Instruction

Alternative Education Programs

The purpose of this policy is to recognize the need for alternative education programs for some District students.

The Board of Education (Board) is dedicated to providing educational options for all students within available financial constraints. It is recognized that there will be students in the District whose needs and interests are best served by participation in an alternative education program. The Board believes alternative education is a student-focused perspective based on respect for students, the belief that all students can learn given the right environment, and participation in an alternative setting is an informed choice made by students and their families.

"Alternative education" means a school or program maintained and operated by the Board that is offered to students in a nontraditional educational setting and addresses the social, emotional, behavioral and academic needs of such students. Alternative education does not, for purposes of this policy, and Connecticut State Board of Education (CSDE) guidelines, include private schools, homeschooling, "*School Choice,"* adult education, approved private special education programs, gifted and talented programs, and schools or programs within the Connecticut Technical High School System.

The Board shall provide alternative education to students in accordance and compliance with the "Guidelines for Alternative Education Settings," established by the State Board of Education. Such guidelines shall include, but not be limited to, a description of the purpose and expectation of alternative education, criteria for student eligibility, and criteria for how and when a student may enter or exit alternative education. The philosophy of alternative education utilizes a whole-student approach. This approach promotes individualized programming to address students' personal, emotional, social, intellectual, work skills, safety and security needs and academic achievement. The Board views enrollment in an alternative setting not as punishment but as a learning opportunity.

In providing alternative education to students, the Board may use space in an existing school, establish a new school, or establish a program affiliated with one or more schools or districts. Programs must be affiliated with at least one district with a code previously assigned by CSDE. Such programs must comply with state laws pertaining to the number and length of school days in an academic year and shall be subject to all other federal and state laws governing public schools.

The Board may form a cooperative arrangement with other boards of education to provide alternative education pursuant to C.G.S. 10-158a.

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Alternative Education Programs (continued)

A list of alternative programs will be approved by the Board annually. The Superintendent may/shall provide for the involvement of staff, parents and the community in recommending alternative education programs for Board approval. The alternative education program, subject to Board approval, must have a transparent and defined purpose, including a description of the students that may benefit most from the program/school environment. Clear and objective admission criteria, consistent with stated program guidelines, must be evident. Also, to be a part of the alternative education program, clear and explicit criteria and procedural exit criteria frameworks must be used to address a student's return to the traditional school setting. There shall be an annual evaluation of alternative education programs.

The Board, as required, will post information about any alternative education offered on its website, including purpose, location, contact information, staff directory, and enrollment criteria. Determination of enrollment shall be made by the student support team, which includes, but is not limited to, parent or family representative, student (if in secondary school), appropriate representative of the alternative environment, student's teachers, school administrator and if the student is identified as disabled, a special education teacher or PPT/504 Team representative. In addition, the Board recognizes its responsibility to give all children in the District who receive alternative education as nearly equal advantages as may be practicable compared to other children in the District. In addition, the Board shall annually submit to the Commissioner of Education a strategic school profile report for each alternative school or program under its jurisdiction.

All students in an alternative education program shall receive instruction based on a curriculum aligned to the Connecticut Core State Standards, unless modified in particular curricular areas as indicated by the goals and objectives of an IEP.

Alternative education programs implemented by the District are meant to maintain flexible learning options regarding environment, structure, and pedagogy. Such programs include but are not limited to, a separate school, tutorial instruction, small group instruction, large group instruction, counseling and guidance, computer-assisted instruction, cooperative work experience, supervised community service activities, and supervised independent study. Before considering an alternative placement, a review of the student's academic, health, and behavioral records, including any PPT and Section 504 records, Student Success Plans, and other history of interventions, must occur.

Students may be placed in an alternative education program within available financial resources upon parent request if the District determines that the placement serves the student's educational needs and interests and assists the student in achieving district and state academic content standards. Families shall have a right of appeal if they disagree with the District's placement decisions.

Instruction

Alternative Education Programs (continued)

The Region 14 Board of Education provides a credit recovery program as part of the alternative education program. A student, if deemed at risk of not graduating, enrolled in the District's "traditional" program may access the credit recovery program without enrolling in the alternative program.

The implementation of this policy and any Board approval of an alternative education program are subject to the requirements and procedures enumerated in the administrative regulation.

(cf. 6172.11 – Relations with Charter Schools)
(cf. 6172.12 – Magnet Schools)
(cf. 6172.41 – Title I Program)
(cf. 6172.6 – Virtual/Online Courses)

Legal Reference Connecticut General Statutes

10-4p(b) Implementation plan to achieve resource equity and equality of opportunity. Assessment. Reports. (as amended by PA 15-133)

10-15 Towns to maintain schools.

10-16 Length of school year.

10-158a Cooperative arrangements among towns. School building projects. Student transportation.

10-220 Duties of boards of education (as amended by PA 15-133)

10-223h(c) Commissioner's network of schools. Turnaround committees. Operations and instructional audit. Turnaround plans. Report. (as amended by PA 15-133)

PA 15-133 An Act Concerning Alternative Education

Guidelines for Alternative Education Settings, State Department of Education, approved by CT State Board of Education, Oct. 5, 2016.

