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School Accountability and Alternative Education

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Accountability of alternative education is a state policy decision. States have the autonomy to define alternative education and whether there is distinct accountability for their alternative schools and/or alternative education programs.

The National Alternative Education Association (NAEA) has identified **Exemplary Practices** with Standards of Quality and Program Evaluation for alternative education. NAEA's **Exemplary Practices** and quality standards support differentiated accountability for alternative and non-traditional schools. NAEA encourages state and local accountability systems that consider these exemplary practices in planning for alternative (non-traditional) student accountability.

The Exemplary Practices that support differentiated accountability are:

A. **Exemplary Practice 5.0 – Curriculum and Instruction**
Indicator 5.10 Community involvement using service learning as a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction, teaches civic responsibility, and strengthens the student's role in his or her community through self-reflection is promoted at the school.
Indicator 5.10 emphasizes the importance of using service learning in state accountability for alternative schools-education.

5.11 Instruction integrates life skills (e.g., career preparation, citizenship, conflict resolution, decision making skills, problem solving, public speaking, self-management, social skills, teamwork, time management, work-based learning, etc.) into the curricula and affords the student with opportunities to put the acquired skills into action.
5.12 Using interest inventories and vocational investigation, opportunities for career exploration (e.g., job shadowing and training, mentorships, work-based learning, career fairs, etc.) related to the student's interests and postsecondary goals are provided at secondary programs.
These indicators highlight the importance of career preparation and work-based learning.

5.14 Researched based dropout prevention strategies for students at-risk of dropping out of school are used at the nontraditional or alternative school.

Indicator 5.14 emphasizes the importance of research-based dropout preventions strategies for students at-risk, one target population of alternative schools. The NDPC/N has identified 15 effective strategies, based on years of research, that when utilized properly, increase graduation rates of at-risk students.

B. **Exemplary Practice 6.0 – Student Assessment**

6.1 School administrators promote assessment as a means to identify individual and group learner needs.

6.2 School administrators enforce data-driven accountability as required by state and local authorities.

Indicators 6.1 & 6.2 accentuate the importance of assessment in identifying individual student needs and the importance of enforcing data-driven accountability as outlined by the state and local entities.

6.6 The program utilizes multiple measures to monitor student achievement, effective and affective performance, and preparation for matriculation or graduation with an emphasis on both informal and formal assessments.

6.7 Quantitative and qualitative data are used to identify student progress as prescribed by the district and state.

Indicators 6.6 & 6.7 stress the importance of the use of multiple measures to monitor student progress and achievement.

6.8 Assessments are directly linked to identifying appropriate curriculum and instructional methods to accommodate a variety of individual learning needs.

Indicator 6.8 reminds of the importance of directly linking assessments to curriculum and instructional methods that "… accommodate a variety of individual learning needs."

C. **Exemplary Practice 10.0 – Program Evaluation**

10.2 Evaluation measures include a review of program implementation ratings (based on observable and measurable data). Ratings are given based on alignment with state specific standards and the <u>NAEA Evaluation Rubric.</u>
Indicator 10.2 suggests the importance of program outcome measures in determining program effectiveness.

10.3 Student outcome data (graduation rates, credits earned, grades, attendance, disciplinary data, and dropout statistics) is gathered as a means to evaluate the success of the nontraditional or alternative school.
Indicator 10.3 emphasizes the importance of student outcome data such as graduation rates and credits earned. Graduation rates beyond the traditional four-year cohort rates are important data to gauge the quality of a credit recovery alternative school.

10.6 Transition services are routinely evaluated to determine the program's effectiveness in preparing the student for the next educational setting or workforce.
Indicator 10.6 stresses the importance of the use of student outcome data as a measure of program effectiveness.

The utilization of the NAEA *Exemplary Practices* offers states and local districts a unique opportunity to design accountability systems that encourage flexibility, especially within the guidelines of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). NAEA respectfully encourages each state, when developing accountability systems for alternative schools and alternative education programs, to the following guiding questions:

1. What are the challenges states and districts face in developing a differentiated accountability system for graduation rates for alternative education and programs?
2. What opportunities would the development and adoption of a differentiated accountability system provide states and districts?
3. What are the benefits for states and districts in adopting a differentiated accountability system?

Further information about alternative education can be found on the NAEA website, <u>http://the-naea.org/NAEA/</u> and NAEA's Exemplary Practices 2.0: Standards of Quality and Program Evaluation
<u>https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B93J0pmTfS18LTctU19nOExOOXc/view</u>