



Santa Barbara SCHOOL DISTRICTS

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DATE: January 26, 2010
TO: Dr. J. Brian Sarvis, Superintendent
FROM: Michael J. Gonzalez, Director of Student Services and Compliance
RE: California Partnership Academies: Student Selection Criteria

Background

The California Partnership Academies represent a high school reform movement that is focused on smaller learning communities with a career theme. There are currently 340 funded programs throughout California. The model, originating with the Philadelphia Academies in the late 1960s, spread to California in the early 1980s. Academies incorporate many features of the high school reform movement that includes creating a close family-like atmosphere, integrating academic and career technical education, and establishing viable business partnerships. Emphasis is also placed on student achievement and positive postsecondary outcomes. Academies have been carefully evaluated and shown to have positive impacts on school performance. Academy components include rigorous academics and career technical education, with a career focus, a committed team of teachers, and active business and post-secondary partnerships.

The Santa Barbara School Districts has two partnership academies housed at Santa Barbara High School including the Visual Arts and Design Academy (VADA) and the Multimedia Arts and Design Academy (MAD).

Issue

Does the legislation authorizing California Partnership Academies include specific criteria for the selection of students for California Partnership Academies?

Results

The legislation authorizing Partnership Academies as codified in California Education Code Section 54690 (d) specifies that at least half of each new class must meet specific "at-risk" criteria to determine student eligibility. The remaining one half has no restrictions. The program is voluntary; students must apply, be interviewed, and be selected on the basis of need and interest. About 60-70 students are typically selected for entry each year, enough to comprise two sections of a sophomore class.

EC 54690 (d) states "at-risk" students means students enrolled in high school who are at risk of dropping out of school, as indicated by at least three of the following criteria:

1. Past record of irregular attendance.
2. Past record of underachievement in which the student is at least one year behind the coursework for the respective grade level.
3. Past record of low motivation or a disinterest in the regular school program.
4. Disadvantaged economically.

Adams Elementary School	Home School Santa Barbara	Peabody Charter School	Goleta Valley Junior High School	Alta Vista Alternative High School
Cesar Chavez Charter School	McKinley Elementary School	Roosevelt Elementary School	La Colina Junior High School	Dos Pueblos High School
Cleveland Elementary School	Monroe Elementary School	Santa Barbara Charter School	La Cumbre Junior High School	La Cuesta Continuation High School
Franklin Elementary School	Open Alternative School	Santa Barbara Community Academy	Santa Barbara Junior High School	San Marcos High School
Harding Elementary School		Washington Elementary School		Santa Barbara High School

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EC 54690 (d) (1) also states if a school district is unable to enroll enough at-risk students as defined in EC 54690 (d) to constitute one-half of the participating students, the academy may enroll non-at-risk students that meet any of the following criteria:

1. Scoring in the 40th percentile or below in mathematics or English language arts on the standardized test administered.
2. Maintaining a grade point average of 2.2 or below, or the equivalent of a C-.
3. Meeting any three of the four criteria set forth in subdivision (d) of Section 54690.
4. The student obtains 90 percent of the credits each academic year in courses that are required for graduation, and does any of the following: (a) successfully completes a school year during the 10th grade with an attendance record of no less than 80 percent; (b) successfully completes a school year during the 11th grade with an attendance record of no less than 80 percent; or (c) successfully graduates after the 12th grade.

At the end of each school year, school districts that have been approved to operate partnership academies are required to certify the following information to the Superintendent of Public Instruction:

1. The operation of each academy in accordance with California Education Code sections 54690-54697.
2. The number of qualified students enrolled during the just completed school year, by grade level, for each academy operated by the district.
3. The amount of matching funds and the dollar value of in-kind support made available to each academy in accordance with subdivisions (a) and (b) of Section 54692.

Conclusion

While partnership academies legislation does require that one-half of the students enrolled meet specific "at-risk" criteria, it is clear that the Legislature intended to broaden the availability of these learning experiences to interested students who do not meet the full criteria of "at-risk" students.