

Arizona Alternative School Application

Frequently Asked Questions

For School Year 2026-2027 Alternative School Status applications, school population reviews will be conducted using October 1, 2025 enrollment data.

If you have questions, please contact Achieve@azed.gov.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. I have an alternative program in my school, do I need to apply? 2
2. What is an Alternative School? 2
3. What is the benefit of applying to be an Alternative School? 3
4. How are Alternative School applications reviewed? 3
5. What is the timeline for Alternative School applications?..... 3
6. Do I have to apply for Alternative School status every year? 4
7. Who is supposed to be responsible for applying for Alternative School status? 4
8. What happens if my school does not apply for Alternative School status? 4
9. How do I know if my school has already applied for Alternative School status this year?.... 4
10. What do I do if I submit something incorrectly? 5
11. Can a school that begins operations in the 2026-2027 school year apply for Alternative Status? 5

1. I have an alternative program in my school, do I need to apply?

A school is never required to apply for alternative school status. If you have an alternative program in your school, you are welcome to apply for alternative school status. However, the entire school entity must apply for and meet the criteria of an alternative school in order to be approved.

2. What is an Alternative School?

Schools that meet the below criteria are eligible to apply for alternative school status.

- a) A district school has adopted a mission statement that clearly identifies its purpose is to serve a student population that is unable to profit from a traditional school setting; a charter holder expressly states in their charter that its purpose is to serve a student population that is unable to profit from a traditional school setting. Mission statements submitted to ADE as part of the Alternative School Status application must score a 3 (distinguishable) when evaluated using the [Alternative School Mission Statement Rubric](#). This is a requirement for both district schools and charter schools. Mission statements submitted to ADE as part of the Alternative School Status application must be up to date on Arizona's School Report Card website and must be present on the district or charter school's website.
- b) The educational program and related student support services of the school must align with the mission and charter (if applicable) of the school.
- c) Schools serving students in grade 12 must offer a high school diploma that fulfills the Arizona State Board of Education graduation requirements.
- d) The school will receive current year state assessment scores for their students.
- e) Seventy percent of the students enrolled by October 1 of the current school year fall into at least one of the following categories of students upon **initial** enrollment at the school:
 - i. Students who have a documented history of disruptive behavioral issues
 - ii. Students who have dropped out of school and are now returning
 - iii. Students who are behind on academic credits or grade level performance at initial enrollment
 - iv. Students who are primary caregivers or are financially responsible for dependents and, therefore, may require a flexible school schedule
 - v. Students who are adjudicated
 - vi. Students who are wards of the state, in foster care, or who are homeless

- vii. Students with High Mobility
- viii. Students who are over-age (18+)
- ix. Students returning to education from a residential or mental health facility

Schools are considered an Alternative School **for A-F Accountability purposes** if they meet the listed criteria, apply for alternative school status, and are approved.

3. What is the benefit of applying to be an Alternative School?

Alternative schools will receive an A-F Letter Grade using the Alternative School A-F Model instead of the Traditional School A-F Model. The Alternative School A-F Model places less weight on statewide assessment results and more weight on preparing students for graduation and being effective members of the workforce after high school.

4. How are Alternative School applications reviewed?

Once the alternative school application deadline has passed, all applications are carefully reviewed and validated by the ADE Accountability & Research team. School and LEA entity IDs are checked based on ADE records, enrollment counts are validated using student data in AzEDS, and mission statements are validated with the schools' governing board or chartering entity.

5. What is the timeline for Alternative School applications?

The application timeline for alternative school submissions for school year 2026-2027 certifications is below.

- January 2026 – the application opens
- March 31, 2026 – the application closes
- April – ADE conducts its student population and mission statement reviews.
 - Schools that ADE cannot verify have 70% of enrolled students falling into at least one alternative student category are sent a list of students that were enrolled at the school on October 1, 2025 and asked to mark each student that falls into one of the alternative student categories. ADE may schedule a virtual meeting to review student documentation
 - Schools that applied with a mission statement that is not distinguishable (as determined by the [Alternative School Mission Statement Rubric](#)) or that does not match the mission posted on the school's website and School Report Card profile page will be contacted and asked to make updates as needed.

- May – Schools begin to receive approval letters. ADE works with schools that did not pass the initial mission statement or student population reviews to ensure that all criteria are being met.
- June – schools are notified whether they are approved for alternative school status for school year 2026-2027.

6. Do I have to apply for Alternative School status every year?

Yes. All schools must submit a First Time Application or Recertification Application (where applicable) each year to identify that they would like to be considered for Alternative School status.

7. Who is supposed to be responsible for applying for Alternative School status?

The person completing the application for Alternative School status differs from school to school and LEA to LEA. We most typically see Alternative School Applications submitted by school Principals and LEA A-F Accountability coordinators; however, other staff members may submit the application if it is applicable and appropriate for your school.

8. What happens if my school does not apply for Alternative School status?

If a school does not apply for alternative school status, they cannot be approved as an Alternative School and will receive an A-F Letter Grade based on the Traditional A-F Model. No applications received after the deadline can be reviewed or considered in order to accommodate all Accountability deadlines and to ensure the timely processing of Alternative School Status applications.

9. How do I know if my school has already applied for Alternative School status this year?

If you are unsure whether or not an alternative school application has been received for your school this year, you can send an email with the school name, school entity ID,

LEA name, and LEA entity ID to Achieve@azed.gov and ask if an alternative school application has been received for your school for this fiscal year.

10. What do I do if I submit something incorrectly?

If you submit information incorrectly in the Alternative School application, you can complete a new submission or contact Achieve@azed.gov. If we receive multiple submissions for a single school, we will use the most recently received application when reviewing alternative school applications.

11. Can a school that begins operations in the 2026-2027 school year apply for Alternative Status?

Yes, Schools that will begin operations in the 2026-2027 school year may apply. They must still satisfy criteria 1-4 and will receive a provisional exception for criteria 5 until October 1 enrollment data is available in the following year.