclusive community. As your principal, my vision is that every member of our school family—students, parents, teachers, and staff—feels valued, respected, and connected. We are committed to creating an environment where everyone knows they belong and where every student's strengths are recognized and celebrated.

We view the independent study experience as an exciting journey of exploration and learning. In our educational model, students are the "Rockets"—the explorers charting their own path toward new knowledge, skills, and opportunities. Families and staff serve together as Mission Control, providing guidance, encouragement, and support. While students are central to their educational journey, they never travel alone. Success comes through teamwork, communication, and a shared commitment to learning.

The home and school partnership is the cornerstone of our success. Independent study offers opportunities for flexibility, personalization, and student ownership, but it also relies on strong collaboration. Parents and guardians play a vital role as educational coaches. Your involvement helps establish routines, encourage perseverance, and celebrate progress. Through regular check-ins, meaningful conversations about learning, and ongoing feedback, families help transform daily lessons into lasting achievement. Meanwhile, our teachers and staff provide the instruction, resources, and support needed to help every student thrive. Together, we create a network that builds confidence, resilience, independence, and a lifelong love of learning.

As we begin this school year, I encourage every student to embrace challenges, remain curious, and strive for continuous growth. Learning is not about being perfect; it is about making progress, taking risks, and developing the skills necessary for future success. We believe in every student's potential and are honored to be part of their educational journey.

Remember, OSIS is a safe place to land, launch, and lift. We are grateful for the trust you place in us and look forward to partnering with you throughout the year. Together, we will ensure every student feels supported, challenged, and empowered to reach their highest potential.

Welcome to another incredible year at OSIS!

Mrs. Adler

Principal, Orcutt School for Independent Study

Mission Statement

The Orcutt School for Independent Study provides an innovative, alternative route to education while rigorously maintaining high academic standards. We operate on the fundamental principle that every student possesses the capacity for high-level achievement when supported by a robust, inclusive community where everyone feels a true sense of belonging.

COLLABORATIVE ROLES AND CAMPUS INTEGRATION

Master Agreement Summary

Our Independent Study program is a wonderful, voluntary path that works best when we all commit to success. Enrolling in OSIS means students and families join us in a shared journey of learning, dedicating a full day to growth for every school day. In return, we provide expert teacher guidance, personalized tracking, and all the tools needed for your student to thrive.

The Parent-Coach Model & Technical Strategies

In the independent study framework, parents function as the primary educational coach. Success is optimized through the following structured strategies:

- **Active Engagement:** Attend all teacher meetings as an active participant; clarify assignment parameters immediately.
- **Structural Predictability:** Establish a rigid, daily routine for home-based academic work.
- **Iterative Feedback:** Review work in real-time. Utilize a "check-in" system where the student completes segments of work and receives immediate corrective input.
- **Instructional Patience:** Recognize that concept mastery often requires multiple iterations of practice.
- **Resource Utilization:** Actively use the Clever portal, Zearn, and Edmentum. Watching instructional videos alongside your student ensures parents understand the specific pedagogical methods utilized (e.g., Zearn math formats).
- **Proactive Communication:** Notify the teacher immediately if a student requires an accelerated pace or additional learning interventions.

Campus Integration & Shared Facility Safety

OSIS maintains a strategic facility partnership with **Ralph Dunlap Elementary School**. Because we share this campus environment, a unified commitment to safety, operational boundaries, and mutual respect is strictly required. OSIS students and families are expected to adhere closely to all shared campus policies outlined throughout this handbook to foster a supportive learning environment for all occupants of the site.

Parent Meetings

Our parent-teacher consultations are valuable opportunities to connect, navigate the curriculum together, and celebrate your student's progress. These meetings help us troubleshoot any challenges early. If you can't make a scheduled time, please let us know in advance so we can find another way to connect or designate another adult to join the conversation.

LOGISTICS, SCHEDULES, & ATTENDANCE

Operational Hours & Master Schedule

Our learning journey begins the week of August 10. We utilize Mondays and Fridays for home-based exploration and personalized virtual appointments, allowing for a flexible and focused start and end to each week.

