

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION**A. PURPOSES**

The Board is committed to the goal of providing a safe and orderly learning environment in each school. The educational program and the student behavior management plan developed at each school, in addition to numerous other strategies identified in Board policy, are intended to create such an environment and to help each student be a successful and contributing member of the school community.

Alternative learning programs or schools are provided as an option for those instances in which a student's behavior management or academic performance needs cannot be met in a regular educational setting. The purposes of an alternative learning program or school are: (1) to intervene and address problems that prevent a student from achieving success in the regular educational setting; (2) to reduce the risk that a student will drop out of school by providing resources to help the student resolve issues affecting his or her performance at school; (3) to return a student, if and when it is practicable, to the regular educational setting with the skills necessary to succeed in that environment; and (4) to preserve a safe and orderly learning environment in the regular educational setting.

B. TRANSFER TO ALTERNATIVE LEARNING PROGRAMS OR SCHOOLS

Students generally are assigned to a school based on attendance area. However, as provided by law, the Board may assign any student to a school outside of his or her attendance area in order for the student to attend a specialized school or for any other reason the Board, in its sole discretion, deems sufficient.

Students may be transferred to an alternative learning program or school on a voluntary or involuntary basis. The transfer process is provided below.

1. Responsibilities of Personnel at Referring School

In addition to any other procedures required by this Policy, prior to referring a student to an alternative learning program or school, the principal of the referring school must:

- a. document the procedures that were used to identify the student as being at risk of academic failure or as being disruptive or disorderly;
- b. provide the reasons for referring the student to an alternative learning program or school; and
- c. provide to the alternative learning program or school all relevant student records, including anecdotal information.

2. Responsibilities of School Personnel at the Alternative Learning Program or School

In addition to any other procedures required by this Policy, once a student is placed in an alternative learning program or school, the appropriate school personnel of the program or school must meet to review the student's records and any other documentation forwarded by the referring school. Based on these records and any input provided by the parent concerning the student's needs, the personnel at the alternative program or school shall determine the support services and intervention strategies that are recommended for the student.

If a student who is subject to G.S. 14-208.18 is assigned to an alternative school, the student must be supervised by school personnel at all times.

3. Voluntary Referral

The Board encourages parental involvement in decisions regarding the child's education and in identifying effective options for addressing concerns regarding the child's behavior or academic performance.

Voluntary transfers are encouraged whenever possible. A voluntary transfer is an agreement by the parent and the principal that transfer is an appropriate option for the particular student. After agreement has been reached, the principal of the regular educational setting and the principal of the alternative learning program or school shall arrange the process and time for the transfer. The principal of the regular educational setting shall notify the superintendent of the transfer.

4. Involuntary Referral

A student may be required to be transferred from the regular educational setting to an alternative learning program or school under any of the following circumstances:

- a. the student presents a clear threat to the safety of other students or personnel;
- b. the student presents a significant disruption to the educational environment in the regular educational setting;
- c. the student is at risk of dropping out or not meeting standards for promotion, and resources in addition to or different from those available in the regular educational setting are needed to address the issue;
- d. the student has been charged with a felony or a crime that allegedly endangered the safety of others, and it is reasonably foreseeable that the educational environment in the regular educational setting will be significantly disrupted if the student remains; or
- e. if the Code of Student Conduct provides for a transfer as a consequence of the student's behavior. See Policy 460.

Prior to an involuntary transfer, the principal of the referring school shall document efforts to assist the student in the regular educational environment. The principal also must document the student's behavior and academic performance. A voluntary transfer is preferable to an involuntary transfer. Therefore, a school administrator should meet with the parents to try to reach a consensus on how to address the student's difficulties at school.

If an agreement is not reached and a basis for involuntary transfer exists, the principal may recommend to the superintendent that the student be transferred to an alternative school. The principal must provide in writing: (1) an explanation of the student's behavior or academic performance that is at issue; (2) documentation or a summary of the documentation of the efforts to assist the student in the student's regular educational setting; and (3) documentation of the circumstances that support an involuntary transfer.

A copy of the recommendation and other documentation must be provided to the parents by certified mail or in person. The parent may request an informal meeting with the superintendent to discuss the transfer. The superintendent has the authority to determine who may be present at the meeting.

If the superintendent approves the transfer, the principal of the regular educational setting and the principal of the alternative school shall make all necessary arrangements.

The parent may appeal the superintendent's decision to the Board. The Board will hear the appeal in closed session. During the period of the appeal, the student may be transferred to the alternative learning program or school.

5. Assignment During a Long-Term or 365-Day Suspension

A student who receives a long-term or 365-day suspension may be offered services in the alternative learning program or school for a portion or the full duration of the suspension. See Policy 460. Any student who receives a long-term or 365-day suspension must be offered alternative education services unless the superintendent provides a significant or important reason for declining to offer such services. Alternative education services include, but are not limited to, the alternative programs or schools established in this Policy in accordance with G.S. 115C-105.47A.

6. Assignment of Student Sex Offenders

The Board may decide, pursuant to G.S. 115C-390.11(a)(2), to assign a student who is subject to G.S. 14-208.18 to an alternative learning program or school.