

**National Dropout Prevention Center
Clemson University**

Essential Elements of Effective Alternative Schools © Type I

This instrument is designed for practitioners to self-assess the effectiveness of their Type I, comprehensive alternative school. The characteristics common to successful alternative schools are organized into ten categories. Under each category are indicators of best practices as identified through a search of the literature dealing with research-based initiatives for at-risk program development.

Instructions for Completing This Form:

Read each best practice indicator under the ten major categories and then check the degree of success to which that indicator has been met according to the scale below. Answers should be based on reliable sources of evidence (observation, discussion, documents, surveys, strategic plans, data, policy, etc.)

Rudimentary	(Rud)	(1 Point)	Effort is minimal and performance is well below expected standard
Developing	(Dev)	(2 Points)	Performance is below expected standard but improving
Proficient	(Pro)	(3 Points)	Expected standard is met but is below highest capacity for success
Accomplished	(Acc)	(4 Points)	Exceeds expected standard and could be considered as a model to emulate
N/A	(N/A)	(0 Points)	Does not apply

After marking the degree of success of the indicators (select only one degree for each indicator), tally your scores and transfer your **Grand Total** to the **Profile Summary Sheet** to assist you in visually assessing your school's effectiveness rating.

1. Student Accountability Measures

Quantitative Indicators

Performance Indicators	Rud (1)	Dev (2)	Pro (3)	Acc (4)	N/A (0)
1.1 The dropout + suspension rate is lower than 20%					
1.2 The average GPA is 2.0 or greater					
1.3 The course completion rate is 85% or better					
1.4 Average absences per student are less than 10 days per semester					
1.5 Recidivism rate is less than 10% for returning students					
1.6 Student attendance is greater than 95%					

Total X 1= ___ Total X 2= ___ Total X 3= ___ Total X 4= ___

Grand Total (Student Accountability Measures):

2. Administrative Structure and Policies

Clear Mission Statement and Purpose:

Best Practice Indicators	Rud (1)	Dev (2)	Pro (3)	Acc (4)	N/A (0)
2.1 Stakeholders know and can verbalize the school's mission and goals					
2.2 Program objectives are measurable					

Written Policies:

2.3 Discipline code is fair and equitably enforced					
2.4 Attendance policy is flexible and designed to meet student needs					
2.5 Admission procedures for students are written and adhered to					
2.6 Exit procedures for student release reflect program philosophy and goals					

Shared Decision-Making

2.7 Stakeholders have an established process for providing input and receiving feedback					
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Total X 1= ___ Total X 2= ___ Total X 3= ___ Total X 4= ___

Grand Total (Administrative Structure and Policies):

3. Curriculum and Instruction

Curricular Standards and Objectives:

Performance Indicators	Rud (1)	Dev (2)	Pro (3)	Acc (4)	N/A (0)
3.1 The school ascribes to state curricular standards and objectives					
3.2 Teacher lesson plans reflect state standards					
3.3 Students are expected to read on grade level					
3.4 Curriculum selection and use is not limited to print materials					
3.5 Each student has a personalized learning plan					
3.6 Course offerings are challenging and are designed to meet the needs of each student related to personal, social, emotional, behavioral, career-development, as well as, basic core learning					

Integrated Curriculum:

3.6 Academic and career education components are integrated and contextualized to provide students with a range of problem solving and employability skills					
3.7 Differentiated instruction is used in all content areas					
3.8 Coursework is primarily hands-on, meaningful, and engaging to students					
3.9 Work experience/career training is integrated into the curriculum					

Technology:

3.10 Computers and appropriate software are readily available in each classroom					
3.11 Teachers consistently integrate technology into the curriculum					

Mentoring and Tutoring:

3.12 An organized adult one-to-one mentoring program is in place					
3.13 Individual tutoring, one-to-one instruction, and small group instruction are prevalent in each classroom					

Teaching and Learning Atmosphere:

3.14 Teachers are creative and flexible in course development and implementation					
3.15 Academics are a key component of the program goals and objectives					
3.16 There are few interruptions that interfere with teaching and learning					
3.17 Teachers are perceived as caring. Their classrooms are places where students trust and feel safe enough to learn					
3.18 Class size does not exceed 10 students per teacher					
3.19 Each teacher has an assigned teaching assistant at least 50% of the day that works directly with students					

