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ALTERNATIVE LEARNING PLANS

Purpose

In an effort to reduce the number of students who do not complete the requirements to graduate from high school and earn a diploma, the Board establishes a program for alternative learning plans for students to obtain a high school diploma or its equivalent. The District, through an Alternative Learning Plan team comprised of teachers, administrators, and guidance counselors, are directed to identify students who may be at risk for dropping out of high school, for developing alternative learning plans consistent with this policy, and for assisting students who are participating in alternative learning plans.

Alternative learning plans may include, but are not limited to, extended learning opportunities, independent study, private instruction, performing groups, internships, community service, apprenticeships, online courses/distance education, or other opportunities approved by the Superintendent or his/her designee, in conjunction with Board policies.

The purposes of alternative learning plans are to provide students with educational experiences that are meaningful, to provide students with opportunities to explore and achieve at high levels, and to meet State and District requirements to obtain a high school diploma or its equivalent. In order to maximize student achievement, this policy permits students to employ alternative learning plans that fulfill or exceed the expectations set forth by State minimum standards and applicable Board policy.

Alternative learning plans may include extended learning opportunities taken for credit or taken to supplement regular academic courses. If the alternative learning plan includes extended learning opportunities taken for credit, the provisions of Policies IMBC, Alternative Credit Options and IHBH, Extended Learning Opportunities, will apply. The granting of credit shall be based on a student's mastery of course competencies, as defined by Policies ILBA, Assessment of Educational Programs and ILBAA, High School Competency Assessments. Highly Qualified Teachers and the Principal must authorize the granting of credit for learning accomplished through extended learning opportunities. If credit is not granted, the extended learning opportunity may be used to fulfill prerequisite requirements for other courses.

Roles and Responsibilities

Alternative learning plan components shall have specific instructional objectives aligned with the State minimum standards and District curriculum standards. All alternative learning plans will comply with applicable laws and regulations, including child labor laws and regulations governing occupational safety.

Teachers, Guidance Counselors and Administrators should inform students of the District's promotion of alternative learning plans and similar programs. District employees who believe a student may be at risk for dropping out of high school should inform either the Principal or the Guidance Counselor of the Teacher's concerns. The

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Principal will then schedule a meeting with the student, the Principal, the Guidance Counselor, and the student's parent/guardian to discuss the student's participation in an alternative learning program. Students expressing interest in pursuing such a plan or program should be referred to the Guidance Counselor, Principal, or the Principal's designee.

The Guidance Counselor or Principal's designee is responsible for assisting students and their parents/guardians in preparing application forms and other necessary paperwork for alternative learning plans. The alternative learning plan components will be determined through a team consisting of the student, school personnel, parent/guardian and other appropriate people based on the individual student need.

The Principal or Principal's designee and the designated team will have primary responsibility and authority for approval and implementation of alternative learning plans and will oversee all aspects of such programs. The Principal will be responsible for reviewing and approving alternative learning plans and credits awarded toward the attainment of a high school diploma or its equivalent.

Parents/guardians and/or students may appeal decisions rendered by the Principal within the provisions set forth below (see Appeal Process).

Students approved for alternative learning plans must have parent/guardian permission to participate in such a program. Such permission will be granted through a Memorandum of Understanding for Educational Services signed by the parent/legal guardian and returned to the district before beginning the program. For alternative learning plans that require off-campus attendance, the District will require a signed agreement among the school, the student, and a designated agent of the third-party host. The agreement should specify the roles and responsibilities of each party.

Students engaged in alternative learning plans will remain as enrolled students of their district. Alternative learning plans that are approved by the District become the responsibility of the District to facilitate implementation, including associated costs and transportation.

Approval Process

1. The student/parent/guardian seeking an alternative learning plan shall meet with the guidance counselor or principal to discuss alternative learning plan options and initiate the formation of an alternative learning plan team. The team, including the student and parent/guardian, will meet to design the alternative learning plan designed to enable the student to remain enrolled in school and complete educational requirements.
2. The Superintendent or Superintendent's designee will review the paperwork and will determine whether or not to approve the alternative learning plan. The Superintendent or designee's decision will be made within ten (10) days of receipt of the paperwork. The student and parent/guardian will be notified in writing of the decision. If additional information is requested, the information must be submitted within ten (10) days of receipt of the request.

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3. It is the student's responsibility to maintain academic standing and enrollment in the approved program. Any failure to complete an approved program may jeopardize the student's ability to remain in the program and receive credit towards obtaining a high school diploma or its equivalent. The student and parent/guardian recognize that in the event the student withdraws from an approved program, the District cannot guarantee placement in an equivalent District-offered course.

4. The District reserves the right to determine the number of credits to be awarded. The course name and actual grade earned will be noted on the student's official transcript.

Evaluation Criteria

The Superintendent or designee will evaluate all applications of students wishing to participate in an alternative learning plan or program. At a minimum, any alternative learning plans must meet the following criteria:

Provides for proper administration and supervision of the program or plan

- Provides that certified school personnel oversee and monitor the program
- Requirement that each extended learning opportunity, if included in the alternative learning plan, meets rigorous standards, including the minimum standards established by the State Board of Education and all other applicable District standards
- Includes age-appropriate academic rigor and the flexibility to incorporate the student's interests and manner of learning
- Are developed and amended, if necessary, in consultation with the student, a school Guidance Counselor, the school Principal and at least one parent/guardian of the student

Appeal Process

If the submitted plan is rejected, the Superintendent or designee will provide the student/parents with a rationale as to why the proposal was rejected. Students whose application has been denied by the Superintendent may appeal that decision to the School Board. The School Board will place the item on its agenda for its next regularly scheduled meeting. Alternatively, if scheduling and time constraints do not allow for the matter to be placed on the agenda at the Board's next meeting, the Board may hold a separate meeting to hear the matter. The matter will be discussed in non-public session, pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II, unless the parents request the Board hear the matter in public session, in which case the request will be honored. If the School Board upholds the Superintendent's determination, the decision of the School Board may be appealed to the State Board of Education, consistent with applicable law. The School Board will inform the student/parents of their appeal rights.

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Program Integrity

In order to insure the integrity of the learning experience approved under this program, the student will be required periodically or upon demand to provide evidence of progress. The Principal will be responsible for certifying completion of the plan or program and the award of credits, consistent with the District's policies on graduation.

If a student is unable to complete the alternative learning plan for valid reasons, the Principal will evaluate the experience completed to date and make a determination for the award of partial credit or recommend an alternative experience. The Principal will determine the validity of such reasons on a case-by-case basis.

If a student ceases to attend or is unable to complete alternative learning plan for insufficient reason (lack of effort, failure to follow through, indecision, etc.), the Principal may determine that the student's transcript be adjusted to reflect the experience as a failure.

In order to certify completion of curricular programs and activities based upon specific instructional objectives aligned to the standards, the Principal will develop appropriate mechanisms to document student progress and program completion on student personnel records.

Legal References:

RSA 193:1, Duty of Parent; Compulsory Attendance by Student
NH Code of Administrative Rules, Section Ed 306.04(a)(13), Extended Learning Opportunities
NH Code of Administrative Rules, Section Ed 306.27(b)(4), Extended Learning Opportunities – High School

New Policy: May 2008