A MIXED METHOD EVALUATION OF A TYPE I ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM IN OKLAHOMA

By

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It has been estimated that one million students drop out of schools in the United States every year (Barr & Parrett, 1995; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1990). Dropping out has been, in many cases, predictable and preventable; a number of potential dropouts were identified as early as third grade (Slavin and Madden, 1989; Chalker and Brown, 1999). In fact, according to Chalker and Brown (1999), the state of Indiana projected future prison facility needs based on second grade reading scores and other at-risk criteria.

Oklahoma defined at-risk students as individuals whose present or predictable status (economic, social-cultural, academic, and/or health) indicated they might fail to successfully complete their secondary education and acquire basic life skills necessary for higher education and/or employment (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 1992). Furthermore, the Oklahoma Technical Assistance Center (OTAC) (1994), found that students were prone to drop out if they felt alienated, were disadvantaged, or both. The Oklahoma definition was fairly typical. Hilliard (1991) concluded that the one determining factor for a child at-risk was the lack of success in the traditional school setting. He explained that while school systems have no control over poverty, race, or

family, they failed to "see each and every child in this nation develop to the peak of his or her capabilities" (p. 34).

Interventions with at-risk students, specifically alternative education programs, proved to be productive for some students (Barr & Parrett, 1995). Three types of alternative schools were identified by Raywid (1994): Type I programs were schools of choice, Type II programs were punitive, and Type III programs were for short-term placement.

Type I programs were voluntary in nature. Students who chose to be enrolled in school, but needed an education program that differed from the traditional school setting, could be served in Type I alternative education programs. These programs were noted for being different from the traditional school setting in that deregulation, flexibility, autonomy, and teacher/student empowerment were key features. They offered a variety of educational options to students who desired a more appropriate or challenging curriculum. These programs, according to research conducted by OTAC (1998), substantiated basic beliefs about alternative education. Some of these beliefs were as follows:

1. The teacher is the most important element in an alternative education program.
2. The most powerful influence that keeps students in school is friendly attention.
3. Students have a need for affiliation, a real sense of belonging.
4. Allow learning to be more natural, meaningful, and pleasant.

5. The role of teacher is to facilitate, not indoctrinate.
6. Students are treated with respect, which establishes a relationship of reciprocity and trust.
7. The teacher is a patient collaborator and friend, rather than a didactic superior.

The teacher was extremely important in Type I alternative education programs, as noted in the basic belief list. Teachers should be advocates and mentors who provided friendly, helpful, and inviting educational environments to maximize student success.

Type I programs also recognized methods that enhanced student success (Raywid, 1994; OTAC, 1994). Students were provided ample opportunities to participate in decision making, active learning, small class sizes, self-discipline was encouraged, individual and cooperative study was offered, and support services were available to address issues that impeded student progress. Raywid (1994) also claimed that Type I programs used a whole-student approach that was not only personalized, but built a sense of affiliation. She provided examples of these programs, which included schools-within-schools, magnet schools, charters, dropout recovery, after-hours programs, or schools in atypical settings, for example. Type I schools proved to be successful for at-risk students including those with behavioral problems (Gregory, 2000; OTAC, 1995; Raywid, 1994).

On the contrary, according to Raywid (1994), Type II programs were those in which students were placed due to behavior problems that led to school suspension or expulsion. These programs aimed to segregate misbehaving students from the mainstream student population. The goal of the Type II program was to "reform" disruptive students.

The placement was typically short-term, until the suspension period or the behavior requirements were met. Because of the short-term placement, curriculum was limited to a few basic courses supplied from the student's home school. Research conducted by OTAC (1995), in Oklahoma, indicated that students who participated in disciplinary programs, or Type II alternative education programs, experienced no long-term gains, either behaviorally or academically. OTAC (1995) further reported that these programs potentially increased negative student outcomes. Raywid (1994) noted that in Florida, statewide analysis of in-school suspension programs (Type II) showed no improvement in student behavior, as well. Gregory (2000) claimed that punitive programs placed educators in a precarious position. He believed that educators had the job of creating schools that were undesirable enough to deter a student's misbehavior. Willis (1996) added that Type II programs could create a two-tiered educational system: good schools for good kids and bad schools for bad kids.

