

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

Alternative Education Overview: Community Day Schools

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~ Introduction, Session 4~ Lecture Notes

Objective: Students will list features of Community Day School in California and programming for expelled youth.

Nowadays educators and parents are concerned about safety at school. With the rash of violence at public schools throughout our nation, local school districts have implemented clear school wide policies aimed at curbing violence and disruptive and or negative behavior. In-school prevention programs, AVID (Advancement through Individual Determination) substance abuse counseling, conflict resolution programs, etc. attempt to “catch kids before they fall”. These safety nets, though meritorious, cannot serve certain students, who, for one reason or another are disruptive or commit offenses that are unlawful. For these students education in either a continuation/alternative high school or a more restrictive placement for expelled youth provides an educational opportunity that was unavailable at the local comprehensive high school. Without doubt, these students require more intensive social and academic services to meet their individual needs. Many of these students may be compromised academically (struggling readers, learning disabilities) requiring programming that attends to these academic difficulties. Each state provides different delivery options for expelled youth with different program names. The following is a description of Community Day Schools in California for expelled youth.

Community Day Schools in California

Community Day Schools were first established during the 1996-97 school year as a new alternative educational placement for expelled and other high-risk youth. In 1995, the California Legislature enacted two significant education bills as part of an effort to implement a policy of zero tolerance of serious negative behaviors. The first bill, SB 966 (Chapter 972), required the governing board of a school district to ensure that an educational program is provided to expelled students. The second bill, AB 922 (Chapter 974), established Community Day Schools as a new placement

option for school districts seeking ways to meet this need. In 1998 the Legislature enacted AB 1845 (Chapter 847), which authorized county offices of education to establish Community Day Schools.

During the 1996-97 school year, approximately 40 districts established Community Day Schools. By the beginning of the 2001-02 school year, the statewide total had grown to more than 200 participating districts and 20 county offices of education, with more planning to begin operations later in the year.

Approximately 8,300 students were enrolled in Community Day Schools in October of the 2000-01 school year. However, a significant turnover in CDS student populations occurs as students' transition in and out of CDSs throughout the year. It is estimated that the actual number of students served in 2000-01 was well over 15,000. With continuing growth of the program, it is reasonable to expect that 20,000 students will be served in Community Day Schools during the 2001-02 school year.

Institutional Culture

Community Day Schools serve mandatory and other expelled students and other high-risk youth. The 360-minute minimum instructional day includes academic programs that provide challenging curriculum and individual attention to student learning modalities and abilities. Community Day School programs also focus on the development of pro-social skills and student self-esteem. Community Day Schools are intended to have low student-teacher ratios. Students benefit from learning support services that include school counselors and psychologists, academic and vocational counselors, and pupil discipline personnel. Students also receive collaborative services from county offices of education, law enforcement, probation, and human service agency personnel who work with at-risk youth. Community Day Schools are supported by supplemental apportionment for Community Day School attendance, in addition to base revenue funding.

Community School Placement

A student in kindergarten or grades 1 through 12 may be assigned to a Community Day School if he or she:

- is expelled for any reason,
- is probation-referred pursuant to Section 300 or 602 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, or
- is referred by a School Attendance Review Board (SARB) or other district-level referral process.

Assignment to Community Day Schools is to be made in priority order: first, students expelled for mandatory expulsion offenses; second, students expelled for any other reason; and third, all other students. These priorities are applicable unless there is an agreement that the county superintendent of schools will serve any of these students.

A community day school may serve pupils in any of kindergarten and grades 1 to 6, inclusive, or any of grades 7 to 12, inclusive, or the same or lesser included range of grades as may be found in any individual middle or junior high school operated by the district. If a school district is organized as a district that serves kindergarten and grades 1 to 8, inclusive, but no higher grades, the governing board of the school district may establish a community day school for any [of] kindergarten and grades 1 to 8, inclusive, upon a two-thirds vote of the board. It is the intent of the Legislature, that to the extent possible, the governing board of a school district operating a community day school for any of kindergarten and grades 1 to 8, inclusive, separate younger pupils from older pupils within that community day school.

Community Day Schools have the following characteristics:

- The minimum school day in a Community Day School is 360 minutes of classroom instruction provided by a certificated employee of the district or county reporting the attendance for apportionment funding.
- Community Day Schools are to be located separately from comprehensive, continuation, and opportunity schools.
- An optional extended day is possible, and additional apportionment may be claimed for students who remain at the Community Day School under the supervision of an employee of the district/county following completion of the minimum day.
- Independent study may not be used as a means of providing any part of the minimum instructional day.

Promising Practices

School districts or county offices of education operating Community Day Schools are expected to emphasize the following program components:

- low pupil-teacher ratio,
- individualized instruction and assessment,

vocational training,

- recreation and leisure time activities stressed,
- maximum collaboration with district support services, including, but not limited to, behavioral counselors and psychologists, academic and vocational counselors, and pupil discipline personnel; and
- cooperative relations with the county office of education, law enforcement, probation, and human services agencies personnel who work with at-risk youth,
- emphasis on marketable skills for secondary students,
- supportive team building culture,
- gang suppression activities,
- substance abuse and family planning programming, special education services offered.