

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

I. PURPOSE

To establish a non-traditional academic program designed to meet the educational, behavioral and social needs of students.

II. SCOPE

This policy applies to all Shelby County Schools students in grades K-12.

III. DEFINITION

Regular School Program – System of instruction and behavioral programs offered within the general elementary, middle, and high school grade structures.

Non-traditional Academic Program – The combination of personalized instructional, behavioral, and social programming and services designed to meet the needs of an individual student or group of students in a comprehensive manner.

IV. POLICY STATEMENT

The Board authorizes the operation of alternative schools in accordance with state law¹ for students who have been suspended or expelled from the regular school program. Additionally, the District may offer alternative services to address educational, behavioral and social needs of students upon approval of the Superintendent (or designee). Shelby County Schools may provide such students with the opportunity to attend alternative schools, as space permits. Students attending alternative schools shall be responsible for their own transportation.

Students attending an alternative school shall abide by the rules of their school and shall be subject to disciplinary action for violations of school rules. However, violation of school rules shall not constitute grounds for extension of time spent in an alternative school. The final decision on removal from an alternative school shall be made by the Chief Administrator of the Alternative Schools.¹

Shelby County Schools shall track the operation and performance of alternative school programs in accordance with state law³ and shall develop and implement formal transition plans for the integration of students between regular schools and alternative schools.⁴

Operation

Alternative schools shall be operated in accordance with the rules of the State Board of Education² and instruction shall proceed as nearly as practicable in accordance with the instructional programs at the student's home school. All course work completed and credits earned in the alternative school shall be transferred to and recorded in the student's home school. Credit earned and progress made shall be granted as if the work were performed in the home school. Additionally, grades earned from alternative schools, shall not be lowered upon students' return to their home school. No student may graduate based solely on attendance in an alternative school.¹

In order to preserve the educational benefits associated with individualized instruction and the small class size structure of alternative schools, student-teacher ratios shall be small enough to allow for adequate instruction but shall be determined by the age, behavior, and academic achievement of the students.

To support effective instruction to students attending alternative schools, within system constraints, the District seeks to provide alternative schools with comparable classroom space, resources, and personnel.

Teachers in alternative schools shall be certified by the state, meet federal "highly qualified" standards, and shall be selected on the basis of interest and ability to work in alternative situations.

V. RESPONSIBILITY

A. The Superintendent (or designee) is responsible for implementing this policy.

Legal References:

1. TCA 49-6-3402; OP Tenn. Atty. Gen. 93-43 (May 12, 1993)
2. TRR/MS 0520-1-2-.09
3. TCA 49-6-3405

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Placement

As space permits, Shelby County Schools may provide the opportunity to attend an alternative school to students in grades K-12 who have been suspended or expelled from the regular school program.¹ Additionally, as space permits, Shelby County Schools may provide the opportunity for students to attend alternative schools in grades K-12 for students who would benefit from a non-traditional academic program designed to meet their educational, behavioral, and social needs.

Referral for alternative school placement of suspended or expelled students shall be based upon recommendation of the principal. Referral for alternative school placement for students with academic, behavioral, or social needs shall be conducted in accordance with Board policy and shall be based upon recommendation from the principal in consultation with an interdisciplinary team (which may include professional school counselors, school social workers, parents, students, etc.). The final decision regarding placement for non-suspended students shall be made by the Chief Administrator of Alternative Schools. Also, students shall remain on the rolls at their home school until the final placement decision has been approved by the Chief Administrator of Alternative Schools. Although the school should make an effort to include the parent/guardian, the meeting may be conducted with or without the parents/guardian's presence if the parent/guardian is unable or unwilling to attend. However, parent permission must be obtained before the placement decision can be approved.

Students found to be eligible for special education shall be placed and served in accordance with the law and rules relating to special education.

The department responsible for alternative schools and programs shall review each referral for validity. Upon receipt of a valid referral, the department

responsible for alternative schools and programs shall meet with the parent to determine admission and placement in the appropriate alternative school.

Grades and Testing

Students shall be allowed to return to their home schools for the purpose of taking semester/final exams, end of course, and standardized tests during the transition of students from their home schools to alternative schools if the period occurs within 10 days of suspension or expulsion. However, grades earned from alternative schools, shall not be lowered upon students' return to their home school.

Transition

Shelby County Schools shall track the operation and performance of alternative school programs in accordance with state law³ and shall develop and implement formal transition plans for the integration of students between regular schools and alternative schools¹. Students that return from incarceration or a mental health facility may transition through the appropriate alternative school. For behavioral incidents that happen within the community that caused students to be incarcerated, the student should be addressed in accordance with the district-wide discipline policy and should be referred to the department responsible for alternative schools and programs for placement in accordance with Board policy and these administrative rules and regulations.

Compliance

Students in alternative schools shall be subject to all rules of the alternative school, and violations of such rules may result in the student's removal from the school for the duration of the original intended suspension or expulsion. Violation of school rules shall not constitute grounds for extension of time spent in the alternative school. The final decision on such removal shall be reviewed by the Chief Administrator of the Alternative School in accordance with appropriate District policy and local, state, and federal law.