

2026 Dropout Recovery School Application Guidelines

Senate Bill 879

Senate Bill 879 (87th Texas Legislature) updated the Texas Education Code §39.0548 definition of a dropout recovery school (DRS) and added the opportunity for alternative education campuses (AECs) that do not meet the age criterion to apply for a discretionary DRS designation.

AECs that meet the statutory DRS definition are identified and preregistered for alternative education accountability (AEA). These campuses provide education services targeted to dropout prevention and recovery of students in grades 9–12, with enrollment consisting of at least 60 percent of students 16 years of age or older as of September 1, 2025, as reported for the fall semester TSDS PEIMS submission. These AECs also meet all the AEA criteria listed below.

AECs that meet the AEA criteria below but do not meet the age criterion must submit a DRS application in order to be registered for AEA. The DRS application process will occur in TEAL Accountability during the March 5–March 17, 2026 AEA registration window.

As a reminder, residential treatment facilities (RTFs) are not rated under accountability regardless of AEA registration status. New RTFs do not need to register for AEA in order to be labeled *Not Rated*.

In the DRS application, the district must certify that the campus meets AEA criteria. The district must also submit documentation demonstrating how the campus is providing dropout prevention and/or recovery services.

If the agency approves the DRS application, the campus receives a discretionary DRS designation and is registered for AEA. If the application is denied, the campus is not registered for AEA and will be evaluated under standard accountability for 2026.

Once a campus receives a discretionary DRS designation, that designation will remain for the following years as long as the campus continues to meet the AEA campus criteria listed below.

AEA Campus Criteria

Districts must certify in the DRS application that the campus meets the thirteen AEA criteria. However, the requirements in criteria 8–13 may not be applicable to a charter school campus (depending on the terms of the charter) or for a community-based dropout recovery campus established in accordance with TEC §29.081(e).

- 1) The AEC must have its own county-district-campus number for which TSDS PEIMS data are submitted and test answer documents are coded. A program operated within or supported by another campus does not qualify.
- 2) The AEC must have its own county-district-campus number on TSDS PEIMS Fall Snapshot day.
- 3) The AEC must be identified in AskTED (Ask Texas Education Directory database) as an alternative instructional campus. This is a self-designation that districts and charter schools request via AskTED.

- 4) The AEC must be dedicated to serving students at risk of dropping out of school as defined in TEC §29.081(d). Each AEC must have at least 75 percent at-risk student enrollment at the AEC verified through current-year TSDS PEIMS fall enrollment data.
- 5) At least 90 percent of students at the AEC must be enrolled in grades 6–12 verified through current-year TSDS PEIMS fall snapshot submission.
- 6) The AEC must operate on its own campus budget.
- 7) The AEC must offer nontraditional settings and methods of instructional delivery designed to meet the needs of the students served on the AEC.
- 8) The AEC cannot be the only middle school or high school listed for its district in AskTED.
- 9) The AEC must have an appropriately certified, full-time administrator whose primary duty is the administration of the AEC.
- 10) The AEC must have appropriately certified teachers assigned in all areas including special education, bilingual education, and/or English as a second language (ESL) to serve students eligible for such services.
- 11) The AEC must provide each student the opportunity to attend a 75,600-minute school year as defined in TEC §25.081(a), according to the needs of each student.
- 12) If the campus has students served by special education, the students must be placed at the AEC by their Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee. If the campus is a residential facility, the students must have been placed in the facility by the district.
- 13) Students served by special education must receive all services outlined in their current individualized education programs (IEPs). Emergent bilingual students/English learners (EL) must receive all services outlined by the language proficiency assessment committee (LPAC). Students served by special education or language programs must be served by appropriately certified teachers.

How to Submit a DRS Application

The *2026 Preliminary List of AEA Campuses* will be available during the AEA registration window from March 5th through 5:00 p.m. CDT on Tuesday, March 17, 2026. On the preliminary list, AECs that do not meet the age criterion will be identified as eligible for DRS application review. These campuses must submit a DRS application if they wish to be registered for AEA.

District superintendents and open-enrollment charter school chief operating officers who do not have TEAL access must request access at

<https://tealprod.tea.state.tx.us/TSP/TEALcurePortal/Access/LogonServlet>.

Districts and open-enrollment charter schools must submit their DRS application and upload supporting documentation by 5:00 p.m. CDT on March 17, 2026. The supporting documentation must include the following:

- The name and county-district-campus number of the campus(es)
- A thorough description of how the campus provides services designed for students at risk of dropping out of school as defined in TEC §29.081(d) and provides accelerated instructional education services targeted to dropout prevention and recovery of these students

- A statement that all information included in the application is true and correct to the best of the district superintendent's or open-enrollment charter school chief operating officer's knowledge and belief
- One upload must be submitted per district. Information for all requested campuses must be included in a single PDF document.
- It is the district's or open-enrollment charter school's responsibility to ensure all relevant information is included with the application at the time of submission as districts and open-enrollment charter schools will not be prompted for additional information.

Application Guidelines

- Applications that miss the submission deadline of 5:00 p.m. CDT on March 17, 2026, will not be considered.
- Applications should not contain personally identifiable student-level information.
- If an application is not submitted during the registration window for a potentially eligible, but not preregistered DRS, that campus will not be evaluated under AEA for 2026 and will not appear on the *2026 Final List of AEA Campuses*. **That campus will be evaluated under standard accountability.**
- If the DRS application is denied, the campus will not be registered for AEA and will be evaluated under standard accountability for 2026.
- Districts will receive application responses prior to the publication of the final AEA list in late April.

Final AEA Campus List

The *2026 Final List of AEA Campuses* will be posted on the TEA website's [2026 Accountability Rating System](#) webpage in April. For 2026, all campuses on the final AEA list will be identified either as RTFs or DRS.

Questions

If you have further questions about the DRS application process or 2026 alternative education accountability, please contact the Performance Reporting Division via the [Performance Reporting Help Desk](#).