Guide to Alternative School Status Application & Verification Process

Alternative School Status Annual Application Guidance

This guidance document was devised to provide additional information and context for the Alternative School definition approved by the Arizona State Board of Education on February 24, 2014. Schools operating a Dropout Recovery Program (DRP) must apply for alternative school status. The suggestions that are listed in this document are not exhaustive; instead, they should be viewed as examples that can provide verification of student eligibility for an alternative school setting.

Arizona statute supports 6th through 12th grade alternative school programs for accountability purposes. It is the intent of the Arizona Department of Education to be in alignment with this statute ([Section C of 15-796](#)).

The following are the criteria that all schools will have to meet to be granted Alternative School status:

Criteria	Guidance/Evidence
1. A district school has adopted a mission statement that clearly identifies its purpose is to serve a specific student population that will benefit from an alternative school setting or a charter school that expressly states in their charter that its purpose is to serve a specific student population that will benefit from an alternative school setting.	This is a required document for both district schools and charter schools. The charter holder's sponsor (e.g., ASBCS, local school district, university or community college) will verify that a charter school's mission and charter coincide and that the charter specifically states serving this student population prior to receiving Alternative School status.

Supporting documentation of this criterion may be the school report card, the school's charter contract, the strategic plan, the school Improvement Plan, a Student-Parent Handbook, various school marketing materials (e.g., webpage or brochure), etc. as of October 1 of the application year. |
| 2. The educational program and related student support services of the school must align with the mission and charter (if applicable) of the school. | |

3. Schools offering secondary instruction for academic credit used to fulfill the Arizona State Board of Education graduation requirements (in part or in full) must offer a high school diploma of graduation.

An entity shall not be considered a school for accountability purposes when offering secondary instruction unless this criterion is met and shall not be eligible for Alternative School status.

4. The school will receive current year state assessment scores for their students.

For a school to apply for Alternative School status it must be in operation and must administer the state assessment annually. Please note: You shall not be granted Alternative School status until the first year of operation.

5. The school must intend to serve students in one or more of the following categories:

Seventy percent of the students enrolled by October 1 of the application year (new status only) and each recertification year shall have been listed in at least one of the categories of students served in an alternative school setting upon *initial* enrollment. Students meeting more than 1 of these criteria should only be included once in the reported numbers.

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a) **Students who have a documented history of disruptive behavioral issues.**

Suspension records
Expulsion records
Referrals Threat of Suspension
Documented relevant IEP

Transcript

Behavior Report

Behavior Intervention Plan

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b)
Students who have dropped out of school and are now returning.

This can be verified by identifying a withdraw code from the previous school and a corresponding 'E' code at the current school. The timeframe from the student dropping out of school and returning shall be no less than 30 days.

c) Students in poor academic standing as demonstrated by being at least one year behind on academic credits or grade level performance.	Measured on the Reading and/or Mathematics portions of the state assessment. Measured on a valid and reliable pre-test for reading and/or mathematics. The administration of this test typically occurs upon intake. Academic transcripts.
d) Students who are primary caregivers or are financially responsible for dependents that may require a flexible school schedule.	Signed and dated documentation from parent, guardian, or student of legal age. McKinney-Vento eligibility form. Emancipation documentation.
e) Students who are adjudicated.	Documentation provided by the Arizona justice system or the probation officer (e.g., enrollment form, enrollment hearing). Request for records from a juvenile detention center school. Transcript showing credits from a juvenile detention center school
f) Students who are wards of the state and need an alternative school setting.	McKinney-Vento eligibility form. Letter assigning guardianship (foster care as assigned by CPS).
6. All schools shall be subject to a quantitative review for student enrollment verification prior to confirmation of alternative status.	Based on the quantitative review, schools could be denied alternative status.

A school submitting a new application under the alternative status must meet the State Board's definition of an alternative school and identify itself as an alternative school through its mission statement, curriculum, and evidence of student support services/programs relevant to its population. Existing alternative schools (schools with alternative status in the prior year) must recertify each fiscal year. The school's mission statements and all other supporting documentation must accompany the school's alternative school status application. To eliminate delay in the verification process, supporting documents should be uploaded and absent of inconspicuous or ambiguous language that may easily apply to schools who do not serve the intended population.

Quantitative and Qualitative Review:

After the school submits an alternative status application and ADE reviews submission, documents, website, etc., ADE will complete a quantitative or verify enrollment in the following sequence:

1. ADE may request evidence of school's curriculum or programs specific to the intended population (i.e., Parenting class syllabus, brochures advertising flexible scheduling, etc.).
2. ADE will verify student population based on October 1 enrollment using information already captured (i.e., enrollment history, student test records, etc.) as part of the quantitative review.
3. On-site visits may be necessary if qualifying criteria cannot be established via SSID or student longitudinal data within the possession of the Department. On-site visits will occur after the school has been notified, and the initial application indicates a qualifying student population not evident within the ADE data system. Please note that on-site visits will only occur when all opportunities to verify qualified enrollment of 70% via the ADE data system has been exhausted.

Category	Qualifying data by ADE (initial source)	Secondary source (used in the absence of initial source)
Documented history of disruptive behavior	W3, Need Code	Documentation maintained by school.
Returning from drop out	W4/S4, W5/S5, W11	
Poor academic standing	Non-proficient in PY, W6, R, cohort greater than the current year	
Primary caregiver/financially responsible	Over 18 in CY AND attendance rate less than .90 within last three PYs	
Adjudicated	W10/S10, PY enrollment at a detention facility	
Ward of the state	None.	

If a school does not meet the criteria, it will be denied alternative status. Schools denied alternative status in the current year may apply in following years. The Department shall deny alternative status only after the qualitative and quantitative processes has been exhausted.

Timeline

The application window will be open March 9th through April 17th. New schools applying for alternative status shall receive notification of alternative status determination within 120 days after submission. If you have any questions regarding this document, email Achieve@azed.gov.