

R 2480 ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS/PROGRAMS

The Superintendent is authorized to provide a nontraditional program for pupils where credits are awarded based on specific instructional objectives and demonstrated outcomes rather than on time spent in the program. The Board may provide an alternative school and/or program for students who are not succeeding in their present school setting. The alternative school and/or program is not intended for pupils who have been classified as disabled. These pupils are eligible for educational services under a variety of special education program alternatives.

A. Pupil Population

1. Pupils who may be experiencing educational and behavioral problems in schools.
2. Pupils who may exhibit chronic problems associated with persistent failure, discipline, truancy and absenteeism.
3. Pupils who may be experiencing basic skills deficiencies, frustration, alienation, negative self-concept, and a school environment that provides insufficient encouragement for such pupils all may contribute to the problem.
4. Pupils who may have a history of negative school experiences and patterns of behavior that have been disruptive to their own education, as well as to that of their classmates.

B. Goals and Objectives

1. The Commission finds it necessary to establish an alternative school and/or programs to prevent pupils' patterns of behavior from interfering with the educational process.
2. The Commission finds it necessary to establish an alternative school and/or programs to achieve both school-related objectives and to facilitate student success.
2. The Commission's removing a group of students with specific needs and an identifiable set of

characteristics or problems from the regular school program allow the Commission to achieve the following objectives:

- a. To assist pupils in making educational progress in order to meet the credit year curriculum requirements and satisfy both local and State high school graduation requirements;
- b. To provide special support and assistance to help identified pupils develop more responsible patterns of behavior;
- c. To improve the school climate by maintaining an educational environment conducive to learning and teaching; and
- d. To increase student adherence to fundamental codes of conduct and increase the effectiveness of disciplinary policies and procedures.

C. Alternative School/Alternative Program

1. An alternative school/program is a program designed and operated for learning/behavioral characteristics for pupils.
2. An alternative school/program individualized program plan is developed and used for each pupil placed in an alternative school/program whether or not the program completion option is to be used as the basis for awarding high school credit.
3. A program completion option individualized program plan is used for any student not placed in an alternative school/program but for whom the program completion option is used as the basis for earning high school credit (e.g. independent study, special research projects, group projects, community action/service programs, etc.)
4. Alternative school/program individualized program plans and program completion option individualized program plans are kept on file in the school and are subject to review by the Commissioner of Education or designee. These plans will be revised and updated as necessitated

by program changes but at least annually in accordance with the requirements of the pupil records code (N.J.A.C. 6:3-2 et seq.).

5. The alternative school must have the following characteristics:
  - a. Be designated by the Board as an entity separate and distinct from any and all other schools within the Commission;
  - b. Maintain a separate Department of Education New Jersey School register;
  - c. Have the facility used to provide educational services approved by the New Jersey Department of Education-Bureau of Facility Planning Services; and
  - d. Be assigned a full-time non-teaching principal who is responsible for administration and supervision of the school. (A waiver may be requested under N.J.A.C. 6:8-3.2).
6. An alternative educational program must have the following characteristics:
  - a. A facility that is used to provide educational services which must be approved by the New Jersey Department of Education-Bureau of Facility Planning Services; and
  - b. An individual assigned at the school facility with designated responsibility for program supervision and coordination.
7. The alternative school/program represents an organizational arrangement with the following distinctive characteristics:
  - a. Is located at a separate site or in a separate wing or building;
  - b. Has a specified pupil population - pupils with specific needs and an identified set of characteristics or problems;

- c. Has a separate administrative head - a certified professional assigned at the facility with responsibility for program supervision and coordination. If the responsibility also includes supervision of staff, the separate administrative head will hold a supervisor's certificate;
- d. Is organizationally small - has a low student-teacher ratio which provides teachers an opportunity to establish personal relationships and offer individualized attention to students' learning and behavioral needs;
- e. Provides comprehensive support services including health and counseling services specifically tailored to facilitate student adjustment and educational success, as well as other social services, including casework and referral services, which link the students and their families to available community resources.

