

NORTH HUNTERDON-VOORHEES REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
BRIEFING PAPER - ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM

Justification:

The alternative education program that we are envisioning will service students who have experienced significant emotional and behavioral problems in a standard school setting. Students with challenging behaviors (verbal abuse, intimidation, property destruction, and defying rules) as well as students with anxiety, depression and/or school avoidance who require clinical/therapeutic supports and services not available in a typical public school setting.

Currently, the district has a number of students who require an out-of-district placement for emotional/behavioral and/or mental health issues. This population presently makes up approximately one third of the current out-of-district placement. The students' demographic requires a small population program with a significant counseling component. Therefore, it would be prudent for the district to consider creating and providing a program with similar characteristics. Please note that in addition to the current out-of-district placement, there is a growing population that may be projected for such a program found in our current in-district placements.

The alternative education program focuses on providing the student with a high-level of social/emotional support and a strong academic focus in the least restrictive environment. Essential to our team approach is frequent communication, collaboration, ongoing supports, and compassionate understanding of the students who are enrolled. This framework creates a holistic learning environment that enables students and their parents to connect and reconnect with the school.

There are many factors, often unrelated to school, which impinge on young people, affecting the way they learn. These students, who display some of the above characteristics often make the learning process secondary. This program is an attempt to reach these students by combining a strong academic program with an evidence-based therapeutic/clinical approach in a setting where individual barriers to learning and socialization can be addressed. In such an atmosphere, it is our hope to fulfill the commitment to these students by providing the means for them to become a successful member of the NH-VRHSD, who contribute to our community and beyond.

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Program Description:

Developing each adolescent's learning potential to his/her fullest extent requires a realization that no single approach to learning will work for all students. However, the alternative program instruction platform can occur via a combination of group and individual instruction in a classroom setting flexible enough to meet a variety of needs. A student's Individual Education Program (IEP) will determine the students' educational program. This will be implemented through a small, well-structured, supported environment that permits students to gain self-regulation skills and academic rigor.

The Program

Goal:

The program's success will be determined based on students' ability to obtain a high school diploma, become a contributing member of the NH-VRHSD community and ultimately be integrated back into the general education environment.

Curriculum:

The program follows the North Hunterdon-Voorhees Regional High School Board of Education approved curricula leading to the successful completion of the 120 credits requirement. Curriculum is aligned with the New Jersey Student Learning Standards and used by teachers in their daily lesson plans. The program's curriculum and instruction is designed to provide accommodations and modifications in order to meet students' learning needs. Instructional practices include differentiation, scaffolded instruction, project-based learning, cooperative learning groups, and research studies.

Sample Schedule:

Academics will be dictated based on the student's high school diploma requirements. Ultimately, the alternative program team will determine schedule and courses of study based on the individual student's needs.

7:45-8:15	Arrival, Morning Meeting, Counseling
8:15-9:00	Academic (Science)
9:05-9:50	Academic (Mathematics)
9:55-10:40	PE/Health
10:40-11:04	Flex Time (Group/Individual Counseling, Blended Learning)
11:04-11:30	Lunch
11:30-12:15	Academic (English/Language Arts)
12:20-1:05	Academic (Social Studies)

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1:10-1:55	Elective
1:55-2:10	Daily Wrap-Up

Space:

The program will be located at North Hunterdon High School. Utilizing the existing space will reduce transportation costs, allow easy integration back to the general education program, access to food service vendors and permit flexibility for behavioral intervention. Also, elective and academic teachers can push into the program.

Program enrollment:

Having an enrollment between 6 to 10 would be most optimal. However, the enrollment for this program can reach a maximum of 12 students and implemented with fidelity.

Professional Development:

To implement a therapeutic program with outstanding academics in a school setting with appropriate structure and support the program requires a collaborative team approach. All staff including the push in-staff members must be certified in the Crisis Prevention Intervention, CPI program. Support staff including the school psychologist must attend varied behavioral and mental health support seminars relevant to educating students with emotional and behavioral problems. Currently, the staff has been exposed to these seminars and will turnkey train staff in the summer months. The actual cost factors will be determined via contractual curriculum hours.

Evening Parent Psycho-Education and Support Group

Key to the success of an alternative program is the training of program and district staff in managing students with emotional and behavioral problems in the classroom. Primary staff assigned to the program will conduct evening support group activities for all parents/guardians and any other family members, who are enrolled in the program. Evening activities will occur at least once per quarter. Topics will be chosen via surveys.

Counseling component:

The mission of the district/program is to provide high-quality in-district clinical services for students with emotional and behavioral problems. The program would provide daily skills groups and weekly counseling sessions to help students develop alternatives to previous problematic behaviors in the classroom and in life. Duration,

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location and time of session will be determined based on a student's IEP plan. A counseling session can be infused into the learning environment when appropriate. Staff is expected to articulate with outside agencies. If a student is in crisis, the staff will implement appropriate protocol for this situation.

Disciplinary Process:

The discipline process will address the behavioral component and a student's individual needs. The program will utilize a behavior modification program and individual behavior intervention plans (BIPs).

1. If at all possible, behavior problems are dealt with in the confines of the alternative program.
2. Should a situation arise where a student's behavior reaches beyond the classroom, the below procedure will be followed:
 - a. The alternative program team will discuss the situation at weekly and/or emergency staff meetings prior to an administrative referral.
 - i. Logs will be kept on all behavioral interventions.
 - b. A staff member will relay recommendations to the assigned administrator.
 - c. When the assigned administrator meets with the student, an alternative program staff member and case manager will be present.
 - d. Should a consequence occur that alters a student's placement, parents and the sending district will be notified by an alternative staff member and administrator regarding the circumstances for the consequence.
 - e. If the offense is a safety concern, risk assessments will be conducted immediately. Established district protocol will be followed. Results will be shared with all relevant staff members.

Admission Procedures:

There are two separate procedures for the intake of students. One process is applicable when the student is from the NH-VRHSD while another process is implemented when the student is from outside the district.

Within the district-

1. The case manager notifies the Director of Special Services that a student may be a candidate for the alternative program.
2. Complete copies of the child study team file are shared with the primary alternative staff. This staff will review the records.
3. An initial recommendation is made based on the alternative staff's input.

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4. A meeting is held with the case manager, alternative team, parents, and student regarding the possible placement.
5. A review meeting is held, at this time a final decision is made regarding the student's enrollment. One member of the alternative team should be invited to such a meeting.
6. Once consent is given or the 15 day period has passed, the student is placed into the program,
 - a. A student may be given a projected start date, based on transportation arrangements and the alternative schedule.
 - b. All appropriate paperwork is transferred to the school including medical, guidance and child study team file.

From outside the school district

1. The sending school district applies to the Director of Special Services that a student may be a candidate for the alternative program.
 - a. Complete copies of the child study team files are shared with the primary alternative staff. The Director of Special Services and staff will review the records.
 - b. An initial recommendation is made based on the alternative staff's input.
2. The sending district observes the alternative program.
3. Our alternative staff observes the student in his/her current placement.
4. A meeting is held with the sending district staff member, alternative team, parents, and student regarding the possible placement.
5. A request is submitted for approval of a potential student to the NH-VRHSD BOE.
6. After BOE approval, a review meeting is held, at this time a final decision is made regarding the student's enrollment. One member of the alternative team should be invited to such a meeting.
7. Once consent is given or the 15 day period has passed, the student is placed into the program,
 - a. A student may be given a projected start date, based on transportation arrangements and the alternative schedule.
 - b. An NHV case manager will be assigned as the liaison case manager.
 - c. All appropriate paperwork is transferred to the school including medical, guidance and child study team file.