

The Board is committed to the goal of providing a safe, orderly, caring and inviting learning environment at each school. The educational program, code of student conduct, and the safe school plans developed at each school, as well as numerous other strategies identified in Board policy, are intended to create such an environment and help each student be a contributing and successful member of the school.

It is the desire of the Board to provide alternative learning programs that are rigorous and include quality education. Alternative learning programs are defined as services for students at-risk of truancy, academic failure, behavior problems, and/or dropping out of school. These services should be designed to better meet the needs of students who have not been successful in the regular public school setting. Alternative learning programs may serve students at any level who are: suspended and/or expelled, at risk of participation in juvenile crime, have dropped out and desire to return to school, have a history of truancy, are returning from juvenile justice settings or psychiatric hospitals, or whose learning styles are better served in an alternative setting. Alternative learning programs can provide a meaningful educational experience for students at times under circumstances when the regular school program or setting is not appropriate. However, there should be a goal of returning the student to the regular education setting as soon as the student is capable of returning and it is appropriate for him to do so.

The superintendent shall develop guidelines, for approval by the Board, for assigning students to alternative learning programs. The guidelines shall include:

1. a description of the programs and services to be provided;
2. a process for ensuring that the assignment is appropriate for the students and that the student's parents are involved in the decision; and
3. strategies for providing alternative learning programs, when feasible and appropriate, for students who are subject to long-term suspension or expulsion.

Prior to referring a student to an alternative learning program, the referring school shall:

1. document the procedures used to identify the student as being at-risk of academic failure or as being disruptive or disorderly;
2. provide the reasons for referring the student; and
3. provide to the alternative learning program all relevant student records, including anecdotal information.

GUIDELINES FOR REFERRING STUDENTS TO ALTERNATIVE LEARNING PROGRAMS

When a teacher, school administrator, or other school personnel recognizes that a student is experiencing academic or developmental difficulty or social/behavior problems, school personnel should meet with the parent to develop a plan of action to address such issues. If the plan is implemented and interventions have not been successful, the school personnel may refer the student to the school's appropriate committee. [Julia-need to insert appropriate committee name(s).] Referrals also may be made by parents, juvenile justice officials, the courts, or other appropriate community agencies. Parents should be informed about the difficulty their child is experiencing and involved in the development of any modifications to be implemented in their child's education program.

When a student is placed in an alternative learning program, the appropriate staff members of the alternative school shall meet to review the records forwarded by the referring school and shall determine what services and intervention strategies are recommended for the student. A personal education plan (PEP) must be developed for each student assigned to an alternative learning program, by the alternative learning program's staff, in consultation with parents and the sending school. The PEP must address the presenting academic and/or behavioral problems, and must include the following:

1. academic and/or behavioral goals to be met in the alternative learning program;
2. projected timelines for meeting the goals;
3. criteria to be used in evaluating student progress; and
4. signatures of the students, parents, and representatives from the sending school and the alternative learning program.

The student and parent should sign a contract, specifying that they accept placement in the alternative learning program and will abide by its academic, behavioral and social expectations.

If the student has been suspended from school prior to placement in an alternative learning program, the PEP must be developed during the period of suspension and prior to the student's admission to the alternative learning program, if possible. If the placement does not involve a suspension from school, the PEP will be developed and implemented within the first week the student is assigned to the alternative learning program. The PEP must be reviewed at least annually and revised as necessary. Parents must be invited to participate in any review.

If a student subject to consideration for assignment to an alternative learning program is suspected of being a child with a disability, the Procedures Governing Programs and Services for Children with Disabilities will be followed. Educational placement of a child with a disability in an alternative learning program must be based on his or her IEP.

TRAINING AND ASSESSMENT

The superintendent shall provide a means to assess on a regular basis (at least annually) whether the alternative learning program is appropriately staffed, and will assure that employees assigned to the alternative learning program are properly trained. [Option: No employee who has received a rating of less than “above-standard” within the last three years on a formal evaluation may be assigned to the staff of an alternative learning program. No employee who has received a performance rating of “below standard” within the last three years shall be assigned to the staff of an alternative learning program.]

The superintendent shall provide the board, on a regular basis, with an assessment of whether the alternative learning program is staffed with professionals who are well trained and provided with appropriate staff development, which shall incorporate practices for improving student academic performance and reducing disruptive behavior. School improvement plans shall include effective instructional practices to improve the academic performance of students identified at-risk of academic failure or dropping out of school.

The superintendent shall assure that a needs assessment is conducted for each school, and used as a basis for developing goals and objectives of the safe schools plan. Students who are at risk of academic or disruptive/disorderly behavior shall be identified, and the superintendent shall document the procedures used to identify such students. The guidelines for assigning students to alternative learning programs shall be incorporated within the school system’s safe school plans. Each school improvement plan shall include specific instructional practices and methods to improve the academic performance of students identified as at-risk of academic failure or dropping out of school. The school system’s safe school plan shall include a clear statement of the services to be provided to students assigned to alternative learning programs.

Legal Reference: G.S. 115C- 47(32a), - 105.27, - 105.48, -276, -288, -366, -367, -391
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