



A DIFFERENT APPROACH

Since 1989, the State has invested in Alternative Education programs that provide a second chance for at-risk students to graduate. These programs are designed to serve students who are at-risk of failing to successfully complete their secondary education and acquire basic life skills necessary for higher education and employment. State funding supports programming to districts, technical assistance, and professional development. Programs are evaluated for effectiveness and compliance with state law.



Photo courtesy of Guymon Alternative Academy

Oklahoma's Alternative Education programs reduce the number of high school dropouts and increase the number of graduates in Oklahoma. Research demonstrates that Alternative Education students:

- are absent less than often
- fail fewer classes
- make higher grades
- improve academic skills

Oklahoma implemented high standards for Alternative Education programs to ensure quality, holistic educational programming that is delivered to Oklahoma's most at-risk students. The Oklahoma State Department of Education's Alternative Education team provides year-round technical assistance to Alternative Education program staff and organizes high-quality professional development geared to the needs of the program and its students.

Local school districts have the flexibility to offer opportunities that meet the diverse needs of their students. Districts may operate local alternative programs or cooperate with neighboring districts or career technology centers. Programs are a part of the traditional school; however, they are specifically tailored to meet the needs of students who may be struggling with poverty, substance abuse, family dysfunction, or psychological or physical trauma. To maximize success for at-risk students, Alternative Education programs offer:

- flexible scheduling
- small class sizes, ensuring low student-teacher ratios
- innovative instructional techniques
- counseling and life skills education
- community supports
- individualized graduation plans
- art education
- connection with traditional school



Photo courtesy of FAME Academy

CRITERIA FOR ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

According to state law (70 O.S. § 1210-568), all of Oklahoma's Alternative Education programs shall:

1. Allow class sizes and student-teacher ratios which are conducive to effective learning for at-risk students.
2. Incorporate appropriate structure, curriculum, interaction and reinforcement strategies designed to provide effective instruction.
3. Include an intake and screening process to determine eligibility of students.
4. Demonstrate that teaching faculty are appropriately licensed or certified teachers.
5. Demonstrate that teaching faculty have been selected on the basis of a record of successful work with at-risk students or personal and educational factors that qualify them for work with at-risk students.
6. Reflect appropriate collaborative efforts with state and local agencies serving youth.
7. Provide courses that meet the academic curricular standards adopted by the State Board of Education and additional remedial courses.
8. Offer individualized instruction.
9. State clear and measurable program goals and objectives.
10. Include counseling and social service components.
11. Require a graduation plan for each student.
12. Offer life skills instruction.
13. Provide opportunities for arts education to students.
14. Provide a proposed annual budget.
15. Be appropriately designed to serve students in grades six through twelve who are most at-risk of not completing a high school education for a reason other than disability.
16. Allow students in the Alternative Education program, who otherwise meet all of the participation requirements, to participate in vocational programs and extracurricular activities, including but not limited to athletics, band and clubs.



Photo courtesy of Jenks Alternative Center

For more information, visit sde.ok.gov/alternative-education