

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



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Technical Assistance Paper

A Business-Community (ABC) School Program

Summary:

The 2006 Legislature created the A Business-Community (ABC) School Program to increase business partnerships in education and reduce school and classroom overcrowding throughout the state. This guidance provides technical assistance and describes the responsibilities for school districts in promoting this program.

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A. GENERAL INFORMATION

A-1. What is the purpose of the A Business-Community (ABC) School Program?

The Florida Legislature created Section 1013.721, (A Business-Community (ABC) School Program.--) Florida Statutes, to promote business partnerships in education, reduce school and classroom overcrowding throughout the state, offset the high cost of constructing educational facilities, and use due diligence and sound business practice in using available educational space. An ABC school is a public school that offers instruction to students from kindergarten through third grade. ABC schools must comply with the constitutional class size requirements. The statute can be accessed via Online Sunshine at:

http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=Ch1013/SEC721.HTM&Title=-%3e2006-%3eCh1013-%3eSection%20721#1013.721

A-2. Are ABC schools public schools?

Yes. ABC schools are public schools subject to the same guidelines and regulations as all other public schools. ABC schools must comply with constitutional class size requirements. More information regarding class size requirements can be accessed at: <http://www.firn.edu/doe/arm/class-size.htm>

A-3. What grade levels are included in ABC schools?

ABC schools may offer instruction from kindergarten through third grade or any single or multiple grade levels within this range.

A-4. What are the districts' responsibilities for implementing the ABC School Program?

A district must:

- Designate a district employee as the ABC program contact liaison
- Appoint an ABC school evaluation committee
- Request proposals from area businesses through advertisements
- Evaluate submitted proposals and if a proposal is accepted, develop a contract between the district and the business

A-5. What are the reporting requirements related to ABC schools?

Each district is required to send to the Department the name and contact information for the district's ABC program liaison and the members of the evaluation committee. It is the district's responsibility to notify the Department upon any changes in membership or contact information. Liaison contact information was due to the Department by September 29, 2006, for the current school year. Committee contact information must be submitted to the Department by February 15, 2007.

Each district school board must submit documentation to the Department demonstrating the board's compliance with the advertising requirement.

A-6. What is an ABC school evaluation committee?

Each school district must establish an ABC school evaluation committee. The committee shall be appointed by the school board and be composed of at least one school district administrator, one member of the business community, and one member of a local chamber of commerce. The board may wish to include community leaders and may find assistance with members of other local business organizations (e.g. Kiwanis, Rotary). In addition, the board may consider additional members on the committee, such as active parents, principals, informal educators, and members of the community in local or city office positions. The committee must meet at least quarterly; however, the committee may meet more often to address their responsibilities of advertising, reviewing proposals, and evaluating the program.

B. ATTENDANCE AND ADMISSION

B-1. What students are eligible to attend an ABC school?

First priority for admission of students to an ABC school shall be given to the children of the owners and employees of the host business. If additional capacity remains after children of the owners and employees of the host business are admitted, the host business may designate other neighboring businesses whose owners or employees may also participate to generate a reasonable number of students for the school. These additional businesses should be submitted to the evaluation committee for approval. The school board shall make necessary arrangements to accommodate students from other school districts whose parents are associated with the host business or business partners.

C. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SCHOOL/DISTRICT

C-1. What are the district's responsibilities for ABC schools?

The school board is responsible for providing the appropriate instructional support, administrative staff, teachers, text books, materials, supplies, and curriculum.

C-2. Can the ABC school operate a before school and/or an after school program?

The school district may also agree to operate or contract for the operation of a before-school and an after-school program using the donated facilities. These terms, including control and oversight of the program, should be negotiated with the business and included in the contract.

C-3. Is the district required to provide transportation for students participating in an ABC school?

The school district is not required to provide transportation. Parents are responsible for providing transportation to and from the school for their children.

C-4. What are the potential benefits of this program to the district?

Districts may benefit from this program by reducing school and classroom overcrowding and offsetting the high cost of constructing educational facilities or fixing deteriorating facilities. Within the ABC school program, children also have more time with their parents because they commute together to school and work. Parents often volunteer in the classroom because of their close proximity to the school. The ABC school program also seeks to encourage other forms of business partnerships.

D. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE BUSINESS

D-1. What are the responsibilities for the business partner for an ABC school?

The host business must provide the appropriate types of space for operating the school. In addition to classroom space, the district may wish to negotiate with the business to supply playground space and equipment and provide maintenance, utilities, and security for the ABC school.

D-2. Does the business cover the costs for construction or other upgrades to the facility?

