



Dropout Prevention & Academic Intervention Programs

What are dropout prevention and academic intervention programs?

Dropout prevention and academic intervention programs are designed for students in grades one through 12 who do not perform well in traditional educational programs. The programs may differ from traditional educational programs in scheduling, administrative structure, philosophy, curriculum, or setting and must use alternative teaching methodologies, curricula, learning activities, and diagnostic and assessment procedures to meet the students' needs, abilities, talents, and interests.¹ Educational programs must also provide character development² and law education,³ and related services to support program goals and lead to a student's improvement in academics, attendance, and discipline.⁴

Dropout prevention and academic intervention programs must emphasize academic performance and may provide instruction in career education, pre-employment training, and behavioral management. Teaching methods that meet the specific needs of the student must be utilized.⁵

What are the roles and responsibilities of district school boards that establish dropout prevention and academic intervention programs?

District school boards are authorized to establish dropout prevention and academic intervention programs.⁶ Each school that establishes a dropout prevention and academic intervention program must include the program in the required school improvement plan.⁷

Each district school board providing a dropout prevention and academic intervention program must:

- ❖ Establish procedures for ensuring that teachers assigned to dropout prevention and academic intervention programs possess the affective, pedagogical, and content-related skills necessary to meet the needs of the students.⁸

¹ Section 1003.53(1)(a), F.S.; rule 6A-6.052, F.A.C.

² Public schools are required to provide a character development program in grades K-12. The curriculum must be submitted to the Florida Department of Education (DOE) for approval. Section 1003.42 (2)(s), F.S.; *see also* Character-Development Education and Service Learning Fact Sheet.

³ According to DOE, law education includes various courses such as civics, United States History, political science, legal systems and concepts, and constitutional law. Email from DOE staff regarding dropout prevention and academic intervention programs (July 6, 2010).

⁴ Section 1003.53(1)(a), F.S.

⁵ Section 1003.53(2)(a), F.S. DOE has developed a document for school districts to use to review the quality and effectiveness of current programs and plan for future program development, implementation, and instruction. Florida Department of Education, Division of Public Schools, *Quality Standards for Academic Intervention Programs*, (2002), available at <http://www.fldoe.org/bsa/title1/dropout/pdf/dr-stand.pdf>.

⁶ Section 1003.53(2)(a), F.S.

⁷ Sections 1003.53(2)(b), F.S., and 1001.42(18)(a), F.S.

⁸ Section 1003.53(4), F.S.

- ❖ Maintain, for each student participating in a dropout prevention and academic prevention program, records documenting the student’s eligibility, the length of participation in the program, the type of program to which the student was assigned or the type of academic intervention services provided, and the student’s academic and behavioral progress evaluation.⁹
- ❖ Coordinate with social service, law enforcement, prosecutorial, and juvenile justice agencies and juvenile assessment centers in the school district. These agencies are authorized to exchange information contained in student records and juvenile justice records for official purposes related to the certification of students for admission to and the administration of the dropout prevention and academic prevention program. The information is confidential and exempt from public disclosure.¹⁰

Each district school board receiving state funds for dropout prevention and academic prevention programs through the General Appropriations Act is required to submit an annual report to the Department of Education’s (DOE) database documenting the extent to which each of the district’s programs have been successful in the areas of graduation rate, dropout rate, attendance rate, and retention/promotion rate. The DOE must compile the information into an annual report which is submitted to the presiding officers of the Legislature by February 15.¹¹

How is eligibility determined for participation in a dropout prevention and academic intervention program?

A student is eligible for participation in a dropout prevention and academic intervention program if he or she meets any of the following three criteria:

- ❖ Is academically unsuccessful as evidenced by low test scores, retention, failing grades, low grade point average, falling behind in earning credits, or not meeting the state or district proficiency levels in reading, mathematics, or writing.¹²
- ❖ Has a pattern of excessive absenteeism or is habitually truant.¹³
- ❖ Has a history of disruptive behavior¹⁴ in school or has committed an offense that warrants out-of-school suspension or expulsion.¹⁵

⁹ Section 1003.53(5), F.S.

¹⁰ Section 1003.53(6), F.S.