Session / Service	Days of Operation	Hours
Blended Track Classes	Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday	8:30 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.
Virtual Learning Track	Monday and Friday	Per Individual Agreement
Main Administrative Office	Monday through Friday	7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

In-Person & Virtual Attendance Compliance

Staying connected and engaged is the key to student success and ensures we meet our community's shared learning goals. We ask families to help us maintain this momentum through the following supportive steps:

- **In-Person Arrival:** Blended track students arriving after 8:30 a.m. must report to the main office to obtain a tardy pass.
- **Virtual Engagement Etiquette:** Students must maintain a professional digital presence during online sessions. Cameras must remain on at all times, backgrounds should be blurred or positioned against a flat wall for family privacy, and students must remain logged in and active for the entire instructional duration.
- **Absence Remedy:** In the event of an in-person blended class absence, students are expected to attend the afternoon virtual session to preserve attendance credit for that instructional day.
- **Re-engagement Partnership:** If engagement starts to slip, we will reach out for a Re-engagement Meeting. This is a collaborative process where we work together to find the best ways to support the student and ensure independent study is the right fit for their success.

Absence Reporting Procedures

A parent or guardian must officially clear all absences within three (3) business days. Clearances can be submitted via ParentSquare or by calling the administrative office directly at (805) 938-8500. Absences left unresolved outside of this three-day window will be permanently recorded as unexcused. Legally, truancy is triggered by any combination of three unexcused absences or tardies exceeding 30 minutes.

CAMPUS ACCESS, & VISITORS,

Visitor & Observation Protocol

To preserve instructional integrity and safeguard the campus environment, all visitors must abide by the following constraints:

- **Office Registration:** All visitors, field trip chaperones, and volunteers must immediately check in at the main office upon arrival. Visitors must scan a valid Driver's License or government-issued photo ID to complete security screening and must wear the generated badge visibly at all times while on campus property. Visitors are never permitted to walk directly to a classroom.
- **Observation Parameters:** Scheduled classroom visits are limited to a maximum duration of 30 minutes and require the direct accompaniment of the Principal or an administrative designee.
- **Frequency Limits:** To prevent ongoing instructional disruptions, classroom observations are limited to a maximum of two (2) visits per student per academic year.

NOTICE: Advanced notification of at least 24 hours is strictly required for all campus meetings or classroom observations.

TRANSPORTATION, & MOBILITY POLICIES

Arrival, Dismissal, & Closed Campus Policy

OSIS operates a strict "Closed Campus" model to ensure absolute student security. Students are not permitted to leave campus grounds unaccompanied at any time during school hours.

- **Morning Arrival:** Blended track students may enter campus beginning at 8:15 a.m. For liability and student safety reasons, students are strictly prohibited from being on campus property prior to 8:15 a.m. as supervision is not available.

Afternoon Dismissal: Classes conclude promptly at 12:15pm for 7th and 8th grade and 12:45 p.m for students in grades 1st- 6th. A guardian must retrieve students at the front of the school within 15 minutes of dismissal. Loitering on campus grounds or playgrounds post-dismissal is prohibited. If a child is not picked up by 1:00 p.m., they must be collected from the main office. No exceptions.

Arrival and Pick-Up Rules for Vehicles (By Car)

Due to intensive traffic congestion, parents driving students to campus must drop off and pick up exclusively on Oak Knoll Road, below the school parking lot. **The main school driveway and parking lot are reserved entirely for school buses and district transit vehicles before and after school.** Do not use the main driveway as a vehicle turn-around or drop-off zone.

The California Highway Patrol (CHP) monitors our boundaries and emphasizes the strict enforcement of the following vehicle codes:

1. Drivers must pull safely to the shoulder of the road to load or unload students. Discharging passengers directly into the active traffic roadway is illegal and exceptionally dangerous.
2. Drivers are strictly prohibited from stopping or parking within a designated crosswalk to drop off or pick up students.
3. Vehicles may not pause to load or unload passengers at active stop signs.
4. Drivers may not stop, park, or idle—even momentarily—within designated red curb zones.
5. As per California state law, drivers are strictly prohibited from utilizing handheld cellular or wireless devices while operating a motor vehicle.
6. Only vehicles displaying valid DMV-issued disabled plates or placards may park within marked handicapped parking spaces.

To optimize traffic flow, Santa Barbara County has designated the school-side curb of Oak Knoll Road between the two main driveways as an active loading zone. **No parking or extended vehicle idling is permitted in this zone between 7:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. on weekdays.**

Pedestrian Guidelines (By Foot)

For students walking to and from campus, the school emphasizes the following safety rules:

- Students must remain on designated crosswalks at all times. Walking in vehicle lanes is prohibited.
- When crossing any street, students must look both ways to verify oncoming traffic has stopped before stepping into a marked crosswalk.
- It is highly recommended that students walk to and from campus in groups or with at least one peer companion.

