Louisiana Believes

Alternative Education (AE) Redesign:
A New Model for Student Support and Success
Objectives

• Describe the goals of Alternative Education (AE) Redesign.

• Build knowledge of the AE Redesign core components and guiding principles.

• Present the strategies LDOE will provide to support school systems implementation of AE Redesign.
• Alternative Education (AE) Redesign Background and Context

• AE Core Components

• AE Guiding Principles

• A New Vision for AE

• AE Redesign Implementation Path Forward

• Questions and Answers
Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) convened an AE Study Group in Spring 2017 to explore current practice and educational services provided in alternative schools and programs.

The study group included administrators, AE principals, juvenile judge, curriculum staff, SPED directors, teachers and children’s advocacy organizations.

The Study Group charge was to:

- Conduct a strategic assessment of current practice and policy;
- Identify support services and guiding principles available to AE students, educators, and families; and
- Explore partnerships to enhance and expand the effectiveness of AE.
The study group met four times from March through June 2017 to:

• Assess current practice and identify core components AE services must provide to be effective for students, and

• Analyze student performance and discipline data.

• The Advisory Council on Student Behavior and Discipline, created pursuant to Act 522 in the 2016 regular legislative session, met concurrently to review existing statute and policy related to behavioral intervention and systems of support to address chronic misbehavior.
In 2015-2016, more than 18,000 students were referred to an AE school or program.

- 88% of students were referred for minor to moderate behavior infractions (e.g. willful disobedience, disturbs the school/violates the rules, leaves school premises without permission, treats authority with disrespect, and habitually tardy/absent).

- AE students referred are 5 times more likely to dropout of school compared to overall state dropout rate.

- Students referred to AE were expelled an average of 2 times and suspended an average of 2.4 times annually.
AE Background and Context: Site Visits

- LDOE staff visited approximately 50 AE schools and programs across 21 parishes and disseminated a survey to 231 AE principals and school counselors.

- Site visits revealed:
  - Significant utilization of online instruction and limited face-to-face;
  - Inconsistent transitional procedures upon entry to and exit from;
  - Lack of access to equitable career and technical options and academic content/curriculum;
  - Need for evidence-based behavioral interventions;
  - Need for increased credit recovery and academic remediation; and
  - Absence of academic counseling to ensure credit obtainment.
AE sites exhibit significant disproportionality towards the most vulnerable and at-risk students.

- 85% are African American, 11% are Caucasian, 3% are Hispanic;
- 85% of students in AE are economically disadvantaged;
- African American students are 3.25 times more likely to be expelled and 7.8 times more likely to be suspended;
- 66% of students in AE are male, yet males account for only 51% of the state’s student population; and
- 26% of students in AE are students with disabilities, yet Louisiana’s students with disabilities population is 11%.

*All data from 2015-2016*
The study group issued a report to BESE in October 2017 with the following guidance:

- LDOE must prioritize:
  - Appropriate levels of accountability for AE services and enhanced data reporting by school systems;
  
  - Best practice guidance around effective behavioral intervention;
  
- Opportunities for high quality professional development to address comprehensive academic, behavioral and social/emotional needs of students; and
  
- Building communities of support for educators, students and families.
The study group report indicated school systems must prioritize:

- Effective discipline practice at the home school;
- Provision of transitional processes and supports to AE;
- Implementation of academic and behavioral interventions to remediate the students’ underlying issues; and
- Support services, as well as core academic and career readiness opportunities for students receiving AE services.
The study group report outlined the following core components for AE sites:

- Climate & Culture
- Collaboration
- Counseling
- Curriculum & Instruction
- Eligibility & Placement
- Parent/Guardian Involvement
- Program Evaluation
- Staffing & Professional Development
- Student Assessment
- Transitional Support
AE Core Components

- **Climate and Culture**: Establish a climate and culture that support students to develop tools and strategies to further their academic, social, and behavioral growth.

- **Collaboration**: Establish and maintain formalized relationships with community organizations to provide comprehensive services, short and long term, for student’s behavioral, social and emotional needs.

- **Counseling**: Offer extensive counseling services to address the behavioral, social, emotional, academic and career needs of students with an emphasis on holistic care to enable student success and growth.
AE Core Components

• **Curriculum and Instruction**: Provide curriculum and instruction that are rigorous and inclusive, individualized to meet the needs of all learners, support second language learners and students with disabilities and address the same readiness outcomes as home schools.

• **Eligibility and Placement**: Educate students who experience difficulty succeeding in school due to extensive academic, behavioral, social, or emotional need or students who self-select an alternate learning environment.
AE Core Components

• **Parent-Guardian Engagement**: Actively recruit and foster parental/guardian involvement in the planning and execution of academic, career, social, and emotional supports for students.

• **Program Evaluation**: Be held responsible for academic performance and other outcomes through a model of accountability that includes performance metrics specific to alternative services, clearly communicated performance standards, and consequences and interventions where standards are not met.

• **Staffing and Professional Development**: Employ and retain effective teachers and staff with specialized training to address the comprehensive academic, behavioral, social and emotional needs of the students receiving services.
AE Core Components

- **Student Assessment:** Engage in robust assessment of a student as they transition to alternative education services. Information garnered from the assessments should be utilized to create an individualized action plan for the student receiving alternative education services.

