

**AMITE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**Alternative Education Program**  
**Student/Parent Handbook**  
**2018-2019**



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## **Legal Requirements for Operations of an Alternative School Program**

The alternative education program, as described in Section 37-13-92 of the Mississippi Code require local school districts to establish, maintain or operate in connection with the regular programs of said school district, an alternative school program or behavior modification program as defined by the State Board of Education for, but not limited to, the following categories of compulsory school age students:

- (a) Any compulsory school age child, who has been suspended for more than ten (10) days or expelled from school, except for any students expelled for possession of a weapon or other felonious conduct.
- (b) Any compulsory school age child referred to such alternative school based upon documented need for placement in the alternative school by the parent, legal guardian or custodian of such child due to disciplinary problems.
- (c) Any compulsory school age child referred to such alternative school program by the dispositive order of a chancellor or youth court judge, with the consent of the superintendent of the child's school district.

The alternative school program provides students an opportunity to continue their education in a more restrictive environment for a specified time period, until behavior requirements have been met.

## **Goals of Alternative Education**

1. To provide students with daily motivation and encouragement for academic growth and personal independence;
2. To provide students with the necessary social skills needed to interact appropriately with peers and faculty;
3. To provide students with group and/or individual counseling to explore avenues to improve emotional, behavioral, and/or adjustment difficulties;
4. To provide students who are experiencing acute or short-term behavior-related difficulties with a support program, which will help them to succeed in obtaining a high school diploma or certificate of attendance.

### **Students Typically Served in Alternative Education Programs**

1. Students who are demonstrating persistent behavior/conduct difficulties that adversely affect their academic performance and/or the academic performance of other students may be referred to the alternative education program.
2. Students involved in the youth court system may be referred by the court to attend the district's alternative education program.

### **Students Not Typically Served by Alternative Education Programs**

1. Students who have been recommended for school expulsion for actions that are considered a threat to themselves and others;
2. Students who commit a felony that endangers others;
3. Students who are charged with the possession or intent to distribute drugs;
4. Students who are charged with the possession of a weapon;
5. Students who commit an assault on a school employee and/or other student.

*Note 1: The term student refers to both regular education and disabled students who are demonstrating behavioral or conduct difficulties which are negatively affecting progress toward school completion.*

*Note 2: Students who have been expelled for any of the above violations must petition the board of trustees for re-admittance into school. In the event that such re-admittance is granted, the student **will be placed** in the district's alternative education program.*

### **Student Referral Procedures**

Students are typically referred to the Amite County Alternative Education Program by regular classroom faculty, special education faculty (see appendix for specific guidelines for students with disabilities), school counselors, school principals, and parents. In some cases, students may be referred by other agencies such as Youth Court or Human Services (Public Welfare Department).

Students who have been expelled from a school in the Amite County School District may be placed in the alternative school by order of the Amite County Board of Education if the Board deems that their presence in the alternative school is not a danger to themselves and/or others. The student will be required to remain in the alternative education program for the length of time assigned by the board of trustees.

Any student who is returning to school after being released from a training school must be placed in the alternative school program for a minimum of 45 days before he/she is eligible for admission into the regular education or special education programs.

Once a student has exited out of the alternative education program, the student will remain on probation for a period of 1 year. During the probationary period, the student can be placed back in the alternative education program, **(without parental permission)**, if that placement is determined to be in the best interest of the student or other students in the school.

### **Student Selection Procedures**

All students referred to the alternative education program are screened by a local selection committee. This committee consists of representatives from vocation education, regular education, special education, alternative education, parents, and school administrators.

### **Student Selection Criteria**

Students are selected based on the presence (or absence, in some cases) of the following behavior/conduct and/or attendance criteria:

#### Behavior/Conduct Criteria

1. Students should have a history of repeated conduct-related offenses (i.e. several discipline referrals) which are directly affecting his academic performance and/or the academic progress of other students.
2. The student has demonstrated behavior violations which would lead to long-term suspension and/or expulsion for any offense which is not considered a threat or danger to others.
3. Any student who is re-entering school after returning from a training school.