Bicycles, Skateboards, and Powered Mobility Restrictions

To preserve safety standards during high-traffic windows, the Orcutt Union School District (OUSD) enforces strict regulations regarding personal transportation devices:

- **District Powered Mobility Policy:** Students are strictly prohibited from possessing, parking, or operating electric bicycles (E-bikes), electric motorcycles (E-motos), or motorized mobility devices (including e-scooters and e-boards) anywhere on school property. Riding any motorized device on school grounds is completely forbidden for everyone. Site administrators regularly monitor campus boundaries to enforce compliance.
- **Traditional Non-Motorized Bicycles/Skateboards:** Students are highly encouraged to walk or ride traditional, non-motorized bicycles to campus. Traditional bikes must be walked (not ridden) immediately upon entering school grounds and must use the designated bicycle lanes.
- **Storage and Security:** Bicycles must be kept completely off the playgrounds and blacktops. They must be parked upright within the provided bike racks and securely locked. Every bicycle must feature its own individual lock.
- **Helmet Mandate:** In accordance with California state law, all students must wear an approved safety helmet at all times when riding a bicycle, skateboard, or scooter to and from campus.
- **Liability Disclaimer:** OUSD and the school site assume no financial or custodial liability for the security, damage, or theft of personal bicycles or property brought to campus. Furthermore, the district does not assume responsibility for student transit safety once individuals exit school boundaries.

STUDENT BEHAVIORAL & CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS

Schoolwide Positive Behavior Matrix

OSIS is a safe place to land, launch, and lift. We utilize the positive behavior mnemonic **LIFT** (Leadership, Integrity, Friendliness, Tenacity) to guide, support, and reinforce exceptional student conduct across all learning environments:

Core Value	On Campus	Virtual Class Work	Independent Work
Leadership <i>Be a role model</i>	• Participate actively in group activities. • Welcome and actively include others.	• Cooperate respectfully with parents and home instructors. • Keep the family informed of work completion.	• Reach out to teachers immediately when stuck. • Check the learning log every morning.
Integrity <i>Choose the right thing even in difficult moments</i>	• Use kind, constructive, respectful language. • Follow rules even when no one is watching.	• Complete all assignments honestly. • Keep toys, games, and personal devices put away.	• Use original ideas and your own words. • Complete assessments without any outside assistance.
Friendliness <i>(Be kind and inclusive)</i>	• Greet peers and staff with a smile or kind words • Invite others to join your group or activities so no one is left out.	• Use encouraging and supportive language in the chat. • Value classmates' perspectives and take turns speaking during breakout groups.	• Reach out to a classmate via message to check in or offer support. • Practice self-kindness by maintaining a positive attitude toward your own progress.
Tenacity <i>Never give up</i>	• Attend tutoring or request extra practice when needed. • Implement teacher feedback immediately.	• Stick firmly to your school routine even on difficult days. • Take a deep breath when frustrated and try again.	• Review teacher grading and notes to correct mistakes. • Submit all weekly assignments strictly on time.

To maintain a safe, respectful, and focused learning environment, we ask all students to uphold these community values while on campus property or using district transit:

1. **Civility & Respect:** We show courtesy and professional respect for all students, staff, and adults. To ensure everyone feels safe, we keep our hands and feet to ourselves; physical contact like wrestling or play-fighting is avoided. Respecting the personal space of others is essential for our community.
2. **Language Standards:** Our speech, writing, and digital communications reflect a professional and positive educational setting. We use inclusive and kind language, choosing to leave vulgarity or hurtful speech out of our school environment.
3. **Campus Stewardship:** We take pride in our clean facilities by disposing of trash and recyclables in the proper bins. To keep our campus beautiful and clean, we keep gum, candy, and seeds at home and enjoy food only in designated dining zones. We finish our snacks before heading out to play.
4. **Classroom Environment:** For safety, students enter classrooms only when a staff member is present to supervise. We walk safely through our corridors and save running for our active PE sessions. Keeping our chairs flat on the floor helps us stay safe and ready to learn when the bell rings.
5. **Restroom Care:** We help keep our restrooms clean and free of litter for everyone. Restrooms are kept as a clean space where food and beverages are not consumed.
6. **District Bus Conduct:** We maintain a calm and orderly environment on school buses to ensure the driver can focus on the road. Following these safety expectations ensures that bus travel remains available for everyone.
7. **Safe Materials:** To maintain a safe environment, we use plastic or reusable containers instead of glass or metal. We also use art supplies and markers that are non-toxic and keep aerosol products off campus property.
8. **Personal Responsibility:** We keep our focus on learning by leaving toys, games, and extra electronics at home. By bringing only what we need for school, we protect our personal items from being lost or causing distractions during our lessons.

Mobile Device & Electronics Policy

To help everyone stay present and focused on our shared learning goals, we ask that student electronics be powered down and stored safely in backpacks before entering campus. This ensures our time together is dedicated to the LIFT values of leadership and integrity.

