

## **Monroe County Schools Alternative Education Policy**

### **I. Rationale**

A high school education is traditionally delivered through a specific number of units of credit being offered to students between the approximate hours of 8:30 - 3:30. Credits are earned in core and elective course classes. Many students achieve success through this approach, however, there are a number of students, who for various reasons, are not successful. Therefore, alternatives to the traditional path through middle and high school need to be available to students. Further, Monroe County is committed to providing a safe and drug-free environment for our students and staff. In order to help ensure safety and provide an optimal environment for learning, Monroe County Schools recognizes the need for an Alternative Education Program.

### **II. Goals**

- A. To provide students with an alternative program that enables them to do the following:
  - 1. Accrue high school credits after they have fallen significantly behind their age group, and have become a disruptive influence at the level to which they are assigned;
  - 2. Achieve a high school diploma even when they are at high risk of not completing a regular school program; or
  - 3. In the case of middle school students, accrue an academic record that will allow them to proceed to the next grade level.
- B. Provide an alternative program to students who through repeated occurrences have demonstrated they are not meeting success in the regular program or in a regular school environment.
- C. To reduce the county dropout rate.
- D. To provide alternative instruction that will allow students to be removed from the regular school environment as outlined in §18A-5-1a[c] of the Safe School Act.
- E. To provide students with a safe learning environment.

### **III. Program Description**

Components of this program include the following:

- A. Assessment of each student upon acceptance in regard to credits earned.
- B. Development for each student, an Alternative Education Plan that would lead to a high school diploma, GED, or re-entry into the regular program.
- C. Placement in sequentially offered academic courses, one course at a time. Progress is self-paced and dependent upon the successful completion of each course's objectives.
- D. A unit of credit is earned after successful completion of the programmed curricular materials.
- E. Students work individually with the assistance of a teacher.
- F. Each course is designed to take approximately 135 (67.5 hours per half credit) hours to complete. However, some students may complete the work in fewer clock hours. Units of credit based upon mastery of performance criteria may be granted as an alternative to the standard units of credit.
- G. Elective courses may be earned through a cooperative work experience course or through an approved community service project. Approved employment or work experience totaling 360 hours equals one elective work experience credit (18 weeks at 20 hours per week); 65 hours equals one community service credit.
- H. Students will attend class four nights a week, three hours each night for core courses. Additional time may be spent through cooperative work experience courses.
- I. Generally, students shall re-enroll in the regular school program after being involved in the alternative school. An exception to this may be granted if the student has completed sufficient credits for graduation while enrolled in the alternative school.
- J. Students enrolled in alternative education programs shall participate in the State Assessment Program, in accordance with State Board of Education Policy 2340:

The Statewide Assessment Program. The test scores for these students shall be counted in the results of the home county school of referral.

- K. Students in alternative education programs shall receive school counseling services and/or other support services such as school social work or psychological services as indicated in the student's Alternative Education Plan.
- L. County Boards of Education shall comply with applicable state and federal laws and regulations in the education of exceptional students placed in alternative education programs.

#### **IV. Pupil Attendance and Membership**

Pupils enrolled in the Alternative Education Program shall be counted as full-time students in Monroe County Schools. Completion of credits will be dependent upon a minimum attendance of ~~50~~ 45 sessions per credit unless otherwise documented by the instructor that completion was in fewer sessions.

#### **V. Referral Process**

Students being considered for the Alternative Education Program will be referred by the principal, the superintendent, or a designee. Referrals will be made to the superintendent's office with the alternative school coordinator reviewing the case and conducting an interview with the student, the legal guardian and the principal, who shall comprise the placement team. This team may also include members of the Student Assistance Program committee at the school or the grade level team at the school or any other personnel deemed appropriate. At this conference the format of the program, the reason for the referral and the student's educational needs, and the parent and student's desire for cooperation and success will be discussed. Based upon this conference, the alternative school coordinator will make a recommendation to the superintendent.

#### **VI. Criteria for Selection**

Students considered for enrollment in the Alternative Education Program must exhibit one or more of the following characteristics.

- A. Inability to function properly within the traditional classroom. Traditional classroom is defined as the regular, special and/or technical education settings that serve as the school day placement site for students.
- B. A pattern of behavioral problems.

- C. Absenteeism and tardiness
- D. Hostility toward adults and authority figures.
- E. Difficulty with community agencies or the law.

**VII. Specific Guidelines for Program Development**

A. Graduation Requirements

Credits necessary for graduation are the same as for that grade level at the home school, although additional electives are available in work experience and/or community service.

B. Compulsory Attendance Exemption

Students will be exempt from attendance regulations from the state and county as long as satisfactory progress is being achieved, and attendance at the night program is consistent.

C. Instructional Day

The actual in-class time will be twelve hours per week; however, students must successfully complete the course work before earning credit.

**VIII. Program Completion**

Alternative school students have completed the program if one of the following has been met:

- A. Students have completed the program if they have completed requirements for graduation as per the requirements at the home school. (Their diploma shall be from the home school)
- B. Their expulsion time is up and they meet the requirements for the return to the regular program;
- C. They have successfully petitioned the superintendent for early re-entry into the regular program from an expulsion as per §18A-5; or

- D. Based upon a principal interview and the recommendation of the alternative school coordinator, the superintendent agrees that the student may enter the regular program who is not currently under an expulsion or suspension.

In all cases, prior to re-entry into the regular program there shall be an interview with the principal, the student, and the legal guardian to establish guidelines for behavior and expected progress in the regular program. Students who do not exhibit appropriate behavior for re-entry may be returned to the alternative setting, even when the expulsion time is up.

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