If special facilities such as restroom or dining, recreational, or other areas are required, the district may contribute a part of the cost to the construction, remodeling, or renovation for such facilities from capital outlay funds of the district. A multiyear lease for operation of the facility must be agreed upon if the school district contributes to the cost of such construction.

D-3. What are the potential benefits of this program to the business partner?

An ABC school program at a business workplace is an incentive for employees. Studies of worksite schools show that employees who have students enrolled in the worksite school have increased productivity and decreased absenteeism and turnover rates. The ABC school program also allows businesses to lease or use space otherwise unoccupied. Businesses may include provisions for facility space enhancement and termination of contracts which may assist the business related to long term planning.

E. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EVALUATION COMMITTEE

E-1. What are the responsibilities of the evaluation committee required by state law?

The evaluation committee must:

- Create and implement a marketing plan that informs businesses regarding the benefits of the ABC school program
- Provide technical assistance to businesses interested in partnering with a school to implement an ABC school
- Inform the public regarding the benefits of business and education partnerships
- Obtain feedback from potential business partners related to ABC program improvement
- Identify local barriers that preclude this program from operating
- Develop an ABC school proposal process and evaluation criteria
- Share information regarding effective ABC programs with the department and local communities
- Submit an annual report to the school board and superintendent

E-2. How does the committee implement a marketing plan for the ABC program?

The committee is responsible for marketing and informing businesses regarding the opportunity to partner with district school boards in establishing ABC schools and ensuring that proposal applications are accessible to interested businesses. The committee is also responsible for informing the public regarding the benefits of such a program. The committee may wish to advertise the ABC Program and the application process in local newspapers and magazines; contact local business leaders directly via mail or newspaper ads regarding the opportunities to develop and implement an ABC school; contact school PTAs or post information on a district website or in a newsletter; and/or establish partnerships with other local organizations that may support the program and assist with the media campaign. Interested organizations might include local Early Learning Coalition or Educational Consortium. A district may choose their own method of advertising; however, some documentation of the advertising products must be sent to the Department.

E-3. How should the school board request proposals from area businesses?

Each school board is required to request proposals from area businesses, to apply to become partners with the school district to develop an ABC school program. A district may request proposals from area businesses simply by advertising in various media. Similar to the suggestions made in E-2, districts may advertise in local newspapers, contact local chambers of commerce, and host informational meetings. The ABC school evaluation committee is required to develop a process for evaluating the proposals. A district may wish to facilitate the committee's evaluation of these proposals by

developing a Request for Proposals (RFP). This could be a unified form for the district that includes questions and narrative sections relating to the committee's evaluation criteria. Further guidance regarding the design of an RFP for ABC schools may be found in question E-4.

E-4. How can the committee create a Request for Proposal (RFP)?

An RFP is a written document outlining specific information regarding the district, the services and products needed, and the specific requirements businesses must meet in order to partner with the district. The RFP is considered the initial step in the process of finding creative solutions to classroom space and building business and school partnerships. The committee should consult with their legal department for appropriate verbiage and regulations. The RFP must include clear information related to the review and selection process.

At a minimum, the RFP should ask businesses to address the following components:

- Summary of the proposed project
- Description of the need with supporting data
- Description of student population, projected number of students to be served, projected demographic composition of students, coordination with the community, and employee (parents) of students
- Description of project design and implementation
 - Financing- ensure the business and facility space is financially sound
 - Management- plan for managing day-to-day operations of the school
 - Administration- descriptions of those people in charge of long term planning of the school
 - Staffing- descriptions of any employees who will be working at, with, or for the school daily
 - Describe potential before-school and after-school program space accommodations
 - Timeline- to become operational and for how long
- Description of facility site
 - Accommodations- description of accommodations for special needs
 - Facility description- description of facility space and classrooms
 - Security- description of facility space safety and security of the school children, especially with regards to employee and visitor monitoring with the children
- Proposed contract terms including lease timeline, cost, and any expected facility upgrades over the life of the school

E-5. How does the committee evaluate proposals?

The committee must evaluate the feasibility of each proposal. Committees should, at minimum, take into account: operating cost, number of students served, proposed student/teacher ratio, and the proposed number of years the satellite school would be operational. The committee will make recommendations to the school board regarding the proposals, and the school board will have 60 days after receiving the recommendation to begin action. This action should include contacting the business and beginning discussion and further negotiations related to the partnership with those businesses that appear to have proposals that meet the needs of the district.

E-6. What provisions should be included in the contract for operation of an ABC school?

The contract must include, but not limited to be, the following: provisions relating to any cost of facility modifications, provision for the assignment or waiver of appropriate insurance costs, the number of students expected to be served or terms for terminating the lease, and advance notice required before the school may be closed. The school district and host business may enter into a multiyear contract.