- **Operational Ban:** The use of outside electronic hardware is strictly prohibited during school hours, unless operating under the direct supervision of a classroom teacher for an authorized academic assignment.
- **Bathroom Absolute Ban:** Activating or utilizing a cell phone or electronic device inside a restroom stall is strictly prohibited and can trigger an automatic administrative suspension.
- **Emergency Communications:** If a student needs to contact a parent during the school day, they must obtain approval to use the landline office telephone. Parents needing to deliver emergency messages to their child must contact the main administrative office directly rather than calling or texting the student's personal device.

Progressive Enforcement Protocol for Violations:

1. **First Offense:** The device will be confiscated and secured in the office. It will be returned directly to the student at the end of the school day after a parent/guardian has been contacted.
2. **Second Offense:** The device will be confiscated and secured. The parent or guardian on record must physically come to the school office to retrieve the device.
3. **Third Offense:** The device is secured in the office. The parent/guardian must physically retrieve the item and participate in a mandatory behavioral intervention meeting with school administration. Subsequent violations will result in a total ban on the student bringing electronic devices to school.

Digital Governance & Cyber-Safety

Maintaining, generating, or posting material to a public website, social network, or blog that threatens a likelihood of substantial disruption to the school environment—including cyberbullying, targeted harassment, or interfering with the civil rights of other students or staff—constitutes a severe violation of the Student Disciplinary Code and is subject to immediate suspension, legal referral, or recommendation for expulsion.

STUDENT DRESS CODE

(Authorized under California Education Code 35183 and OUSD Board Policy 5132)

We take pride in presenting our best selves at school. Our dress standards are designed to ensure comfort, safety, and a focus on learning. By choosing attire that is respectful and appropriate for a community of learners, we demonstrate integrity and respect for ourselves and those around us.

Prohibited Themes: Clothing may not feature graphics, text, or messaging that draws negative attention, promotes gang affiliation, includes hate speech, vulgarity, obscenity, or references illegal activity, including controlled substances, alcohol, and tobacco use.

Specific Attire Rules (Grades TK-8):

- **Coverage:** Tops and shirts must protect and completely cover personal body parts, including the midriff. Sleeveless tops are permitted provided the shoulder straps measure a minimum of one (1) inch in width.
- **Lower Garments:** Pants, shorts, skirts, and dresses must be securely worn at the natural waistline and extend vertically down to at least mid-thigh. No fabric rips, tears, or distressing are permitted above the mid-thigh line.
- **Pajamas:** Standard pajamas, sleepwear, or lounge pants are strictly prohibited from being worn to school.
- **Safe Footwear:** For the safety of everyone during our active days, we ask students to wear secure, closed-toe shoes with hard soles. To prevent slips and injuries, we save soft-soled shoes like Crocs or slippers for home.
- **Headwear & Identity:** Standard hats and caps are permitted, including all verified religious headwear. Students must comply immediately if a staff member requests the temporary removal of headwear in a classroom setting. Helmets, heavy hoods, or masks that obscure a student's basic facial identity are prohibited (excepting verified religious practices or medical directives). Faces must remain fully visible during school portrait sessions. Hoods that block a student's ears may not be worn up inside a classroom.
- **Grooming & Hair:** Hair must be clean and neatly combed. Temporary hair dyes, sprays, or pigments that liquify or drip when wet are prohibited.

Exemption Requests: Written requests for dress code modifications based on verified medical conditions, cultural observances, or bona fide religious beliefs must be formally submitted to the Principal for review. California law stipulates that students failing to meet basic standards of personal neatness and cleanliness may be sent home to prepare properly before entering the classroom (5 CCR § 302).

CAMPUS HEALTH, SAFETY, & NUTRITION

Emergency Protocols & Standardized Drills

OUSD campuses employ standardized response protocols to manage unexpected emergencies. In compliance with state mandates, the school conducts monthly fire drills to practice rapid evacuation. Disaster drills (such as duck-and-cover drills for earthquakes or explosions) are executed every other month. Comprehensive lockdown drills designed to prepare staff and students for potential on-campus intruders are integrated periodically throughout the academic term.

Bullying, Harassment, & Threat Mitigation

Bullying, intimidation, cyber-harassment, and verbal threats will not be tolerated under any circumstances. School administration and staff are firm and direct in resolving harassment claims, applying disciplinary consequences immediately, and involving parents. Students are heavily encouraged to report any threat or ongoing peer friction to a teacher, the principal, or a trusted adult. Parents are urged to contact school administration immediately if their child reports a hostile interaction.

