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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Director of Schools; Attendance Supervisors; Accountability Staff; Cohort Staff
FROM: Jonathan Criswell, Chief Program Officer
DATE: February 18, 2025
RE: Enrolling Students in Alternative / Adult High Schools

This memorandum intends to clarify state laws and State Board of Education rules regulating enrollment practices in alternative schools and adult high schools. The department asks that each school district review the district's current student enrollment procedures as well as the status of each student's enrollment in an alternative school or an adult high school to ensure students are being enrolled in an alternative school or adult high school in compliance with state law and State Board of Education rules.

Alternative School Enrollment

[Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-3402](#) establishes that an alternative school or program is a school for a student that has been suspended or expelled from the student's regular school program. As stated in [Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-3402\(b\)](#), students in alternative programs receive instruction in accordance with the instructional program at a corresponding "home school," and "[a]ll course work completed and credits earned in alternative schools or alternative programs shall be transferred to and recorded in the student's home school, which shall grant credit earned and progress thereon as if earned in the home school."

Consistent with the law, high school students who are currently enrolled in an alternative school must have a designated home school in their current district.¹ Districts must review alternative school enrollment records to ensure every student has a designated home school as their "primary enrollment" prior to enrolling in an alternative school as the "secondary enrollment." It is critical that every student enrolled at an alternative school have a primary enrollment at a home school in the same district in EIS. No school district may serve a student in an alternative school or program without enrolling the student in EIS.

¹ An exception applies for two or more LEAs that join together to establish a single alternative school per [Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-3402\(a\)](#).

To assist districts with this, the department will notify any district identified as having students enrolled in an alternative school without a primary enrollment at a traditional high school in May 2025. If the district does not resolve the issue, the department will assign the student to the largest traditional high school in the district as his/her primary enrollment for graduation cohort purposes during the Cohort Phase II process. Districts may reach out to TNE.D.Graduates@tn.gov for additional guidance as needed.

Adult High School Enrollment

State board rule [0520-01-02-.05 \(2\)\(d\)](#) states “Adult high school students must be at least seventeen (17) years of age.” Each district must review the district’s current adult high school enrollment procedure as well as the status of each student’s enrollment in an adult high school to ensure this rule is implemented appropriately.

Please direct any questions related to accountability implications to TNE.D.Accountability@tn.gov and any questions related to state laws and State Board of Education rules to TDOE.GeneralCounsel@tn.gov.