Type III programs had features of the first two types. Participation in Type III alternative education programs, like Type I programs, was voluntary (Raywid, 1994). Like the Type II programs, they were short-term, but they offered various social services, much like the Type I programs. While students may participate in counseling and academic remediation, the Type III programs were predominately therapeutic in nature. Raywid's research (1994) indicated that, while the Type III programs appeared to change student behavior and achievement, the change was temporary and diminished once the student returned to his/her home school.

Although Raywid (1994) researched and defined the three types of alternative education programs, she noted that the distinctions between the three were beginning to blur. For example, more Type II programs were offering counseling, which had been a defining feature of the Type I and III programs.

Statement of the Problem

Little systematic research has been conducted on the effectiveness of alternative education programs (SEDL, 1995). The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) (1995) published a review of the literature in alternative education and noted the lack of research. SEDL cited the work of the Oklahoma Technical Assistance Center as the only well-designed, large-scale evaluation research on the effectiveness of alternative education programs.

The Oklahoma studies, conducted annually since 1988, were quantitative assessments of program success such as student attendance, grade point average, standardized and norm referenced pre- and post-testing, credits earned, classes failed, and discipline referrals (OTAC, 1998, 1999). These quantitative indices of program success were selected on the basis of discriminant analyses of at-risk students indicating that these were the quantitative factors most closely related to eventual dropping out of school (Hollifield, 1988; Slavin & Madden, 1989). The Oklahoma data (1995-1999) had indicated that, as a group, the state-funded alternative education programs in Oklahoma had demonstrated improvement in each of these variables in every year. In the 1998-

1999 school year, approximately half of the 270 alternative education programs in Oklahoma demonstrated success as defined by these variables.

Quantitative evaluations of changes in this limited data set were not the only evaluations occurring in alternative education programs. Students were evaluated informally by their teachers, and through outside program evaluation processes and procedures (McKean & Langley, 1999; SEDL, 1995). These evaluations occurred among and between the adult professionals working in alternative settings. These evaluations were stories about realities not linked to tests and numbers, yet they were evaluations that impacted and explained these quantitative data. In fact, some stories indicated that despite test scores and numbers that did not increase, students were improving. L. McReynolds, a twenty-six year veteran in alternative education and program director for Tulsa Street School, (personal communication, August 10, 2000) related to me that:

> Parents call me to tell me that their child had behaviors like arguing, refusing to go to school or to do chores, but after attending our alternative program they are different. They tell me that their child is all of the sudden nice to family members, gets up on his own to go to school, and even helps out around the house. They tell me that there is just a change in everyday behavior. I think that change in behavior and those stories give us a bigger picture of a student's progress than test scores.

Castleberry and Enger (1998) claimed that because of alternative education programs, these individuals now had abilities that enabled them to be more successful in terms of numbers.

The quantitative data, by themselves, could miss important student outcomes, both positive and negative, that occurred in alternative education programs. Perhaps more importantly, the quantitative data available could not tell us *why* some programs

were successful while others failed, or why some students were successful while others failed. Both quantitative data and qualitative empirical materials were needed to fully understand the impact of alternative education programs on the students enrolled in them. The proposed study built upon the largest data source available on the effectiveness of alternative education programs by adding a thorough qualitative study which determined (1) the types of student and program outcomes that may be missed in quantitative studies and (2) program features that may not be quantifiable but were highly related to program and student success.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to evaluate an alternative education program in terms of quantitative data, qualitative information, and the combined realities of both. To accomplish this purpose, three perspectives were developed as follows from the same setting:

Perspective One – quantitative;

Perspective Two – qualitative, and

Perspective Three – combined.

The conclusions reached from each perspective will be compared and contrasted.

