Alternative Learning Environments

A Checklist of Quality Indicators

Alternative educators developed the following. The information was drawn from research specialists and practitioners in order to establish a quality baseline for developing and reviewing learning alternative/s environments. It is based on the Framework for Learning Alternatives Environments in Iowa and research published on alternative education over the past thirty years recognized by the Iowa Association of Alternative Education.

The list of quality indicators is formatted with two columns provided to allow documentation of present practice and identification of goals for improvement. Present practices can be documented through check marks or "yes" "no" answers. Goals can be identified for any of the indicators to modify existing practices.

	Philosophy	Present Practice	Future Goal
1	Staff advocates the philosophy that all students can learn. Statements of philosophy are documented, published, and clearly visible to and embraced by staff, students, and parents.		
2	Student success is central to all management of learning.		
3	Philosophy is consistent with district goals and standards.		
4	The student is the focus of concern and valued equally or greater than content standards and academic endeavors.		
5	The whole student (personal, social, emotional, intellectual, work skills, safety, and security) is of concern, not just academic endeavors.		
6	Individuality of learning for each student is recognized and embraced.		
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	Administration	Present Practice	Future Goal
1	Staff responsible for the learning alternative freely develops the learning environment.		
2	Staff collaborates and freely participates with other staff in the district/s in all aspects of education (administration, staff development, guidance, support services, extracurricular activities, transportation, health and food services, and instructional delivery systems).		
3	Staff across the district/s reflects ownership for and supports the alternative/s.		
4	Community members reflect ownership for and support the learning alternative/s.		
5	Administrators responsible for the Learning Alternative/s actively plan and participate in establishing a quality learning experience.		
6	A budget for the learning alternative/s is established allowing all standards to be fulfilled.		
7	Administration and budgeting for the learning alternative/s complies with state/federal guidelines.		

		Present Practice	Future Goal
8	Student records are kept which clearly reflect student progress and are accessible to both student and parent.		
9	Rules exist which are written, clearly understood by staff, students, and parents and are applied consistently to guide student behavior, monitor progress, and manage the learning experience.		
10	All support service agencies and organizations within the community/ies are collocated within the school or coordinated with the learning alternative/s environment to provide multiple support systems for both student and family.		
11	Community-building activities are implemented to build relationships and trust between staff and students regarding commitment to learning.		
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	Student	**Present Practice**	**Future Goal**
1	Each student and parent chooses to participate in the learning alternative/s.		
2	Students are responsible for their own learning, including attendance, work completion, and timelines for completion.		
3	Each student participates in reviewing and shaping the learning environment and activities of the school.		
4	Each student feels he/she belongs.		
5	Students feel that the way they learn is recognized and accommodated.		
6	Students have a personalized plan for success.		
7	Students review their personalized plans on a regular basis with guidance from the staff.		
8	Students are personally informed and continuously monitor their credits earned with regard to personal goals/completion/ graduation.		
9	Each student experiences success in his/her learning on a regular basis.		
10	Discipline is viewed as means to self-improvement and learning acceptable behavior.		
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	Parents/Guardians	**Present Practice**	**Future Goal**
1	Parents are involved in choosing the alternative learning environment for their child.		
2	Parents are involved in making decisions and supporting the personalized education plan.		
3	Parents receive personal contacts and training regarding how to support their child to achieve maximum learning and personal success.		
4	Privacy is provided in working with parents regarding student success and needed support services.		
5	Parents are continuously appraised of their student's		

		Present Practice	Future Goal
	progress and their support of the student and services.		
6	Parents are involved with evaluating the effectiveness of the learning alternative/s and providing suggestions to improve conditions for their student/s and others.		
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	Staff	**Present Practice**	**Future Goal**
1	Staff freely chooses to teach within the learning alternative.		
2	Teachers, administrators, counselors, and support staff meet local and state licensure requirements.		
3	Emphasis on the process of learning is valued, embraced, and implemented as the means to creating the primary motivation to want to learn.		
4	The self-assessments are guided by written criteria.		
5	Staff meets as a team to review the learning alternative/s and share responsibility to establish maximum quality.		
6	Each staff member participates in staff development for self-improvement.		
7	Teacher/student ratios do not exceed 1/12 based on total students served and total teachers available.		
8	Staff members reflect a holistic perspective of care for students including personal, social, emotional, intellectual, life success, and safety/security elements.		
9	Staff perceives themselves as equal in the implementation of the learning alternative/s allowing open sharing and decision-making.		
10	Teaching by example/modeling is practiced to establish commitment to learning.		
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	Curriculum and Instruction	**Present Practice**	**Future Goal**
1	The needs of students related to personal, social, emotional, behavioral, career development, and essential learnings are addressed in the curriculum.		
2	Individualized delivery systems are provided as well as group learnings to accommodate different learning styles, speeds, and abilities.		
3	Students are involved identifying personalized learning paths available inside and outside the immediate learning environment allowing them to take advantage of all possible paths to learning.		
4	Short-range goals are implemented to establish success for students, which is essential to future success.		
5	Abstract thinking is cultivated to support learning and application of learning principles.		
6	Technology is part of the curriculum delivery process allowing programmed learning, immediate feedback systems, maximum monitoring of individual progress and needs, and adjustments to personal choice, needs, and		