¹¹ Section 1003.53(3), F.S.; see generally Florida Department of Education, *Developing Effective Education in Department of Juvenile Justice and Other Dropout Prevention Programs Annual Report 2008-2009* (2010), available at <http://www.fldoe.org/family/dropoutp/pdf/AnnualReport08-09.pdf>.

¹² Section 1003.53(1)(b)1., F.S.

¹³ Sections 1003.53(1)(b)2., F.S., and 1003.01(8), F.S.; see also Kindergarten Admission & School Attendance Requirements Fact Sheet.

¹⁴ “Disruptive behavior” means behavior that: (a) interferes with the student’s own learning or the educational process of others and requires attention and assistance beyond that which the traditional program can provide or results in frequent conflicts of a disruptive nature either in or out of the classroom; or (b) severely threatens the general welfare of students or others with whom the student comes into contact. Section 1003.53(1)(c)3.a. and b., F.S.

¹⁵ Section 1003.53(1)(c), F.S.

Participation in a dropout prevention and academic intervention program is voluntary, except that a district may assign disruptive students to such program.¹⁶

What are a parent's rights prior to the placement of his or her child in a dropout prevention and academic intervention program?

The school principal must provide written notice of an intended placement in a dropout prevention and academic intervention program by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the student's parent prior to such placement. Within three days following receipt of the notice, the parent must sign an acknowledgment and return it to the principal. The parent is entitled to an administrative review of any action by school personnel relating to such placement.¹⁷

How are dropout prevention and academic intervention programs funded?

Students who participate in dropout prevention and academic intervention programs are reported in the appropriate basic cost factor in the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) and the strategies and supports provided to these students are funded through the Supplemental Academic Instruction (SAI) allocation set forth in the General Appropriations Act (GAA).¹⁸ For FY 2010-11, the Legislature appropriated \$639.3 million for the SAI allocation.¹⁹

What are "second chance schools"?

"Second chance schools" are schools that offer programs for students who are disruptive or violent or who have committed serious offenses. These programs are provided through cooperative agreements between the district school board and Department of Juvenile Justice, private providers, state or local law enforcement agencies, or other state agencies.²⁰ Currently, there are no second chance schools in operation.²¹ While a district may include "second chance" in the name of a school, DOE is not aware of any schools that have established cooperative agreements with the providers listed above or who have applied to DOE for a startup grant.²² Most likely schools that include "second chance" in their name are categorized as Alternative Schools.²³

¹⁶ Section 1003.53(1)(a), F.S.

¹⁷ Section 1003.53(5), F.S. The administrative review is conducted pursuant to ch. 120, F.S., the Administrative Procedure Act. *Id.*

¹⁸ Section 1003.53(1)(b), F.S.

¹⁹ Specific Appropriation 78, s. 2, 2010-152, L.O.F.

²⁰ Section 1003.53(1)(d)1., F.S.

²¹ Email, Florida Department of Education (July 16, 2010).

²² *Id.*; see *infra* text accompanying notes 30 and 31. In addition, second chance schools are eligible for waivers by the Commissioner of Education of State Board of Education rules that prevent the provision of appropriate educational services to violent, severely disruptive, or delinquent students in small nontraditional settings or in court-adjudicated settings. Section 1003.53(1)(d)1., F.S. DOE has received no such waiver requests. E-mail, Florida Department of Education (July 16, 2010).

²³ E-mail, Florida Department of Education (July 16, 2010).

Who may be placed in a second chance school?

A student may be placed in a second chance school under any of the following circumstances:

- ❖ The student is in grades six through 10; is a habitual truant²⁴ with excessive absences that are linked to a lack of motivation and that have affected his or her academic progress; has unique needs that a traditional school setting may not meet; and has been identified as at risk of dropping out of school.²⁵
- ❖ The student habitually exhibits disruptive behavior in violation of the school board's code of student conduct.
- ❖ The student interferes with his or her own learning or that of others and requires attention and assistance beyond that which the traditional program can provide.
- ❖ The student commits a serious offense²⁶ warranting suspension or expulsion.²⁷

In any of the above circumstances, a student must be evaluated by a school's local child study team prior to placement in a second chance school and the team must ensure that the student is not eligible for placement in a program for emotionally disturbed children.²⁸

How do students reenter a traditional school after being in a second chance school?

Students who wish to reenter a traditional public school after attending a second chance school must demonstrate academic and social progress, complete a character development and legal education program, and demonstrate preparedness to reenter a regular school setting.²⁹

Are there funds available for starting second chance schools?

