

What is Alternative School Status?

- Alternative schools are defined as schools that meet the Arizona State Board of Education approved definition (updated 02/28/2014) as schools whose sole and clearly stated mission is to serve specific populations of at-risk students.
- Arizona statute supports 6th through 12th grade alternative school programs for accountability purposes. It is the intent of the Arizona Department of Education to be in alignment with this statute ([Section C of 15-796](#)).

Criteria

1. A district school has adopted a mission statement that clearly identifies its purpose is to serve a specific student population that will benefit from an alternative school setting or a charter school that expressly states in their charter that its purpose is to serve a specific student population that will benefit from an alternative school setting.
2. The educational program and related student support services of the school must align with the mission and charter (if applicable) of the school.
3. Schools offering secondary instruction for academic credit used to fulfill the Arizona State Board of Education graduation requirements (in part or in full) must offer a high school diploma of graduation.
4. The school will receive current year state assessment scores for their students.
5. The school must intend to serve students in one or more of the following categories that reflect an alternative school setting necessary for these students:
 - *Students who have a documented history of disruptive behavior issues.*
 - *Students who have dropped out of school and are now returning.*
 - *Students in poor academic standing as demonstrated by being at least one year behind on grade level performance or academic credits.*
 - *Students who are primary caregivers or are financially responsible for dependents and, therefore, may require a flexible school schedule.*
 - *Students who are adjudicated.*
 - *Students who are wards of the state and are in need of an alternative school setting.*
6. All new and converted schools shall be audited for student enrollment verification prior to confirmation of alternative status. All other alternative schools will be subject to an audit of enrollment counts as deemed necessary by the Arizona Department of Education and/or the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools.

Requirements

- Existing alternative schools must recertify each fiscal year.
- Schools must fill out the online application and upload their mission statement. The mission statement that is uploaded must be the one that is in effect on October 1st of the current school year.
- Schools must include total enrollment of students as of October 1st of the current school year and the number of students by category based on their *initial* enrollment. (List a student in one category only for online application).

- Arizona State Charter Board will review the list of charter school applicants as a verification point. Other alternative school sponsors will be contacted for verification if there is any abnormality or additional clarification needed regarding their applicants.
- Alternative status is granted by application to the Arizona Department of Education and applies to the state accountability system.
- Additional information about the requirements for Alternative School Status and the application process is available here: <http://www.azed.gov/accountability-research/altschoolapp/>
- Questions about Alternative School Status should be directed to <mailto:Achieve@azed.gov>

Alternative School FY24 Timeline

All schools, including those that wish to continue their alternative status from FY23 into FY24, must recertify by filling out and providing all requested information. *Schools operating a Dropout Recovery Program (DRP) must apply for alternative school status.*

February 14, 2023: Application window opens for FY24

March 31, 2023: Application window closes for FY24

May 2023: Schools notified of alternative status