		Present Practice	Future Goal
	learning capacity.		
7	Sufficient material resources are available to allow accomplishment of the standards of learning.		
8	Students feel challenged by the curriculum.		
9	Students and parents feel the curriculum prepares them for life, careers, and future training in higher levels of education.		
10	Access to community services and organization is part of the curriculum. Community organizations participate in creating awareness and involvement of the students and families.		
11	Business and industry are involved in the development, support, and delivery of curriculum.		
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	Vocational/Technical/Career	**Present Practice**	**Future Goal**
1	Assistance is provided to assist students to transition into employment and post secondary training.		
2	Students research career fields and complete personal assessments to promote career development.		
3	The private and public sectors of the community/ies are engaged to provide training experiences related to entering and succeeding in future employment.		
4	Internships, apprenticeships, career exploration, service learning opportunities, Tech Prep, 2X2 programming, and paid work experiences are available to students in order to help them enter the workforce.		
5	Community college courses and participation in 4-year college courses are available to students.		
6	Workforce Development Offices and Welfare-To-Work support systems are engaged to assist students and families.		
7	Students are assisted to develop personal portfolios to help them enter the workforce.		
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	Assessment	**Present Practice**	**Future Goal**
1	Staff, students, and parents clearly identify the purposes of assessment within the learning alternative/s. Purposes are in writing and openly communicated.		
2	Multiple measures are utilized to guide student learning.		
3	Multiple measures are aligned with district-wide measures to allow progress reporting within the community.		
4	Multiple assessments include standardized measures to identify student progress as prescribed by state requirements.		
5	Results of assessments are used to inform the student and parent/s of progress, guide instruction, modify curriculum,		

		Present Practice	Future Goal
	and provide support services to benefit the student.		
6	Comparing assessment results between students and or using assessment results to compare schools or determine teacher salary increases are considered misuses of assessments and are not practiced within the alternative learning environment/s.		
7	Students, parents, business, labor, and other community persons/organizations are involved in assessments of the program/school and are involved in evaluation and decisions resulting from the assessments.		
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	Personal/Social/Life Skills	Present Practice	Future Goal
1	The staff has identified and considers specific personal/social and other life skills for personalized planning, instructional delivery, and support services for all students.		
2	Productivity in the community is considered a primary personal goal for all students within the context of district goals.		
3	Specific course content is devoted to personal/social and life skills.		
4	Students are able to participate in extra-curricular activities, including sports and other team and/or individual activities.		
5	Cooperative learning, team building, and other group activities are practiced to exercise the development of personal/social behaviors important to the success of the community.		
6	Staff considers physical fitness as crucial to personal satisfaction, self-perception, and personal commitment to successful achievement in school. Physical fitness is identified and addressed in personalized planning, program management, and delivery.		
7	Personal student and/or family crises are accommodated by staff and accommodations made in personal plans to assure success in the alternative learning environment.		
8	All staff, students, and families consider cultural differences as crucial to understanding personal needs. Accommodations for cultural differences are made to allow for personal success within the learning alternative/s.		
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	Community and Social Services	Present Practice	Future Goal
1	The learning alternative/s is planned with and meets the expectations of community members and community service organizations.		
2	Assessments of the learning alternative are planned collaboratively and include information important to delivering support services by community service providers.		

		Present Practice	Future Goal
3	Management of the learning alternative/s accommodates the delivery of support services without penalizing student success.		
4	Personalized planning incorporates community and other support services.		
5	Staff development includes information related to effectively collaborating with community support services and how to connect students and families with such support services.		
6	Parents and students receive instruction and personal assistance to understand and to access community support services including legal services.		
7	Students and parents reflect understanding of community services and how to access the services.		
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	__Facilities__	**Present Practice**	**Future Goal**
1	Physical facilities adequately accommodate the needs of staff and students to accomplish the established goals with high quality.		
2	Adequate space is available to accommodate group activities without interfering with individualized learning.		
3	Provisions are made for technology to complement the management of learning.		
4	Accommodations are made for "privacy areas" for counseling and the delivery of community support services.		
5	Facilities meet state and local fire and safety regulations.		
6	Facilities are accessible to all and meet accessibility requirements as prescribed by law.		
7	Food services are provided near or within the facilities. Food services reflect high quality nutrition and accommodate personal student needs and desires for nutrition.		
8	Facilities accommodate student fitness development, or alternatives for fitness development are organized within the community/ies to complement the learning alternative/s.		
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	__Signals that the learning alternative/s may not be successful.__	**Present Practice**	**Future Goal**
1	Administrators, not the staff, design the program.		
2	It is imported from somewhere else and set into operation as it worked elsewhere.		
3	It is a referral program to which the majority of students are assigned.		
4	It is a last chance program which students must choose in order to avoid suspension or expulsion.		
5	It is punitive in orientation.		

6	It is organized around a single cluster of elements, but still keeps the features of the traditional school in tact.		
7	It is treated as another department within a school, using existing regulations, operating procedures, and arrangements.		
8	Staff is assigned to the school by administrators outside the school, possibly based upon staff reductions or contract rights.		
9	It is intended for the toughest cases.		
10	No one knows much about the learning alternative/s program in the traditional school or the community in general.		
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