Orienting Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

Typically, student success demographics had been demonstrated through quantitative indices such as the number of days absent, credits earned, course grades, and

achievement test scores. While these indices were easily aggregated and analyzed, they failed to provide information on other ways in which students demonstrated improvement, and they did not provide information about the reasons for student success or failure.

Similar measurement issues were debated by researchers in the quantitative and qualitative paradigms. According to Punch (1988), quantitative data collection "is about how the variables are to be measured" and quantitative data analysis "is about how the measurements of the variables are to be analyzed" (p. 59). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) and Creswell (1994) claimed that the qualitative researcher would be more likely to use multiple data sources in a study. Creswell (1994) claimed that there were many ways that the qualitative researcher could collect meaningful data. Researchers could gather notes based on observations, conduct various types of interviews, maintain a journal during the course of the research, analyze documents, utilize video or audio tape, and collect personal information from informants, to name a few. Due to the nature of the data, the qualitative researcher would use a broader array of materials in any study than does the quantitative researcher, who would rely on numeric data (or information that could be quantified) alone.

Creswell's (1994) reasons for choosing either of these paradigms dealt with the researcher's worldview, training and experience, psychological attributes, the nature of the study, and the audience for the study. The qualitative paradigm allowed the researcher to deal with ambiguities and often was of longer duration. It was a less restrictive endeavor; researchers used this design because it allowed them to be free in accepting

emerging concepts. Punch (1998) echoed the comments of Creswell and added that while qualitative empirical materials seemed simplistic, it was actually quite complex in that the researcher must not only demonstrate great care in the data collection process, but must also be aware of any biases brought to the research. Both authors agreed that qualitative research reflected a broader range of perspectives as well as a more varied and diverse study.

Because qualitative studies involved exploratory research (Patton, 1987), the qualitative researcher interacted with informants involved in the study. In exploratory research, little, if any, information was available. Patton (1987) claimed that it was the task of the researcher to "build a picture" based on the ideas of the subjects.

On the other hand, Creswell (1994) reported that quantitative studies required the researcher to be comfortable with many rules as well as short study duration. This form of research has typically been studied by others and came with pre-existing theories. Quantitative research, according to Punch (1998), allowed researchers the ability to disprove theories, never to prove them. He further stated that by always pre-structuring the data, the researchers could not provide any information to the study using their own terms, meanings, and understandings.

Collecting numeric data has been one way of demonstrating student success in alternative education programs (OTAC, 1988). SEDL (1995) maintained that the literature contained a scarcity of scientific research regarding the success of alternative education programs. However, it was my bias that many students may not demonstrate success quantitatively, but may be successful in other ways that quantitative data did not

allow. Stories told by faculty and students would fill the gaps that numeric data collection leaves blank. Castleberry and Enger (1998) conducted qualitative research with alternative education students. These students were asked to compare their success in school between the traditional educational environment and the alternative education program. These interviews led to information regarding student success that mere numbers could not report. It appeared that both types of data collection were necessary to determine true student success. By actually talking with study participants, valuable information was gathered that otherwise would not using a structured, cause and effect form of quantitative research design.

Sergiovanni and Starratt (1998) explained that schools need teachers who were committed to the principle that all children could learn through active involvement in the learning process. They also believed that teachers were needed who could design individual or group activities that would provide optimum learning activities for every student to be successful. Newmann and Wehlage (1995) added that authentic pedagogy led to authentic learning; authentic learning was the result of actively engaging students. They stated that to determine whether authentic instruction took place in the classroom, students must be able to demonstrate that higher-order thinking skills, a shared understanding of concepts, and connections to the world at large from knowledge learned all occurred.

Traditionally, students assumed a passive role in the classroom. Research (Raywid, 1995) demonstrated that students were more successful when they were actively involved in the learning process. When observing if active learning took place, students

demonstrated higher-order thinking skills by answering open-ended questions, relating the unknown to the known, and discussing how concepts fit together. One alternative education teacher told me (personal communication, October 12, 1998) that:

> In alternative education you're trying to make them aware of the details so they have to think. It's not like the regular school where kids get out their paper and pencil to complete a multiple choice or true/false test. To me, we don't ask kids to think for themselves very often in regular school. It's important to involve kids in what's going on in class.

