

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL OPTIONS AT SOUTHERN DOOR

By Joseph Innis

Over the past few years the landscape has changed considerably in regard to how K-12 education can be provided to children, in particular at the middle and high school levels.

With the development of online instructional programs and the consistent striving of K-12 education to find what works for all children, more flexibility has been put in how education is and can be provided.

Obviously the majority of our children attend school on a full time basis, 180 days a year. Through this traditional option children are taught a sequential curriculum, participate in a variety of additional activities, engage in working with their teachers on a daily basis, and are provided direct guidance and assistance as needed.

At Southern Door, however, we also have several options for those children who do not wish to attend full time. Some of these options include:

Virtual Schooling—In July 2009 the School Board approved virtual education programs for middle and high school age students.

The focus of the virtual-learning initiative is to meet the needs of individual students who may need an alternative approach. Students can participate in curriculum work online and/or at home or a combination of home study and classroom attendance for certain subjects can be determined on a case by case basis.

Each year we have a small number of students who open enroll to other virtual schools outside of Southern Door. The option of maintaining enrollment at Southern Door and participating in a virtual school program is now available.

SOAR (Student Opportunities for an Alternative to Regular education)—In 2008 Southern Door received a grant from the Department of Public Instruction to begin a program titled SOAR for students who are having difficulty in some classes and are at risk of not graduating unless additional assistance is provided.

Students attend some regular classes, work on other classes online or in small groups, receive academic support, and may also participate in work experience opportunities off campus; all working toward receiving their high school diploma.

This has been a very successful program, having kept some students from dropping out while others have come back to high school a fifth year to complete their high school work.

Schooling at Home—Through our virtual learning initiative we have a plan in place to work with Middle and High School age students who are schooled at home. These options also include student participation in online or classroom curriculum programs and participation in extracurricular activities if they choose.

SWS (School Within a School)—SWS is a mix of computer-based programs, commercial courses, regular curriculum courses, and a work study/volunteer experience. Students work with staff to develop a CIP (Customized Instructional Plan), designed to assist students in correcting minor delays in progress toward graduation.

All in all, there are several alternative options for students to participate in through the Southern Door Schools as they work toward their high school diploma.

Our focus in developing these options is with the mindset that one program does not fit all and some students need alternatives in order to be successful.

If students and parents are considering options beyond having your children attend school on a regular basis in the next school year, I encourage you to contact a building principal or counselor to explore the alternatives available at Southern Door.

If you do so, I believe you will find we can meet the needs of your children through alternative means beyond the traditional classroom if that will accommodate your children best and if that is what you choose.



To access Southern Door Virtual Education Program Policies and Procedures, please click link below:

[Middle School](#) or [High School](#)