

ALTERNATIVE TO EXTERNAL SUSPENSION Q & A

1. Where is Alternative to External Suspension (AES) represented on the District's Discipline Matrix?
 - a. Participation in one of the district's AES programs is aligned with, but distinct from the discipline matrix. Administrators have the option of offering AES participation in lieu of external suspension. Parents have the option of accepting the alternative in lieu of an external suspension for their child.

2. Can an AES program in one Area serve children from other Areas?
 - a. Yes. AES programs are a voluntary option. As such, they are open to students from the entire district. This is particularly relevant for parents of magnet school students. If a student at a magnet school commits a suspendable act, AES remains an option. If the parent lives in the Northeast quadrant of the county, but the child's school is in the Southwest, the parent can request assignment to an AES program that would allow easier drop-off and pick up. The parent will have to understand that their child must meet the schedule and operational guidelines of the particular program being accessed. If that student is accessing district transportation, they will participate in the AES site in their home Area.

3. How are different programs made available?
 - a. Administrators are provided with an updated AES list, with contact numbers, annually. They can request assignment to any of the district programs. Access will be granted based on availability of seats.

4. What entry procedures must be followed for a student to participate at an AES site?
 - a. In order for these programs to function in an orderly manner and provide positive experiences for students, the following must occur prior to the student's AES assignment to begin: (1) appropriate parent notification and explanation, (2) confirmation that the program is not functioning over capacity (a reservation) and, (3) all paperwork completed and either transmitted prior to the start date or brought by the student. When these three stipulations are met (all too often parents arrive without appropriate paperwork or they indicate that they were not made aware that they were required to participate in orientation or pick up their child daily) programs run efficiently. Staff commitment to the expected standard removes possible issues.

5. What can I do if I want to assign the AES option and I have gotten agreement from the parent BUT the AES program staff has completed their workday?
 - a. There are a few options in a case like this: (1) Set an agreement that the AES lead person will be available via telephone to accept late registrations. Agree to a cut off time (say 5:00 PM). (2) Assign a different start date for the student, based on the completion of the stipulations for participation (generally the next day).
6. Is each AES program able to serve the same number of students?
 - a. Generally, yes.
7. Does each school in an Area get an equal number of seats in its' AES site?
 - a. There is no district mandate for apportioning seats at the AES sites. In general, seats are assigned on a first come-first served basis, regardless of the sending school. There might be times when an Area might controll seating due to peak usage or the situational happenstance of one school reserving a higher proportion of available seats.
8. What is the procedure when programs are considered full?
 - a. There are a few options when this occurs. The Assistant Principal should be putting out a daily attendance roster that indicates the anticipated end date for program participants. Administrators can decide to assign the option commensurate with the next available seat. Another option is to search for other programs, which might not be full (transportation will not be provided).
9. If three students fight, can I send them to the same AES site during the same time?
 - a. This is a Area decision and it is partially based on the programming available at the AES site. Many of our programs offer behavioral interventions designed to address these issues. Therefore, the AES placement might be a very fitting environment to address the presenting issue. Additionally, we have B.L.A.S.T. counselors assigned to several of our AES locations, and they can provide assistance in addressing and de-escalating these behaviors. If, however, the sending administrator feels that the situation is too volatile for the AES environment, other options (staggered AES assignment dates, assigning the students either different options or participation at different AES locations) are available.

10. What procedure is in place when a student misses a day of his AES assignment?
- a. In general terms, a three-day assignment is a three-day assignment. If a student misses time, either because of an excused or an unexcused reason, that student's stay is extended for the same amount of time she or he missed. Some circumstances warrant review by the sending school.
11. What if a student does not participate in a complete day?
- a. Participation in an AES assignment is participation in school. If a previously scheduled bona fide appointment (doctor, court date, etc.) coincides with an AES assignment, the AES staff, along with the assigning administrator, makes the determination (for example: if a student leaves the program after 1.5 hours to attend a doctor's appointment and is not brought back, he has not participated in 80% of the school day. That might not be enough to grant a day's credit for time served. If a student was picked up 1.5 hours prior to the end of the school day, he has completed 80% of the school day and the program might agree to count that as a complete day served). Another factor might be the student's commitment to academic assignments and behavior while in the AES program.
12. What if the student does not meet the AES standard for behavior?
- a. The standard for behavior at the AES site is no different from any other school location. The expectations are aligned with the Student Code of Conduct. If a student exhibits unacceptable behavior during the AES assignment, the sending administrator should be informed immediately. In almost all of the cases, the sending administrator should bring into force the originally assigned consequence (before the AES option was selected). AES programs deal with an entire group of students who have chosen to express themselves with behaviors that do not meet standard. If students are allowed to continue those, and other inappropriate behaviors at the AES site, it becomes virtually impossible to help the student find more acceptable behaviors.
13. How are ESE students served by AES programs?
- a. In the case of an ESE student, we need to insure that all interventions have been provided in the AES environment prior to deciding that the student has not met the program's behavioral standard. Secondly, we need to partner the sending school's ESE coordinator to determine if other interventions might rectify the problem. Finally, we are bound by Federal legislation governing services to exceptional students.