Newmann and Wehlage (1995) further claimed that students who were actively involved in the learning process engaged in conversation with their teachers and peers to share an understanding of the topic or ideas presented in each lesson. Students were then able to make connections between their knowledge and social or personal problems.

Qualitatively, classroom observations provided valuable insight into whether authentic instruction led to program success. Traditional demographic information that was collected to determine program success quantitatively involved student standardized and norm-referenced pre- and post- test scores, grade point averages, attendance, classes passed and failed, and discipline referrals.

Procedures

As the researcher, I brought a wealth of experience to the topic. My background included ten years as a special education teacher, specializing in mental retardation and emotional disturbance. Later, I was the coordinator of alternative education programs for Sand Springs Public Schools for three and one-half years. While there, I was instrumental in developing and supervising alternative education programs based in three schools with

a total enrollment of 130 students. Twelve faculty members were hired and supervised under my leadership. I was responsible for maintaining all student records, which included quantitative data (pre/post: classes passes/failed, standardized test scores, discipline referrals, grade point average, and attendance). Currently I am employed as a Field Coordinator by OTAC. OTAC is a third party evaluation agency that monitors and evaluates the alternative education programs in Oklahoma.

Access to various alternative education programs was easy as I was involved with 46 school districts. Districts were required under Oklahoma law to report pre/post requested data to the OTAC office. All alternative education students were asked to complete a student survey.

I was particularly interested in this study to discover what could be gained from the qualitative research portion. I believed that valuable information about alternative education program success could be obtained from what students and faculty had to say about the program that quantitative data did not ask.

Data Needed

Both quantitative data provided by OTAC and qualitative empirical materials obtained on-site, were needed from one Type I alternative education program. The quantitative data included student surveys plus pre/post student information such as testing, attendance, grade point average, number of classes passed/failed and discipline referrals. The program was also rated using a rubric (Appendix A) to rate its effectiveness in implementing 17 criteria required in Oklahoma law (OSS, Title 70, Section 1210.568)

on a five-point scale. Moreover, surveys were administered to participating students. The survey asked students to compare their experiences in alternative education with those in traditional education programs. The survey (Appendix B) consisted of 13 forced-choice questions that were each asked twice (once for alternative education and once regarding the traditional program) and seven questions that required open-ended responses.

Qualitative empirical materials were also an important component that provided faculty "stories" about student and program success. Faculty interviews were conducted to discover how alternative education programs differed from traditional education programs, what made alternative programs successful, and what was gained from being involved in alternative education programs. Field observations were conducted and provided pertinent information about the interactions between the faculty and the students that led to program success.

Data Sources

The quantitative data (program ratings, student surveys, attendance, grade point average, standardized and norm referenced pre- and post-testing, credits earned, classes failed, and discipline referrals) was provided by OTAC, while the qualitative empirical materials (interviews, field notes, and field observations) were provided by study participants and myself. The qualitative empirical materials added to the quantitative portion included faculty interviews. Six faculty members were involved in the interview process. The faculty members interviewed had past experience with traditional education programs, and worked in the alternative education program for one or more years.

Data Management, Presentation, and Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed by the OTAC organization and were reported in the OTAC Final Evaluation Report (1999-2000). Data on the following five quantitative indices were collected from the alternative education program. These five indices were highly correlated to dropping out of school:

- number of absences
- number of disciplinary referrals
- number of classes or courses failed
- grade point averages
- standardized test scores

This set of factors had been cited in the dropout prevention and intervention literature as the variables most highly related to eventual dropping out of school. The evaluative hypothesis was that successful dropout prevention programs should have significant impact on these variables.