Currently, startup funding is not specifically appropriated for second chance schools; however, district school boards seeking to enter into a partnership with a private or public entity to operate a second chance school may apply to the DOE for startup grants. These grants must be used to offset startup costs for implementing such programs off public school campuses. General operating funds must be generated through the FEFP.³⁰

²⁴ Habitual truant" is a legal status determined by the court upon the filing of a petition by the school superintendent. In order for the court to declare a student habitually truant, the court must find that the student is subject to compulsory school attendance; the student has had 15 unexcused absences within 90 calendar days with or without the knowledge or consent of the student's parent; and a child study team has conducted intervention activities and attempted unsuccessfully to remediate the student's truant behavior. Section 1003.01(8), F.S.

²⁵ Section 1003.53(1)(d)3., F.S.

²⁶ A "serious offense" means behavior that: threatens the welfare of others with whom the student comes into contact; includes violence; includes possession of weapons or drugs; or constitutes harassment or verbal abuse of school personnel or students. Section 1003.53(1)(d)5.c., F.S.

²⁷ Section 1003.53(1)(d)5., F.S.

²⁸ Section 1003.53(1)(d)7., F.S.

²⁹ Section 1003.53(1)(d)8., F.S.

³⁰ Section 1003.53(1)(d)2., F.S.

Districts could use funds they receive through the FEFP Supplemental Academic Instruction (SAI) allocation to start a program.³¹

How many students are served in dropout prevention and academic intervention programs?

As indicated in the chart below, 142,034 students were served in dropout prevention and academic intervention programs during the 2008-09 academic year.³²

Program	Students Served
Education Alternatives ³³	46,045
Dropout Retrieval ³⁴	7,585
Disciplinary Programs ³⁵	39,772
Alternatives to Expulsion ³⁶	9,114
Teen Parent Programs ³⁷	5,024
Educational Services in the Department of Juvenile Justice ³⁸	34,494
Total	142,034

(A student may participate in more than one program.)

³¹ Specific Appropriation 78, s. 2, 2010-152, L.O.F. For FY 2010-11, the Legislature appropriated \$639.3 million for the SAI allocation.

³² Email, Florida Department of Education (June 23, 2010).

³³ Education alternative programs are designed to serve students who are unmotivated or unsuccessful in the traditional school setting. Students are identified as potential dropouts based on high absenteeism, failing grades, or low achievement scores. Rules 6A-6.0524, and 6A-6.0521, course modifications, credit recovery, alternative curriculum, and flexible schedules are examples of educational alternative programs. DOE Information Data Base Requirements, Automated Student Data Elements, (July 2008), *available at* http://www.fldoe.org/eias/dataweb/database_0809/st91_1.pdf.

³⁴ Dropout retrieval programs are alternative programs serving students who have officially been designated as dropouts. DOE Information Data Base Requirements, Automated Student Data Elements, (July 2008), *available at* http://www.fldoe.org/eias/dataweb/database_0809/st91_1.pdf.

³⁵ Disciplinary programs are programs that are longer than 10 days in duration and are designed to serve students who are disruptive in the traditional school environment. Participation in a disciplinary program is assigned or voluntary. Rule 6A-6.0527, F.A.C.

³⁶ Alternatives to expulsion programs are designed for students who are subject to district school board policies for expulsion or for repeated or serious offenders. DOE Information Data Base Requirements, Automated Student Data Elements, (July 2008), *available at* http://www.fldoe.org/eias/dataweb/database_0809/st91_1.pdf.

³⁷ Teenage Parent Programs are educational programs designed to provide a specialized curriculum to meet the needs of students who are pregnant or students who are mothers or fathers and the children of the students. Section 1003.54, F.S.; rule 6A-6.0525, F.A.C.

³⁸ District school boards are required to provide educational services to youths in residential or nonresidential care facilities or juvenile assessment centers. Section 1003.52, F.S.; rule 6A-6.0528, F.A.C.

Where can I get additional information?

Florida Department of Education

Bureau of Family & Community Outreach

(850) 245-0847

<http://www.fldoe.org/family/>

Florida House of Representatives

Education Committee

(850) 488-7451

<http://www.myfloridahouse.gov>