
Alternative Education Programs Policy 2.302

The Background:

T.C.A. § 49-6-3402 authorizes the State Board of Education to establish a policy and guidelines for the operation of alternative schools. All local boards of education must have at least one alternative school available for students in grades seven through twelve (7-12) and may have the choice to offer an alternative school for students in grades one through six (1-6).¹ Alternative schools are designed to help students who are exhibiting serious discipline problems improve their behavior and become academically successful.

This item proposes substantial changes to the Alternative Education Programs policy. Previously, the policy was centered on an outdated pilot project titled *Changing Risk to Resiliency: A Model for Alternative Schools*. The suggested rewrite of the policy is designed to establish and clarify minimum requirements and guidelines for local boards of education concerning their alternative education programs.

Some of the major updates on first reading included:

- Requires each LEA to adopt a policy and procedures that define and provide appropriate educational opportunities for students assigned to an alternative education program.
- Establishes model standards that must be utilized as a guideline in the development of each LEA policy for alternative education programs.
- Emphasizes alternative schools shall comply with the same federal and state requirements (e.g., health and safety laws) as traditional schools.
- Requires that the IEP team makes all final decisions regarding change of placement and delivery of services for students with disabilities.
- Clarifies funding for students assigned to alternative schools.
- Clarifies all students enrolled in alternative education programs shall participate in all required state assessments.
- Requires LEAs to monitor and regularly evaluate the academic program of each student.
- Provides guidelines for the transition plans to help students successfully transfer between a traditional school and an alternative school program.

¹ In providing alternative schools, any two (2) or more boards may join together and establish a school attended by students of any such school system; furthermore, any board may, by mutually acceptable agreement with another board, send its suspended or expelled students to any alternative school already in operation.

Since first reading, the definition of alternative schools was updated to align with statutes, and there was a minor edit to clarify the assignment of students with disabilities to alternative schools.

The Fiscal Analysis Impact:

T.C.A. § 49-1-212 requires that the Department of Education prepare a fiscal analysis of any policy, rule, or regulation proposed to the State Board of Education. This item has no financial impact on an LEA.

The Recommendation:

The Department of Education recommends adoption of this item on final reading. The SBE staff concurs with this recommendation.