

**ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS/PROGRAMS OF CHOICE**

\*\*\*Note: Education Code 58500-58512 authorize the Governing Board to establish and maintain one or more alternative schools, or separate class groups within traditional schools, which offer a different structure, learning philosophy, or academic emphasis. Examples of such schools and programs are on the California Department of Education's (CDE) web site and include magnet schools, schools organized around a curricular theme, independent study, "schools without walls" utilizing community facilities and resources, online learning, newcomer centers, and "school-within-a-school" programs. The CDE refers to these as "alternative schools or programs of choice" to distinguish them from alternative schools for at-risk students, such as community day schools, continuation schools, and opportunity schools.\*\*\*

The Governing Board desires to provide a variety of innovative educational programs to accommodate students' diverse learning needs and interests, foster student engagement in the schools, and enhance student achievement. Toward this end, the Board may establish and maintain alternative schools or programs of choice.

A district alternative school or program of choice may differ from the traditional educational program in its academic emphasis, sequence of curriculum, educational philosophy, instructional strategy, structure, setting, size, scheduling, targeted student population, decision-making process, and/or other components. All alternative schools or programs of choice shall offer enrolled students the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve district content standards in core academic subjects and shall provide access to the course of study required for high school graduation.

*(cf. 6011 - Academic Standards)*

*(cf. 6143 - Courses of Study)*

*(cf. 6146.1 - High School Graduation Requirements)*

*(cf. 6158 - Independent Study)*

*(cf. 6172.1 - Concurrent Enrollment in College Classes)*

*(cf. 6178 - Career Technical Education)*

\*\*\*Note: Education Code 58502 allows a parent/guardian to request that the Board establish an alternative school or program of choice. The following optional paragraph extends this authority to staff and other interested persons.\*\*\*

Any staff member, parent/guardian of any student, or other interested person may request the Board to establish an alternative school or program of choice. The Superintendent or designee shall establish procedures and criteria for reviewing proposals. Based on such criteria, he/she shall evaluate all proposals received and present his/her recommendation to the Board for action.

\*\*\*Note: Education Code 58509 authorizes the Superintendent of Public Instruction,

**ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS/PROGRAMS OF CHOICE** (continued)

upon the district's application, to grant an alternative school an administrative waiver of all Education Code provisions except those specifically related to alternative schools (Education Code 58500-58512) and earthquake safety. As with all waiver requests, the CDE's Alternative School of Choice Waiver Request form contains spaces for certifying that employee bargaining units, the public, and advisory committees or councils have had opportunities for input.\*\*\*

As necessary to provide flexibility to alternative schools or programs of choice to improve student performance and/or streamline operations, the Superintendent or designee may request that the Superintendent of Public Instruction waive any provision of the Education Code except provisions specified in Education Code 58509.

*(cf. 0420 - School Plans/Site Councils)*

The Superintendent or designee shall establish processes to ensure communication among staff in the alternative schools or programs of choice and staff in the regular educational program in order to share information and ideas.

**Program Evaluation**

\*\*\*Note: Education Code 58510 requires that the district conduct an annual evaluation of each alternative school of choice which includes testing of enrolled students' basic skills, identification of variables that may have affected achievement, and input from teachers, parents/guardians, and students. The CDE's Guidelines for Annual Evaluations and Reports for Alternative Schools and Programs of Choice, available on its web site, clarify that testing of basic skills can be accomplished through the state's Standardized Testing and Reporting Program. In addition, the guidelines specify that, when identifying variables that may have affected student achievement, the focus should be on features of the school or program that differentiate it from traditional schools and programs, rather than on student characteristics. Surveys or questionnaires are commonly used to solicit input from teachers, parents/guardians, and students.\*\*\*

\*\*\*Note: Pursuant to Education Code 52052 and 5 CCR 1068-1074, alternative schools of choice that meet eligibility requirements approved by the State Board of Education (e.g., those that serve highly mobile or at-risk students) may participate in the state's alternative schools accountability model and not be included in the district's Academic Performance Index rankings.\*\*\*

The Superintendent or designee shall conduct an annual evaluation of each alternative school or program of choice which includes testing of basic skills for student participants and which identifies the variables that may have affected student academic achievement. The evaluation process shall include input from teachers, parents/guardians, and students from the alternative school or program of choice. (Education Code 58510)

**ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS/PROGRAMS OF CHOICE (continued)**

Evaluation reports shall be sent to the Superintendent of Public Instruction on or before August 1 following the close of the school year. (Education Code 58510)

*(cf. 6162.5 - Student Assessment)*

*(cf. 6162.51 - Standardized Testing and Reporting Program)*

Prior to submitting the evaluation report to the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Superintendent or designee shall report the evaluation results to the Board. The Board shall review the effectiveness of the school or program in meeting program objectives, compare student achievement data with that of students in other district schools, evaluate changes in the school or program over time, and make program modifications as needed.

*(cf. 0500 - Accountability)*

*(cf. 6190 - Evaluation of the Instructional Program)*

*Legal Reference:*

*EDUCATION CODE*

*35160.5 Intradistrict open enrollment*

*41505-41508 Pupil Retention Block Grant*

*48980 Parental notifications*

*52052 Academic Performance Index*

*58500-58512 Alternative schools and programs of choice*

*CODE OF REGULATIONS, TITLE 5*

*1068-1074 Alternative schools accountability model*

*11705 Charter schools as alternative schools*

*COURT DECISIONS*

*American Civil Rights Foundation v. Los Angeles Unified School District, (2008) 169 Cal.App.4th 436*

*Management Resources:*

*U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PUBLICATIONS*

*Creating and Sustaining Successful K-8 Magnet Schools, September 2008*

*Innovations in Education: Successful Magnet High Schools, September 2008*

*WEB SITES*

*California Department of Education, Alternative Schools of Choice:*

*<http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/eo/as>*

*Foundation for California Community Colleges, Early College High School Initiative:*

*<http://www.foundationccc.org/ECHS>*

*U.S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement:*

*<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oii>*

Policy

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**VACAVILLE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Vacaville, California