14. What are the hours of operation of the AES sites?
 - a. Hours of operation will mimic those of the host school. The program must offer a regular school day.

15. What about service on early release days?
 - a. The AES program should provide service in the same formula as the host schools

16. Can we decide not to run a program on certain days?
 - a. There is some flexibility in this area. A choice might be made to close the AES program down during FCAT, for example. As a normal practice, programs should be open during the regular school calendar.

17. Can a student's assigned consequence at an AES site be reduced?
 - a. This is not in the purview of the AES staff. They facilitate the program, but do not make those decisions. Program staff should certainly inform the sending administrator and home school that the student is performing at a high level. All decisions are made by the school administrator.

18. Can a sending administrator reduce the assigned consequence?
 - a. In conjunction with the B.L.A.S.T. family counselors, several schools and administrators have institutionalized a 'buy-back' process. An example would be: A student commits an offense for which the consequence, as spelled out in the District Discipline Matrix, is ten days. The administrator assigns the ten-day consequence. The administrator then works with the family. The family agrees to have the child participate in six counseling sessions with the B.L.A.S.T. counselor. The administrator might allow for a three-day AES assignment and hold seven days in abeyance, pursuant to the successful participation in the counseling process. Taken further, the process might include family counseling sessions.

19. What is the student's responsibility insofar as their schoolwork is concerned?
 - a. Students should come to the AES site prepared to perform academically each day of their stay. This means bringing appropriate materials and texts. Students should bring the supplies necessary to complete their academic responsibilities.

20. What can the program staff provide academically?
- a. The program staff should serve as a conduit between the sending school's assignments and the student's performance. Staff can assist in grading assignments if directed. Staff can work to create and offer grade level appropriate academic enrichment, and FCAT preparatory strategies to enhance the student's participation during the AES stay. Expectations for student participation are consistent with being at any school. All work produced at an AES site, whether assigned by the home school or at the site, should earn credit. Assigned credit is district procedure, and the weight of the credit is a home school decision (either a specific assignment or a homework credit, for example).
21. Can individual programs make accommodations to meet special circumstances?
- a. Yes, although adaptations should align as closely as possible to the protocol. We do not want the protocol to be so limiting that stakeholders cannot avail themselves of this alternative. On the other hand, accommodations that stray too far from the program design serve to minimize the impact of the behavioral and academic climate we are attempting to create in the Alternative to External Suspension environment.
22. What can be done when parents do not pick up their children in a timely manner?
- a. Egress from the program is a parent responsibility, if the parent has not chosen to participate in the district transportation option, and should be clearly explained when the option is presented by the administrator. Teachers assigned to the AES programs are on a set schedule, and do not have overtime authorized. At the same time, they should not leave children unattended. Parents must be accountable. Failure to pick up children in a timely manner could be grounds for the original consequence being enforced. Parents must provide the program staff with a valid, working contact telephone number.
23. Are Alternative to External Suspension programs available to students whose home school is an alternative educational center?
- a. Students who have been assigned to an alternative center are often presenting very challenging behaviors. One point of view is that their current placement offers a set of controls that are more comprehensive than those available at an AES site and therefore they should not be offered this option. On the other hand, if children are making academic and social strides during their placement, an argument can be made that they deserve an opportunity to participate in the AES option. The district does not

have a definitive position on this except to say that the option is a service to parents and students. If the service can continue to help a student develop academically and socially, the student would be well served by participation. Communication between the sending school administrator and the lead school administrator would seem to be the way to address situation by situation cases.

24. What do we do about the issue of students being reassigned to the AES program?

- a. The AES programs are meant to be an intervention that allows the student an opportunity to review their behavior and, with assistance, make adaptations that will allow them to perform acceptably at the home school. There are two recent factors that cloud this formula: (1) the district commitment to reduce external suspension, and (2) the legislation that indicates that IDEA eligible students cannot be externally suspended for more than ten days. We acknowledge that students cannot progress academically or socially if they are spending significant time out of the educational environment. At the same time, it becomes infinitely more difficult to affect academic and social modification if the student knows that the AES program is their destination. This is particularly problematic when the student continues the inappropriate behavior at the AES site and faces no additional consequences. We have taught the student that they have reached the limit of the consequences that will be brought to bear, which creates penalty-free time for them. We need to continue to investigate programmatic enhancements addressing this type of issue. Among these enhancements, we could consider more behavioral consequencing (along the lines of the point system that is employed at the alternative educational centers. These too have drawbacks because the consequence generally includes more time away from the traditional learning environment). Recidivistic students also occupy program seats that might ultimately go to students who have not developed institutionalized behavior, who might make behavioral adaptations based on their participation in the AES program.

25. Can children choose their style of dress because they are not on their campus?

- a. No. By selecting this option, Parents and students agree to meet all School Board of Broward County Code of Conduct standards. Students must be in the dress code of their home school during their AES assignment. It is important that assigning administrators make this clear to both parents and students when the option is offered and accepted. Failure to comply may lead to additional consequences or dismissal from the AES program.

26. Can students who have a valid drivers license transport themselves to their AES assignment?
- a. No. We do not have the parking facilities to accommodate these students nor do we feel it appropriate for this option to exist. Students may access district transportation or be signed in / out by a parent or guardian.