- **Transitional Support:** Ensure school systems create a consistent and thorough transition process and supports that encourage students to maximize the time spent receiving alternative education services and that leads to a successful transition out of services or on to post-secondary education or the workforce.
AE Guiding Principles

The study group report outlined the following eight guiding principles for AE sites:

1. Alternative education service providers, either the school system or third-party providers, should place an emphasis on services that can be short term or longer term, dependent upon the level of need demonstrated by the student.

1. The school system should establish and maintain a process for providing alternative education services to include a comprehensive transition procedure and standardized transitional plans for students entering and exiting services.
AE Guiding Principles

3. The school system should ensure students transitioned for alternative education services are assessed at the onset and receive documented identification of appropriate and effective interventions and supports to address the root cause of their need for alternative services.

3. The school system should ensure students receive access to equitable academic services and career readiness opportunities. Students should have access to career and technical education opportunities and pathways available in the school system. Students should be counseled on all diploma pathways and supported in pursuing the graduation plan optimal for their unique circumstances.
5. LDOE should support alternative education service providers – teachers, principals, and school system leaders – with high-quality professional development and educational resources to address the comprehensive academic, behavioral, social and emotional needs of the students.

5. The school system should maintain and report to LDOE consistent data collection, necessary to effectively measure student growth – both academically and behaviorally, and to monitor school systems’ provision of high-quality education. The LDOE should establish a model of accountability, including data and indicators, that are specific to the unique population and needs of students’ receiving alternative education services.
7. The school system should ensure that all schools prioritize referrals to providers of intensive and extended alternative education services for students who habitually experience difficulty succeeding in the home school due to extensive academic, behavioral, social or emotional needs or for students who self-select attendance in an alternate learning environment.

7. The school system should establish and maintain partnerships and alliances with key stakeholders that are critical for enhanced services provided to alternative education students and families.
A New Vision for AE

The study group report details the need for local school systems to provide AE services, short-term and long-term, that seek to improve supports, resources, wraparound services, and outcomes for students in need.

- Short-term services should provide academic and behavioral remediation at the home school for mild-to-moderate behavioral challenges, (i.e. students who need intervention to avoid the risk of expulsion for behavior or truancy).

- Long-term services should be designed for students that need intensive and extended academic and behavioral support, resources and remediation.
A New Vision for AE

The report details the need for AE services to include:

• Evidence-based behavioral and academic interventions, supports, and resources, per BESE Bulletin 131;

• Effective transitional structures and community partnerships to ensure individualized comprehensive and appropriate services are provided to advance students toward a college and career pathway;

• Educators who are equipped to appropriately address the behavioral, social and emotional needs of students, per R.S. 17.252;

• Consistent data collection, performance measures, and evaluation of outcomes appropriate for schools serving unique populations; and

• Increased provision of student supports, individualized courses of study and use of alternative teaching methods in support of existing language in BESE Bulletin 741, §2901; RS 17.100.1 and 17.416.2
October 2017: LDOE presented the AE study group report to BESE, who passed a motion directing LDOE to continue redesign work, focused on:

- Developing a plan of action for creation of a new AE services model; and
- Exploring new quality accountability indicators for AE, consistent with the state’s Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan.

April 2018: LDOE presented BESE a working definition of AE schools and programs to use as a framework to develop new accountability performance measures for AE, consistent with the state ESSA plan.
Alternative education **schools** serve students referred for long-term services due to long-term suspensions or expulsions or needing other intensive services. Alternative education schools should thus be evaluated based on annual outcomes of students. Accountability scores for these sites should be based on students who are present at the site on October 1 through the end of the fall semester and those who are present on February 1 through the end of spring semester. Any exception to this duration of services should be approved by the local superintendent.

**Alternative education programs** are responsible for serving students for shorter periods of time. They are not evaluated based on the annual success of students. As such, they should not be considered schools and should not receive a summative evaluation like schools.
AE Redesign Implementation: Policy

• **Summer 2018:** LDOE will recommend new performance measures to the Accountability Commission and engage this group and other stakeholders for feedback/input.

• **Fall 2018:** LDOE will present to BESE: 1) policy recommendations for alternate AE Accountability, and 2) Bulletin 131 revisions that align with the core components and guiding principles of the AE Study Group report.
• ESSA School Redesign process will award funding to school systems to support an AE pilot and a proof-of-concept of expanded AE services.

• The school system consortiums created to implement behavior intervention and supports will continue to expand and facilitate the use of evidence based behavioral interventions.

• LDOE launched the Johns Hopkins High School Redesign Cohort, which includes seven AE sites, to provide guidance and support to school systems in the creation of 2019-2020 redesign plan.
AE Redesign Implementation: Resources

• **Summer 2018**: LDOE will release a new portfolio of evidence based Social-Emotional-Learning (SEL) curriculum and programs to support effective behavior intervention (BI) in both traditional schools and alternative sites;

• **Summer 2018**: LDOE will release the recommendations of the BI Study Group that provide the foundational components of effective and evidence based BI; and

• **Fall 2018**: LDOE will release a BI Vendor Guide to support school systems development and implementation of ESSA redesign plans.

• The Advisory Council on Student Discipline and Behavior is developing recommendations to improve the implementation and efficacy of the Model Master Discipline Plan.
AE Redesign Implementation: Partnership

• LDOE will continue stakeholder engagement for dialogue and feedback on policy changes and guidance resources.

• LDOE will build a community of practice through the ESSA pilot cohort, Hopkins cohort and PBIS consortiums for the purpose of learning, identifying best practices and replicating strategies statewide.

• The priority of partnerships is to bolster AE practice at the school/program site level.
QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
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