Statistical Treatment of Outcome Data. All outcome data amenable to statistical analysis were analyzed in at least one of three ways:

(1) basic descriptive statistics, including means, frequencies, medians, summations, etc.,

(2) repeated measures analyses of variance or correlated *t*-tests, used for all pre-post within-group comparisons, such as changes in reported absences or scores on standardized achievement tests; and

(3) univariate and multivariate analyses of variance (ANOVA and MANOVA) and covariance (ANCOVA and MANCOVA), used for pre-post comparisons and comparisons between treatment groups and comparison groups.

Where appropriate, correlational and multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine the relative effects of various program components. All statistical tests were conducted at the .05 level of significance. All tests were two-tailed.

Qualitative empirical materials were analyzed using an interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman (1994). The attempt to link themes in terms of causal relationships was conducted using their approach, "transcendental realism." The components of this interactive model included data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. These components were described as three concurrent streams that simply interacted throughout the analysis.

Data Reduction. Collected data was edited and summarized during the early stages of analysis. Coding and memoing were used to find themes, clusters, and other patterns that emerged from the data collection. It was important to reduce the amount of collected data without losing important information. The various categories that developed were compared and contrasted.

Data Display. Moreover, to better organize collected data, displays were used to show what stage the analysis had reached. The displays were also the basis for further analysis. Forms of displays included Venn diagrams and causal models. Punch (1998) claimed that good qualitative analysis involved repeated displays of data, much the way grounded theory does.

Drawing Conclusions. Data reduction and display were used to assist in drawing conclusions. This procedure actually occurred throughout the process of reduction and display. The actual conclusions could not be formed until all of the data were analyzed.

While some initial decisions about data organization, reduction, interpretation, and reporting had been made, it should be emphasized in the qualitative portion of the study these decisions were amenable to periodic review based on where the research led me.

Research Criteria

According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), research would make sense because of the techniques used by the researcher. The researcher must build trust and rapport among those involved in the study. I was fortunate to have already built trust and rapport among staff. The "prolonged engagement" that Guba and Lincoln (1989) discussed came naturally to me because I was constantly seen interacting with the staff for two years prior to this study. Moreover, this provided me the opportunity to be engaged in persistent observations. This helped me to be more focused so that I could decide what was the most relevant information that I needed and to then search for that information. Another suggestion by Guba and Lincoln (1989) was to use "peer debriefing." It was most helpful to discuss this study with an individual who helped me to be open about my findings.

While many assumptions were noted by Marshall (1984) about trustworthiness or goodness, common criteria existed. She claimed that depending on "your purpose, your audience, and how finely tuned you are as a research instrument," goodness criteria could be a judgment call (p.189). For example, the use of qualitative research for this study was discussed. The "stories" told by staff members provided pertinent information that numbers could not provide. Also, while my biases were expressed I attempted to guard against value judgments in the data collection. Moreover, many sources were used to increase credibility to the study. The numeric data provided from OTAC (2000) as well as staff interviews and observations provided different perspectives, which led to the same outcome.

Those who participated in the study benefitted because their voice was heard. It was expressed, by the subjects, that they were elated to describe situations that they were not typically asked. They showed their excitement to tell stories of program success through body language and they asked if they could tell specific stories of how the program impacted a particular student's life.

It was also important to note that an audit trail existed. The data was preserved and available for reanalysis, as recommended by Marshall (1984). This information, interview transcriptions, notes from interviews and observations, and OTAC numeric data were maintained in a locked file cabinet for the duration of the study and would be so until one year after the study was complete. This would allow for the research to be used for further study. All subjects were told that they could leave the study at any time. An informed consent form was presented to the participants stating the purpose and the process of the study. The informed consent forms were signed by the participants and me. All of the information compiled led to a more credible picture of what actually took place in this school setting.

Study participants were told that pseudonyms would be used to ensure their privacy and confidentiality. They were also told that any recorded tapes, notes, or transcriptions would be saved for a period of one year and then destroyed. These bits of information would remain in my possession until that time.

Guidelines for research involving human subjects were obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Oklahoma State University. Approval by the IRB for rules and regulations for conducting research was also obtained (Appendix D).