Playground Operational Safety Rules

- **Supervised Boundaries:** Students must remain strictly within fenced, active play zones where adult supervision is present. The campus zone positioned behind Room 23 is permanently off-limits.
- **Play Structures:** Running on top of play structures or jumping off high platforms is prohibited. Students must remain seated in a forward position while sliding down.
- **Swings:** Students must remain seated on swings; twisting chains, spinning, or jumping out of a moving swing is banned. If a line forms for a swing, occupants must limit their turn to sixty (60) forward-and-back counts before relinquishing it.
- **Game Safety:** High-risk sports, including tackle football, are banned. Hard baseballs or dense rubber utility balls are prohibited. Aiming or throwing any projectile at an individual's head is strictly forbidden.

Animals and Pets on School Property

To shield the school community from safety hazards and allergic reactions, **all pets and family pets are strictly prohibited on school grounds at all times.** Even well-behaved or friendly dogs can create unpredictable liabilities in high-activity student environments. Parents walking pets during transit windows must remain completely off school property and on public perimeter sidewalks.

Nutrition Standards & Smart Snack Compliance

- **Universal Meals:** Under state provisioning, all enrolled OSIS students are eligible to receive one (1) free breakfast meal and one (1) free lunch meal daily from the cafeteria.
- **No Food Sharing Policy:** Due to severe, life-threatening food allergies and hygiene standards, students are strictly prohibited from trading, sharing, or distributing food items with peers.
- **Federal Smart Snack Rules:** Any commercial food item brought to campus for classroom distribution or celebrations must be pre-packaged with all nutritional and ingredient labels fully intact. Homemade foods are completely prohibited for classroom sharing. Shared items must satisfy federal nutritional thresholds:
 - **Snacks:** Maximum of 200 calories; maximum of 200 mg of sodium.
 - **Entrées:** Maximum of 350 calories; maximum of 480 mg of sodium.

RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES, & LEGAL NOTICES

Statutory Grounds for Suspension or Expulsion

In alignment with the California Education Code, students will face immediate administrative suspension and potential recommendation for district expulsion if they commit any of the following offenses while under school jurisdiction:

- Possessing, selling, or furnishing firearms, knives, explosives, or other dangerous objects/weapons.
- Possessing, utilizing, selling, or being under the influence of controlled substances, intoxicants, alcohol, or narcotics.
- Committing or attempting to commit acts of bullying (including cyberbullying), sexual harassment, physical assault, or verbal threats against peers or staff.
- Engaging in willful, persistent defiance of school staff, teachers, or administrators acting in the line of authority.

Property Liability and Document Confidentiality

- **Financial Liability:** Parents/guardians are held legally and financially liable for the full replacement cost of any damaged, defaced, or lost school property. This includes Chromebooks, digital hardware, textbooks, and lab materials checked out to the student.
- **Record Confidentiality:** In strict compliance with state and federal privacy statutes, all student disciplinary, medical, counseling, and academic records are maintained in absolute confidence by school personnel. Access is limited strictly to authorized guardians and designated educational staff.

8TH GRADE PROMOTION

Participating in the 8th Grade Promotion Ceremony is a joyous way to celebrate your tenacity and academic milestones. We are so proud to honor students who reach these four goals of excellence during their final year at OSIS:

1. **Grade Point Average:** Maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average of 1.0 (a "D" average) across all classes completed over the four quarters of the 8th-grade academic year.
2. **Fourth Quarter Standards:** No "F" grades and zero (citizenship Unsatisfactory ("U") marks during the final fourth quarter of their 8th-grade term.
3. **Attendance Benchmark:** Maintain a minimum verified school attendance rate of 80% or higher, satisfied in full by the date of the promotion ceremony.
4. **Demerit Limitation:** Accumulate no more than twenty-four (24) total disciplinary demerits during their 8th-grade school year. Demerits are calculated via the following progressive scale:
 - Each day of administrative suspension counts as three (3) demerits.
 - Each office-managed major discipline referral counts as one (1) demerit.
 - Every three (3) teacher-issued minor discipline infractions combine to equal one (1) demerit.

HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGMENT & SIGNATURE PAGE

By executing signatures below, we formally confirm that we have thoroughly reviewed the integrated Orcutt School for Independent Study and Ralph Dunlap Elementary campus policies, and we explicitly agree to abide by all rules, timelines, and codes of conduct contained herein for the 2026-2027 academic year.

[] I have independently reviewed and signed the required Independent Study Master Agreement.

Student Full Name (Printed): _____

Student Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Parent / Guardian Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

OSIS Teacher Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Special Education Teacher Signature (If Applicable): _____ **Date:** _____