Level of Student Involvement:

3.20 Students are taught to be self-directed					
3.21 Students have opportunities to engage in the school's decision-making process					

Assessment of Learning:

3.22 Standardized test results are used to make needed curriculum changes					
3.23 Alternative methods of assessment are used (ie., portfolio, oral, visual)					
3.24 Rewards and incentives for academic excellence are evident in each classroom and school-wide					

Educational Options:

3.25 Student accommodations and adaptations are evident					
3.26 Extracurricular activities are available					
3.27 Enrichment activities are available					
3.28 Opportunities for accelerated learning are available					
3.29 Service-learning is employed school-wide					

Grand Total: (Curriculum and Instruction) :

Total X 1= ___ Total X 2= ___ Total X 3= ___ Total X 4= ___

4. Faculty and Staff

Qualifications:

Performance Indicators	Rud (1)	Dev (2)	Pro (3)	Acc (4)	N/A (0)
4.1 All faculty are properly certified for the area(s) they teach					
4.2 All staff are thoroughly screened regarding their desire to work with at-risk students					
4.3 All faculty and staff are voluntarily assigned					
4.4 New faculty and staff are provided with a thorough orientation prior to beginning their assignment					
4.5 Inexperienced teachers are assigned a professional mentor					

Professional Development Activities:

4.6 Training related to at-risk students is on-going					
4.7 Each staff member has an individualized professional development plan					
4.8 Staff members regularly attend and make presentations at conferences and workshops					
4.9 The school provides professional organization membership for staff					
4.10 Faculty and staff have access to a comprehensive professional library					

Classroom Management and Teaching Methodology:

4.11 All teachers exhibit effective classroom management practices					
4.12 Behavior management is positive in nature rather than punitive					
4.13 Individualized behavioral interventions are used					
4.14 Varied strategies are used to address student learning styles					

Total X 1= ___ Total X 2= ___ Total X 3= ___ Total X 4= ___

Grand Total: (Faculty and Staff) :

5. Facilities and Grounds

School Plant:

Performance Indicators	Rud (1)	Dev (2)	Pro (3)	Acc (4)	N/A (0)
5.1 School is clean and well maintained					
5.2 School is adequate for services provided					
5.3 School is attractive and inviting					
5.4 School accommodates disabled students, staff, and community members					
5.5 School location is readily accessible to all students in the district					
5.6 School size is limited to no more than 150 students					

Total X 1= ___ Total X 2= ___ Total X 3= ___ Total X 4= ___

Grand Total: (Facilities and Grounds) :

6. School Leadership

Principal/Assistant(s):

Performance Indicators	Rud (1)	Dev (2)	Pro (3)	Acc (4)	N/A (0)
6.1 School administrators are good managers of personnel and resources					
6.2 Principal is viewed as an effective and knowledgeable instructional leader					
6.3 Administrators react well during times of crises					
6.4 Principal has strong political leadership skills					
6.5 Principal is effective in recruiting and retaining quality staff					

Total X 1= ___ Total X 2= ___ Total X 3= ___ Total X 4= ___

Grand Total: (School Leadership):

7. Student Support Services

Food Service:

Performance Indicators	Rud (1)	Dev (2)	Pro (3)	Acc (4)	N/A (0)
7.1 Food services are provided near or within the school					
7.2 Meals reflect high-quality nutrition and accommodates student needs					

Citizenship, conduct, and Social/Health Issues:

7.3 Personal and behavioral management instruction is integrated throughout the curriculum					
7.4 Drug/alcohol prevention and treatment is readily available					
7.5 Conflict management instruction is ongoing					
7.6 Effective parenting skills instruction is provided					
7.7 Assistance with accessing social and health services is provided					
7.8 Child care is provided for students (as appropriate)					

Student Counseling:

7.8 Each student is assigned a personal counselor					
7.9 Career counseling is included as a major academic component					
7.10 Guidance and counseling are integral components of the curriculum and are comprehensive in nature and structure					
7.11 Counselors have a high degree of flexibility to address student needs					
7.12 Students are monitored and supported after returning to home school					