Significance of the Study

Research analysis conducted by James Catterall in 1987 and reported in the Oklahoma Statewide Alternative Education Program Evaluation Executive Summary Report by OTAC in 1997-98, indicated that dropouts cost the government (in direct services and lost tax revenue) a minimum of $81,000 per person, per year. By accepting Catterall's *savings to government* as a result of Oklahoma's monetary investment to alternative education programs statewide, an estimated $132,840.00 was saved when 1,640 students completed requirements leading to graduation in that year. In that same year, there were 894 recovered dropouts, which saved the state another $72,414.00. The monetary investment in alternative education yielded a high return to the state government. The state gained even more through a better-educated workforce, greater productivity, lower health care costs, and other economic advantages of high school graduates.

Moreover, in recent years, the Federal government passed laws that allowed public schools to suspend students from school for one year. Therefore, every state developed some sort of alternative to home suspension for these students placed out of the traditional school environment. The numbers of suspended students caused a surge in the numbers of alternative education programs across the country (NCES, 1998; Cantu, 2000). Although students who attended alternative education programs did so for a variety of reasons, these types of programs grew greatly as an alternative to suspension or expulsion. In fact, according to the 1998-99 Oklahoma State Needs Assessment, 68,721 students in grades 6-12 were suspended from school for either short or long term

placement (Oklahoma State Department of Education Needs Assessment, 1999). While schools were free to suspend students in elementary grades, they were asked only to report the numbers of suspensions for those students in grades 6-12.

The Oklahoma State Legislature increased funds to its alternative education programs by 23 million dollars during the 1996 legislative session. Every school in Oklahoma was mandated to have an alternative education program in place for students in grades 6-12 by the school year 2000-2001. To date, all but seventy districts had received funding to put alternative education programs in place.

During the 1990s, alternative education has been the fastest-growing area of secondary education in the United States (Barr & Parrett, 1995). Research has been quite limited in the area of alternative education. The limitations of the research indicated that alternative education programs had not been fully questioned to discover what works best or even what works best with whom (Barr & Parrett, 1995).

Raywid (1998) agreed that many states created alternative education programs for students who were labeled as "problem students." She maintained that alternative education programs evolved as a way to address the failure students experienced in the traditional education programs. Recent safe-school legislation encouraged public schools to provide a safe and orderly learning environment. Public schools were encouraged to use this model for disciplinary purposes. Raywid was concerned that the original purpose of alternative education programs (providing the optimal educational learning environment for students) has changed to a correctional or therapeutic format. She

further explained that schools must understand what they are supposed to accomplish before they plan how to go about it.

Summary

Although research was limited, the Type I alternative education program appeared to be the most productive. Students elected to attend these non-punitive programs where flexibility and student/teacher empowerment existed. The Type I alternative education program typically allowed students to experience success.

Program success in Type I alternative programs had been documented through numeric data rather than faculty members own stories. Numbers alone did not adequately explain why Type I alternative education programs were successful in helping students reach their potential. It was possible that through faculty interviews combined with numeric data that the true picture of program success could be told.

Reporting

The remaining chapters contain the following information:

Chapter II: I provided an exhaustive report of the current alternative education research.

Chapter III: I presented a very rich, thick description regarding data collection.

Chapter IV: Quantitative and qualitative empirical materials was analyzed. Techniques were provided and discussed.

Chapter V: I presented the study conclusions and summaries.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter, the current literature regarding alternative education program evaluation is summarized and at-risk students are defined. The three types of alternative education programs and the necessity to evaluate programs using both quantitative data and qualitative empirical materials to determine program success are also presented.

Alternative Education

The latter part of the 20th century was fraught with educational change. While the research suggested that the most conducive environment for learning is within the regular education setting, the harsh reality was that it was not meeting the needs of nontraditional learners (Chalker & Brown, 1999). Barr and Parrett (1995) stated that the most critical indicators to predict who would drop out of school were those students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, those who were educated with others from low socioeconomic backgrounds, grade retention, and not reading by the third grade. Alternative education programs were programs specifically designed for students who had experienced circumstances that prohibited them from being successful in the traditional educational environment. According to Mary Anne Raywid (1999), alternative schools were designed to meet the varying needs of its students. Morley (1991) echoed

Raywid and added that not every individual learned the same way and a novel curriculum taught differently would assist students in academic success.