More specifically, students whose discipline offenses result in excessive in-school suspensions will be considered by the screening committee for alternative education placement. Also, any student who participates in a fight while at school or while attending a school event may be recommended for alternative school placement.

### **Student Entry Procedures**

Once a student has been recommended for alternative education placement, parents will be given written notice of the screening committee's recommendation. However, before a student may participate in the alternative education program, parental consent must be given in writing (see appendix). **Students may be placed in the alternative education program in lieu of expulsion at the recommendation of the school principal and the approval of the superintendent.** Parents may present written permission to the principal for a designee to sign the student's consent forms. The letter granting the designee permission to sign the forms in the place of the parent must be included with the student entry records into the alternative program.

In cases where parents do not consent to alternative education placement, the student may be given out-of-school suspension for subsequent discipline violations. *Note: Once a student commits conduct violations which would warrant his/her receiving a third out-of-school suspension, the student may receive a ten-day out-of-school suspension with a recommendation for expulsion. **If a student has been placed in the alternative school program in lieu of expulsion and parents decline the alternative school placement, the student will be recommended to the school board for expulsion.***

### **Alternative Education Program Design**

The Amite County Alternative Education Program is designed to offer each student the major or core educational requirements in the areas of mathematics, language arts, sciences, and social studies. Additional programs may include; employability skills training, learning strategies, character development, conflict resolution, violence prevention, counseling and tutorial. A classified employee shall serve as the facilitator of the alternative education classroom. In addition, a teacher will be assigned to the alternative school for a designated class period each day in the areas of mathematics, English, science, and social studies. The assigned teacher will be responsible for awarding all grades to alternative students for the subject area he/she teaches. All subjects will be taught by certified staff members with appropriate educational endorsement(s).

### **Program Duration**

Students referred and recommended for alternative education placement must attend classes in the alternative school setting for the length of time recommended at the time of placement. The minimum length of time a student can be assigned to the alternative school is 45 days. In cases where students are referred during the middle of a grading period, they will be required to attend the alternative program at a minimum for the remainder of that grading period and the following grading period.

### **Extracurricular Activities**

Students enrolled in the district's alternative education program will not be allowed to participate in any extracurricular activities (i.e. varsity sports, clubs, etc.) and/or attend any school-related functions.

### **Student Exit Procedures**

A student may exit the alternative education program for the following reasons: (1) after serving a minimum of 45 days or the time period assigned, and (2) when he or she demonstrates successful attainment of objectives specified in his/her instructional, behavioral, and attendance plans. Before a student is allowed to exit out of the alternative education program, the alternative education screening committee must meet to review the student's growth and performance in the areas of academics, behavior, and attendance. The screening committee will be given the responsibility to recommend that the student be exited out or receive an extension of their assignment in the program.

### **Individual Instructional Plan**

Each student in the alternative education program will have an Individual Instructional Plan (IIP) developed by the alternative education staff to include academic goals and objectives for each grading period. Such a plan will be developed with each student's strengths and weaknesses taken into account. Parents will be encouraged to assist in the development and successful implementation of this plan.

### **Individual Behavior Plan**

All students enrolled in the alternative education program will be highly expected to demonstrate appropriate behavior on a daily basis. Each student will have an individual behavior plan developed to include goals and objectives for each grading period. Such behaviors include, but are not limited to, the following: staying on task, following directions, staying in an assigned area, completing work, and attending school with a minimum number of absences, observing school discipline rules. It is our strong belief that by demonstrating these behaviors to an acceptable degree, a student's chance for success in regular education is greatly enhanced.

To monitor the process of each student toward performing these behaviors, a daily/weekly report (see appendix) will be maintained for each student by the alternative staff.

### **Individual Attendance Plan**

To facilitate good school attendance, each student enrolled in the alternative education program will have a specific plan to address his or her overall attendance at school.

Students enrolled in the alternative program are required to follow the district's attendance policy (see *Absence from School* in the student handbook).

### **Behavior Management Program**

It is our belief that students often develop behavior-related problems as the result of the lack of consistency in defining expectations and delivering appropriate rewards or consequences for proper and/or improper behavior. Therefore, in an attempt to improve overall student behavior and achievement, each student enrolled in the alternative education program will receive instruction that focuses on positive and/or negative consequences to actions in an attempt to get students to consider their actions.