Transportation of Students:

7.13 Transportation is provided at no cost to students					
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Grand Total: (Student Support Services): Total X 1= ___ Total X 2= ___ Total X 3= ___ Total X 4= ___

8. Learning Community (Staff, Students, Parents, and Community)

Family Involvement:

Performance Indicators	Rud (1)	Dev (2)	Pro (3)	Acc (4)	N/A (0)
8.1 Formal and informal parent/teacher conferences are conducted on a regular schedule					
8.2 The school has an active parent involvement organization					
8.3 Family activities are regularly scheduled					
8.4 Family counseling is available					
8.6 Regular home visits are made by staff					

Community Involvement:

8.7 Active local advisory board is in place					
8.8 Mentoring/apprenticeship opportunities are sought for students					
8.9 Community volunteer opportunities are available					

Students

8.10 A comprehensive student orientation process is in place					
8.11 Family members are required to attend orientation					

Communication:

8.12 There is effective communication between administration and staff					
8.13 - between alternative school and feeder schools					
8.14 - between school and parents					
8.15 - between school and community					
8.16 - between school and students					

Grand Total: (Learning Community): Total X 1= ___ Total X 2= ___ Total X 3= ___ Total X 4= ___

9. Program Funding

Adequate School Budget to:

Performance Indicators	Rud (1)	Dev (2)	Pro (3)	Acc (4)	N/A (0)
9.1 Administer the instructional program					
9.2 Maintain the school plant					
9.3 Provide an effective discipline program					
9.4 Provide and effective staff development program					
9.5 Provide for effective curriculum development					
9.6 Provide for the development and maintenance of technology					
9.7 Provide an effective guidance program					
9.8 Provide staff and student incentives					
9.9 Provide student support services					
9.10 Provide for effective student assessment					
9.11 Provide for a comprehensive annual program evaluation					

Grand Total: (Program Funding):

Total X 1= ___ Total X 2= ___ Total X 3= ___ Total X 4= ___

10. School Climate

Ethos of the School:

Performance Indicators	Rud (1)	Dev (2)	Pro (3)	Acc (4)	N/A (0)
10.1 Characterized by a culture of concern and caring					
10.2 Positive relationships exist between students and teachers					
10.3 Student diversity is evident					
10.4 A safe environment is evident					
10.5 All staff share the expectation that all students can learn and have worth					
10.6 Equity in terms of learning is evident					
10.7 Students are expected to behave according to established, fairly executed rules of conduct					
10.8 All staff, students, and parents are treated with respect and dignity					

Grand Total: (School Climate):

Total X 1= ___ Total X 2= ___ Total X 3= ___ Total X 4= ___

Transfer Grand Totals for each major category to the *Profile Summary Sheet* on the next page.

Profile Summary Sheet
(Shade in the appropriate area corresponding to the Grand Total for each category)

1. Student Accountability Measures

Rudimentary (0-6)	Developing (7-12)	Proficient (13-18)	Accomplished (19 -24)

2. Administrative Structure and Policies

Rudimentary (0-8)	Developing (9-16)	Proficient (17-24)	Accomplished (25-32)

3. Curriculum and Instruction

Rudimentary (0-32)	Developing (33-64)	Proficient (65-96)	Accomplished (97-128)

4. Faculty and Staff

Rudimentary (0-14)	Developing (15-28)	Proficient (29-42)	Accomplished (43-56)

5. Facilities and Grounds

Rudimentary (0-7)	Developing (8-14)	Proficient (15-21)	Accomplished (22-28)

6. School Leadership

Rudimentary (0-5)	Developing (6-10)	Proficient (11-15)	Accomplished (16-20)

7. Student Support Services

Rudimentary (0-14)	Developing (15-28)	Proficient (29-42)	Accomplished (43-56)

8. Learning Community

Rudimentary (0-16)	Developing (17-32)	Proficient (33-48)	Accomplished (49-64)

9. Program Funding

Rudimentary (0-11)	Developing (12-22)	Proficient (23-33)	Accomplished (33-44)

10. School Climate

Rudimentary (0-8)	Developing (9-16)	Proficient (17-24)	Accomplished (25-32)