Public Act 24-45 An Act Concerning Education Mandate Relief, School Discipline and Disconnected Youth §9

Policy adopted: March 3, 2025

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 14
Bethlehem and Woodbury, Connecticut

Instruction

Alternative Education Programs

In developing an alternative education program to be presented to the Board of Education for its approval and budgetary support, these regulations provide the basis for such a program.

Program Philosophy

The basic tenets of an alternative education program shall include the following basic principles:

1. A philosophy of high expectations is evidenced through the program's documented mission and vision statements that are visible and available to all school/program community members.
2. The school/program embraces the concept that all students are capable and can be successful.
3. As part of the overall philosophy of the alternative education setting, family involvement is welcomed and actively supported. Families are considered equal partners and involved in all decision-making processes for their child's learning and personal success.
4. A climate must be created that supports receiving input from families and bi-directional communication to share information about the student's progress at home and school.
5. Enrollment in the alternative setting is an informed choice by students and their respective families. An orientation or information session is provided to explain the program and student expectations.
6. Students and their families shall be regularly informed of their progress through the mandated and personalized "Student Success Plan."
7. All students in the program shall receive instruction based on a curriculum aligned to the CT Core State Standards (CSS) unless modified by the goals and objectives of an IEP or Section 504 plan in particular curricular areas.
8. Instructional practices must be culturally relevant to promote understanding and respect for enrolled students and include their perspectives and interests within an inclusive learning environment to accommodate different learning styles and abilities through flexible groupings.
9. Students are provided support to transition into postsecondary training and employment.
10. All staff, students, and families will consider cultural differences as critical to understanding personal needs, and accommodations will be made for cultural differences to allow for personal success within the learning alternative(s).

Instruction

Alternative Education Programs (continued)

Guidelines for Student Placement

Student placement in an alternative education setting must include the following written policy direction:

1. **Prior to Referral**

   Before consideration of alternative placement, the following need to take place:

   - A review of the student's academic, health and behavioral records, including planning and placement team (PPT) or 504 records, student success plans (SSP), and the efficacy of tier 1, 2, and 3 interventions;
   - Assurance that Child Find requirements have been complied with;
   - Students may be referred from the following sources: parent, student (self or peer), school or district.

2. **Entrance Criteria**

   The Board of Education is required to approve the development of alternative education settings to ensure the following:

   - The alternative education program/school has a transparent and defined purpose, including a description of the types of students that may benefit most from the program/school environment.
   - Alternative education schools and programs develop clear and objective criteria for admission consistent with stated program guidelines provided to students and their parents/guardians at the time of admittance into the alternative setting.

3. **Process**

   The student and parents/guardians are provided with an accurate and comprehensive description of the alternative education delivered. There are culturally and linguistically responsive family and student engagement practices regarding all aspects of decision-making related to placement. The team will ensure that parents/guardians know and understand how the alternative education placement will benefit their child.

   Determination of enrollment is made by the student support team involved in the placement, which includes but is not limited to parent or family representative, student, if in secondary school, appropriate representative of the alternative environment, student's teachers, school administrator (sending school), special education administrator or designee and PPT/504 Team (if the student has an identified disability).

   If there is disagreement with the placement decision, there must be a clear process written in policy by the Board delineating a family's right of appeal.

   The entrance criteria and procedures must be explicitly written in each alternative education program/school handbook and provided to parents/guardians and students in the language of the home at the time of admittance into the alternative setting.

Instruction

Alternative Education Programs (continued)

Guidelines for Continued or Discontinued Student Placement

To ensure that continued placement in the alternative setting is appropriate, the District's written policy must have a clear process to include the following:

1. **Annual Review**

   A review of the appropriateness of placement occurs at least annually with a team. The following issues are to be considered:

   - A review of program goals to reinforce student and parent choice regarding placement.
   - A review of the student's program of study and alignment to their Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals, where appropriate.
   - Members of the team include, but are not limited to, parent or family representative, student, if in secondary school, appropriate representative of the alternative environment, student's teachers, school administrator or designee (receiving school – if applicable), and if the student has an identified disability, special education administrator or designee.

2. **Exit Criteria**

   Alternative education settings must adopt clear and explicit criteria and procedural frameworks to address the following:

   - A return to the traditional school setting by an informed choice of the student and their family.
   - A determination that the setting is no longer beneficial to the student.

3. **Process**

   Student transition from an alternative education setting shall be made as follows:

   - Transition planning for placement outside of the alternative education setting is related to the annual review to ensure the continuity of support.
   - The transition plan provides recommendations consistent with the student's future educational plans as evidenced by their student success plan.
   - The transition plan is aligned with the student's IEP goals where appropriate.
   - Members of the team include, but are not limited to, parent or family representative, student, if in secondary school, the appropriate representative of the alternative environment, student's teachers, school administrator or designee (receiving school – if applicable), and if the student has an identified disability, special education administrator or designee.

Instruction

Alternative Education Programs

Guidelines for Continued or Discontinued Student Placement (continued)

If there is disagreement with the placement decision, there must be a clear process written in the Board's policy by the LEA Board of Education, delineating a family's right of appeal.

The exit criteria and procedures must be explicitly written in each alternative education program/school handbook and provided to parents/guardians and students in the language of the home at the time of admittance into the alternative setting.