D. Staffing/Staff Development

- 1. The program staff will be able to develop a conceptual understanding of a different approach so their reactions to the unpredictable are congruent with the program.
- 2. The Board shall provide appropriate staff development programs.

E. Educational Requirements

- 1. The alternative school/program shall be in operation a minimum of one hundred eighty days a year and provide at least four hours of approved educational experiences daily. An approved educational experience is one that is planned for a student in connection with the individualized program process and is implemented under the general supervision of certified school staff.
- 2. The following requisites must be satisfied by each student in order to receive a state-endorsed high school diploma:

- a. Complete the credit year requirements for each curricular area based upon the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards;
- b. Pass the HSPA or other State mandated assessment or satisfy the SRA process; and
- c. Satisfy the attendance requirements for the alternative school/program.

F. Curriculum and Instruction

1. The alternative school/program curriculum, while based on the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards also includes other program components. The program of study for grades nine through twelve must minimally include the credit year requirements of N.J.A.C. 6;8-7.1 et seq.
2. Clear goals, specific objectives (that reflect the Commission's curricular proficiencies), and an individually-paced program will be designed and specified for each pupil.
3. Instructional approaches will be matched to the pupil's behavioral needs, learning styles, abilities, and curricular areas.
4. Clear standards of achievement will be provided to create a work and learning atmosphere.
5. Classes will be structured to facilitate the development of life skills as well as the attainment of educational goals.

G. Individualized Program Plan

1. An Individualized Program Plan (IPP) will be prepared for each pupil enrolled in the Alternative School Program. The IPP provides the pupil, parent(s) or legal guardian(s), and teacher(s) with an overall program plan to guide the implementation of the agreed-upon educational experiences and program activities which have been developed by the appropriate school staff and approved by the Principal. The IPP provides

a record of the credits earned and documentation that the pupil successfully meets locally established proficiencies, including, but not limited to the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards.

2. The IPP will be developed in consultation with the Principal, teacher, parent, appropriate pupil personnel specialists, and other staff members who know the pupil's educational performance,
3. The Superintendent or designee is responsible for the placement of pupils in conformance with the pupil's educational program.
4. The IPP will be under the supervision of a certified teaching staff member.
5. The IPP will be maintained in the school Principal's office and are subject to review by the New Jersey Department of Education.

H. Attendance

1. Pupil attendance requirements appropriate to all educational programs offered shall be established pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6:8-7.1(d)2. For educational programs based upon the program completion alternative, which in most cases is proficiency based as opposed to time based, special attention will be given to the amount of time that is necessary and required to meet program objectives.
2. A record of daily attendance will be maintained for each pupil in the alternative school/program. In the event the program activities are not school or classroom based, attendance will be considered in the context of the student's participation in the various program components regardless of the setting in which they take place. Accordingly, there may be different attendance requirements for different programs and/or program components.
3. Alternative school attendance registers and student rosters must be maintained separate and distinct from any other school.

Exception: If the alternative school is under the jurisdiction of a parent school to which the alternate program is linked, the existing school must also keep a record of daily student attendance. Student absences will be applied to the average daily attendance rate of the parent high school.

I. Transportation

The Board will establish policies and procedures for transporting pupils to and from alternative education school/programs and related school activities pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6:21-3.1(b).

J. Budget

The administration will develop and the Board will approve a projected budget for the alternative school/program. The budget will account for all operating expenses required to run the program. The budget must be submitted to the New Jersey Department of Education.

K. Miscellaneous

1. The alternative school/program will be subject to the Department of Education's certification and monitoring procedures performed by the Commissioner's representative(s).
2. The Superintendent will establish a program and management committee for the purpose of providing oversight to the development and ongoing implementation of the alternative school/program.

The Board will comply with all New Jersey Department of Education requirements for application and approval to operate an alternative education school/program.