



Date: May 9, 2023
To: House Committee on Education
From: Lisa Merrick, Legislative Liaison, Portland Public Schools
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Subject: Responses to Member Questions for SB 923A

Does PPS track student data similarly or differently than other school districts?

- Neither federal nor state law, nor ODE guidelines, clearly distinguish between a school and a program. Districts have some latitude to describe an institution as one or the other. When a district has an institution that it describes as a program, they report student data for that program in the same way that PPS does.
- PPS follows all ODE requirements ([Rule 581-023-0006](#)) around student accounting records and state reporting.

Does PPS interpret state statute to define programs as supplemental? Why would students be enrolled in a program but not in a school?

- PPS abides by Oregon statutes when operating our programs.
 - The alternative education statute [OAR 581-222-2505](#) does not define programs as supplemental.

Pioneer School and Special Education Placements

- According to IDEA, PPS is obligated to provide a continuum of placements to students. Some IEP teams determine that students require a special education day program or residential program placement.
 - **Specifically IDEA identifies the following:** [§300.115](#) Continuum of alternative placements.
 - [\(a\)](#) Each public agency must ensure that a continuum of alternative placements is available to meet the needs of children with disabilities for special education and related services.
 - [\(b\)](#) The continuum required in paragraph (a) of this section must



- (1) Include the alternative placements listed in the definition of special education under §[300.39](#) (instruction in regular classes, special classes, special schools, home instruction, and instruction in hospitals and institutions); and
- (2) Make provision for supplementary services (such as resource room or itinerant instruction) to be provided in conjunction with regular class placement. (Authority: 20 U.S.C. [1412](#)(a)(5))

- Pioneer School provides therapeutic instructional support for students in grades Kindergarten through the 12th grade. Students are placed within the program entirely through the IEP process, based on each student’s unique needs and the decision of the student’s IEP team members (including parents).

Alternative Education Programs

- PPS offers several alternative education programs for students. There are many different reasons that would lead to a student enrolling in a program or dual enrolling in a program and school. For example, Teen Parent Services helps young Moms and Dads confront challenges and create opportunities. Our mission has been to provide teen parents with support and resources to help navigate their lives as parents and as students. Academic support, Counseling, and Advocacy are our primary services. Our program provides support for all pregnant and parenting students within the Portland Public Schools District boundary. Many of these students receive home instruction, others dual enroll in this program and one of PPS’s comprehensive schools.
- The Multiple Pathways to Graduation Mission is to “provide educational options for all youth that empower, engage, and prepare them for college, work training, and global citizenship while serving as a vanguard for systemic educational change.” The district is committed to providing an appropriate learning environment for all students.
- Alternative education options can be either district operated or community based. These options are developed to meet the needs of a specific student population. Alternative education options can be either a program of a school or an independent school. To meet student’s needs, alternative education options generally offer something different from or in addition to the regular curriculum and may offer something different from regular school hours.



- Reconnection Services' Outreach Coordinators reach out to over 1,000 Portland Public School middle and high school students each year who have left, or are at-risk of leaving, school early without a diploma. For those interested in exploring educational options and getting back into school, an education plan is put into place and a relationship is established with one of our Outreach Coordinators.

Is PPS aware of cases where students are waiting a year or longer to be placed in a special education program?

- Several highly specialized day or residential treatment programs have had staffing shortages that have caused delays in enrollment. We are not aware of any PPS student that has been denied special education services while awaiting placement or experiencing delays of over a year while awaiting placement.