### **Program Content**

Based on the IIP's developed for each student, the alternative program provides educational tutoring in the courses in which the student is currently enrolled. There is strong emphasis on developing pro-social behaviors using skills training and behavioral counseling. The atmosphere of the class reinforces responsible behavior to replace the previous pattern of irresponsibility. The focus is on returning a student to the regular education program.

Certified teachers in the areas of mathematics, English, science, and social studies will be responsible for providing daily instruction to students in the alternative school setting. Each teacher assigned to the alternative school will be responsible for assigning the students' grades for the class he/she teaches.

### **Daily Absences**

When a student must be absent, **the parent or guardian MUST call** the alternative school by 8:30 a.m. to report the absence, including the reason for the absence. If the parent or guardian does not notify the school, the school will first attempt to contact the parent at home. If unable to reach the parent at home, the school will then contact the parent at his/her work place. The school must be notified as to the whereabouts of the student each day he/she is assigned to the alternative school. Each student's phone number will be kept on file in the alternative classroom.

The alternative school cannot accept or honor a student's calling in his/her behalf to report an absence. The school will work closely with the county attendance officer and Youth Court officials.

### **Emergencies**

The alternative school operates on a **CLOSED CAMPUS POLICY**. No student assigned to the school will be allowed the privilege of leaving early unless there is an extreme emergency. The parent or legal guardian first must notify the school of the reason for the student's need for an early dismissal or emergency departure. The student will be permitted to leave the campus only if the parent or guardian comes to the school to pick up the student. The parent or guardian **MUST** come inside the alternative education program building to check out the student. In order to ensure the safety and welfare of all students, there will be no exceptions to this rule.

### **Student Conduct**

Good behavior is expected of every student enrolled in the alternative school program. The school is designed to give students who have been expelled or suspended a chance to stay in school and receive graduation credits. Therefore, it is a privilege for the student to attend this alternative program. At all times a teaching situation conducive to learning must be maintained. Under no circumstances can a student who is assigned to the alternative school be given In-School Suspension; however, alternative students can receive Out-of-School Suspension. **Any student who makes it extremely difficult or impossible for the teacher to devote full attention to the class will be subject to expulsion.**

Good citizenship is based on respect and consideration for the rights of others. Students are expected to conduct themselves in such a way that the rights and privileges of others are not violated.

Students are required to respect school authority and to conform to school policies, regulations, and rules. When students behave inappropriately or violate school regulations, they will be subject to disciplinary action by school authorities.

**Any students who starts a disturbance or fight (or who participates in one) on campus, in the classroom, or on a bus, will be subject to expulsion and to being turned over to law enforcement. No student is allowed to harass or intimidate another student or staff. Any form of verbal or physical harassment will be dealt with on an individual basis.**

**All students must refrain from the use of profane or verbally abusive language while on the school campus and on the bus. The school will not tolerate insubordination or verbal abuse to teachers or staff. Students who violate this rule will be subject to expulsion and to further disciplinary action by the school. The possession, carrying, or use of any type of weapon on school property will be treated as a criminal offense. Weapons violations must be reported to the school principal, who will be responsible for notifying the appropriate law enforcement authorities and the**

**superintendent of education (for further information refer to *Possession of Weapons on School Property* in the student handbook).**

### **Lunches/Breaks**

All alternative school students will continue to receive meals at no cost through the Provision III meals program implemented throughout the district. The lunches will be delivered from the cafeteria to the alternative program building. Breaks are a privilege offered to students whose behavior/conduct has been satisfactory. Students should use this time to go to the restroom and to get water. Breaks are given in the morning and in the afternoon. Each break is about 10 minutes.

### **Transportation**

Transportation services are provided by the school district if the student is not under a bus suspension. Students who are attending the alternative program are not allowed to drive a car to campus or ride to school with another student. Any parent of a student attending the alternative school program who chooses to drive the student to school or pick him/her up after school must drop off or pick up the student at the gate to the alternative building. In addition, alternative students who ride the bus to school will be dropped off and picked up at the alternative building.

