

## **Alternative Authorizing Practices for Schools Serving Opportunity Youth**

### Overview

The Governor John Engler Center for Charter Schools (the “Center”) at Central Michigan University (“CMU”) recognizes that high schools serving a significant percentage of students that may be classified as alternative face unique opportunities and challenges. As such, the Center has worked to adapt some of its authorizing practices to reflect the unique aspects of partnering with these schools. After a review of best practices and input from key stakeholders, the Center has developed criteria that schools must demonstrate meeting in order to be eligible for the flexibility afforded by these practices. In addition, a range of alternative measures for assessing academic performance have been developed as options to use when evaluating a school’s progress. These measures are not exclusive and will continue to be refined over time.

### Eligibility

High schools that partner with CMU are eligible for the designation of serving Opportunity Youth in a number of ways, but primarily through the use of a consistent student profile. This designation is not available to schools or campuses serving students below grade nine. The designation will be revisited annually due to natural changes in the student population served by a school. It is the responsibility of the school to systematically collect, analyze and report data to remain eligible. The Center will collaborate with and provide support to schools throughout this process. When a school is approved for the designation, specific submission items and associated due dates will be added to Epicenter in an effort to provide an effective monitoring tool for both the school and the Center.

Accordingly, Opportunity Youth will be defined as those students that are severely off-track to graduate with their four-year accountability cohort based on a minimum population threshold of 60%. More specifically, **at least 60% of students must be two or more years off-track to graduate in four years (upon enrollment) and exhibit at least two of the characteristics listed below:**

- Has been involved in the criminal justice system;
- Has failed at least one course during their middle school tenure;
- Has been dis-enrolled from high school for at least one semester;
- Is parenting;
- Is in or nearly aged-out of foster care;
- Has a long-term history of housing insecurity or mobility;
- Has documented physical health challenges;
- Has an Individualized Education Program;
- Has documented mental health challenges; and
- Exhibits Post Traumatic Stress Disorder tendencies due to childhood trauma

Schools designated by the Michigan Department of Education as a **Strict Discipline Academy**, consistent with the Revised School Code, will automatically qualify for the designation of serving Opportunity Youth as a result of their mission/purpose.

Schools seeking this designation must also maintain a **mission statement** that is explicit with regard to serving students that meet the definition of Opportunity Youth outlined above. While the statement may not include the exact phrase Opportunity Youth, it should be clear that the school's purpose, design and outcome is intended to meet the opportunities and challenges of working with this student population.

### Systemic and Programmatic Considerations

The Center recognizes that there are a number of best practices necessary to be successful in serving Opportunity Youth and that the list below may not be exhaustive of these practices. Schools with this designation should carefully consider and implement the following elements, some of which may be required as a condition of continued eligibility, as deemed appropriate for their students. In addition, these elements should be represented in the school's description of its Educational Program, which the Center uses as the basis for its Educational Program Review protocol to determine if a school is implementing its program with fidelity.

- School designs that integrate **specific interventions and support services** into daily practice using programmatic vehicles, such as morning meeting, structured advisory programs, town halls, community service, arts, peer counseling, etc. Similarly, these services should be systematically supported by schedules, calendars and staffing levels.
- Ensure that students are assigned to **grade levels** based on credit attainment and not age.
- Postgraduate **tracking**, and multi-year reenrollment tracking of eligible students, transfers and students who drop-out of school.
- **Staffing plans** that include multiple non-instructional staff, such as case managers, advocate counselors and/or social workers who work together to provide interventions, ongoing supports and referrals to address student academic and non-academic needs.
- Establish an **admissions requirement** stating that students must be at least 16 years of age to enroll.
- Ensure smaller **class sizes**.
- Create a **partnership portfolio** with human services agencies, industry, the juvenile justice system and/or postsecondary institutions. Establish formal partnerships and written agreements with specific terms and delineated outcomes.
- Conduct **postgraduate tracking** (college, military, trade school and employment).
- Design and implement effective forms of **blended learning** and other methods that personalize learning content and instruction to **accelerate learning**.
- Administer the Northwest Evaluation Association's (NWEA) Measure of Academic Progress (Progress) or similar **assessments**, ensuring that students are enrolled in the **correct grade-level** based on credit attainment and not age.

- Implement **Educational Development Plans (EDP)** as required by law and aggregate student goal attainment to measure success and consider improvements over time.
- Establish multiple and personalized **pathways to graduation**.
- Engage in school-wide **deep data dives** multiple times each year, focusing on specific student outcomes and progress toward those outcomes.
- Establish at least one **Perkins-aligned CTE** program leading to an industry-recognized credential in a field included in Michigan's industry and labor projections.

### Alternative Accountability Measures

The following measures represent some options for establishing accountability measures that are alternative to the Center's standard post-secondary readiness indicators. Once a school has demonstrated that they are eligible for the designation of serving Opportunity Youth and are serving their students using best practices, the Center will work collaboratively with the school to develop alternative accountability measures which may include the following.

- **Augmented College and Career Readiness Measures:** A percentage of students will meet benchmarks on the SAT or ACT WorkKeys that have been augmented for use with alternative student populations.
- **Graduation Rate:** A percentage of students will meet all requirements to graduate high school by the sixth year accountability cohort.
- **Academic growth measures for reading and math:** A percentage of students enrolled at least one year will meet or exceed their performance growth targets in reading and mathematics as measured by the NWEA MAP. Over time, as additional data becomes available, metrics for the comparison of a school's performance against similar schools may be established.
- **Schools offering CTE and/or vocational education:** A percentage of students enrolled in CTE courses for at least one year will pass at least one industry-recognized certification exams.
- **Schools offering internships and apprenticeships:** A percentage of students enrolled in internships and apprenticeships for at least one year will achieve Silver Status on the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC).
- **Schools that offer dual enrollment programs:** By Year 3 of the school's dual enrollment program, a percentage of students will participate and a percentage of participating students will achieve at least a C grade in all courses. As additional data becomes available, metrics for the comparison of a school's performance against similar schools may be established.
- **Educational Development Plans:** A percentage of students will accomplish their EDP goals annually.

- **Nonacademic Measures:** Identify at least one mission-specific design element and establish the performance indicator(s). This design element should address one or more of the aforementioned student characteristics. Examples may include, but should not be limited to, recidivism rates, housing stability rates, etc. and be based on baseline data and relevant comparisons.
- **Attendance and Enrollment:** Each year, students will have achieved a specified average daily attendance rate of. Each year, a percentage of students will have a specified annual attendance rate. Each year, a percentage of all eligible students enrolled on count day will return (reenroll) and be enrolled on count day of the following year.