### **Alternative School Rules**

All students assigned to the alternative school program in the Amite County School District must follow all guidelines and procedures of the district's student handbook. In addition to the dress code and student disciplinary policies defined in the student handbook, alternative students must adhere to the additional rules and regulations that follow:

- 1) While assigned to the alternative school, students are not allowed to be on any other school property during or after regular school hours. This includes sports activities or other events sponsored by the school district.

Failure to comply may result in the student being charged with trespassing.

- 2) Alternative education students will not be allowed to drive a car onto the school campus or ride to or from school with another student. They may ride a bus (if not under bus suspension) or be driven to school by their parents.

- 3) Alternative students cannot be dropped off and picked up by bus or car at the main school campus. They must be dropped off and picked up at the entrance to the alternative school.
- 4) Alternative students will not be allowed to participate in or attend extracurricular activities.
- 5) Alternative students are subject to all rules and regulations as designated in the student handbook.

## AMITE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

DESCRIPTOR/TERM

ADOPTION DATE

**Guidelines for Alternative Education Program**

**July 18, 2013**

1. The alternative school program is defined through written board-approved policies and procedures that define and provide appropriate educational opportunities for the categories of students to be served. Further, the program must meet the requirements of Mississippi Code Section 37-13-92.
2. The district has and follows written procedures which meet Goss vs Lopez due process requirements for removal of a student from school for disciplinary reasons.
3. The curriculum and instructional methodology address the needs of students through an Individual Instructional Plan which emphasizes academic performance behavior modification, functional skills, and career education.
4. The student/teacher ratio in each classroom is no greater than 15:1 with a process for approving exceptions by the State Department of Education.
5. Adequate instructional staff is assigned to ensure the continuing education of students and classroom supervision at all times.
6. Certified teaching staff and other staff assigned to the alternative program have adequate credentials to achieve the stated mission of the program. Further, students assigned for a grading period or longer and receiving Carnegie unit credits will receive instruction from appropriately certified teachers.
7. When the alternative school program is housed in a free standing facility separate from the regular school program, there is a certified administrator assigned to supervise the program.
8. When the alternative school program is housed in an existing school, the safety of regular staff and students will be insured by appropriate supervision and isolation as necessary. When an alternative program is operated by two or more school districts, pursuant to a contract approved by the State Department of Education, the contract will indicate which school district will house and which district will operate the alternative education program.
9. Rules and regulations which address the unique needs of alternative program students have been developed and disseminated to parents and students.

10. The alternative school facilities are clean, safe and functional, and commensurate with facilities provided to other students by the local school district.
11. The school district is in compliance with applicable laws and State Department of Education guidelines for reporting information relating to the alternative program.
12. Cumulative records on each student placed in an alternative program remain at and are maintained by the sending school.
13. Personnel assigned to an alternative program will report any criminal activity or other unlawful activity committed on school property to the appropriate authority.
14. Students enrolled in alternative programs/schools, including those provided through contractual agreements among multi-districts will participate in the Mississippi Assessment System at sites determined by school officials and in accordance with established guidelines regarding student grade levels and eligibility. Test results for these students will be reported in the home school district.
15. Evaluation of the student's progress will be conducted at regular intervals according to district policy and the appropriate records will be maintained and subject to the State Department of Education review.
16. The Individual Instruction Plan will provide full-day attendance with a rigorous workload and minimal non-instructional time.
17. Districts may select programs from options provided by the local school district, the Mississippi Department of Human Services (Division of Youth Services) or the youth court, and/or transfer to a community-based alternative school.
18. Alternative programs will provide:
  - a) a motivated and culturally diverse staff
  - b) counseling for parents and students
  - c) administrative and community support for the program.
19. The district will complete an annual program review and evaluation as directed by the State Department of Education.

**AMITE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Alternative Education Program**

Parents/Guardians:

After reading this Amite County Alternative Education Program Handbook, please sign below, cut along the broken line above, and return this section only to the Alternative school facilitator.

**I have thoroughly read the student handbook and understand the policies and procedures of the alternative program.**

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*Signature*

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*Date*