The new concept of alternative education attracted a variety of learners during the experimental times of the 1960s. Recovered dropouts and students who had psychologically withdrawn from school were now afforded a nontraditional approach in obtaining an education. This was in thanks to the tremendous social change of the 1960s and 1970s. During this time, many changes and experimentation happened in the nation's schools. Alternative education was a natural part of this evolution. In fact, during this time frame, alternative education programs increased from 464 programs in 1973 to over 5,000 programs by 1975 (Clark, 2000; Houck, 1997; Katsiyannis & Williams, 1998). Although many of the programs that began during the 1960s and continued in operation for more than 25 years (Barr & Parrett, 2001), proved to wane during the next decade.

Due to the political climate of the 1980s (Dunn, 2000; Hadderman, 2000), many education programs were closed due to the "back to basics" movement of the Reagan Era. Alternative education programs were targeted for closure since few students were served. Earlier strides made to engage the disaffected learner came to a standstill during this time.

Interestingly, due to an increase in juvenile crime and school safety issues, alternative education was in the forefront legislatively in the 1990s (Gregg, 1998; Knutson, 1999). Alternative education programs were once comprised mainly of dropouts involved in the juvenile justice system; however, "today the dropout and dropout prevention programs represent the largest number of alternative public schools in the United States" (Barr & Parrett, 2001, p. 175). The majority of school districts across

this country implemented or provided student access to alternative education programs. Although numerous states implemented legislation regarding alternative education, six state examples follow.

Florida

The state of Florida, according to Menacker (1994), expressed the desire to prevent juveniles from entering the juvenile justice system. To that end, the state legislature created the Department of Health and Rehabilitation Services (DHRS) to form programs for at-risk children and their families. In addition, Florida enacted a Community Juvenile Justice System Act in 1993, which required the schools and DHRS to develop alternative education programs. The goal was to address the growing number of school suspensions, expulsions, and those involved in juvenile crime.

Oregon

The Oregon School Boards Association (1990) required superintendents to develop in-district alternative programs. These implemented programs were to maintain learning situations that were flexible with regard to environment, time, structure, and pedagogy. The legal references were contained in the Oregon Revised Statutes and Oregon Administrative Rules.

Utah

Alternative high schools were established in Utah to assist students who work, teen parents, or those on probation. The state of Utah served 72,981 at-risk students in 1992, according to the Utah State Superintendent of Public Instruction Annual Report (1991-92). In 1991, Utah began aggressive programs for the at-risk. These programs included alcohol and drug prevention, corrections education, GED, youth in custody, and vocational programs for homeless children.

Wisconsin

In 1993, Wisconsin Senate Bill 88 was established to create an alternative education grant program. According to the Wisconsin Legislative Council Report (1993), with this bill Wisconsin addressed the needs of the at-risk student in grades kindergarten through twelve. This legislation was designed to provide assistance to school districts in the development of alternative programs. The Wisconsin belief was that through these programs, intervention strategies would prevent pupils from experiencing alienation and increase collaborative efforts between educational, community, and social service systems. The emphasis was dropout prevention.

Virginia

A report of the Department of Education to the Governor and General Assembly of Virginia regarding a study of alternative education in 1994 indicated that Virginia was

dedicated to facilitating the learning process of at-risk students. Through the Code of Virginia, regulations governing alternative education were developed.

Oklahoma

Oklahoma realized the necessity to serve at-risk students and in 1994, through House Bill 2640 and Engrossed Senate Bill number 1108, established funding and criteria for alternative education programs. This legislation specifically called for eight school districts to receive funding as pilot programs. The funding originated from the juvenile justice system in an effort to reduce juvenile crime or recidivism.

While funding increases were legislated, a change occurred in the original intent of alternative education programs. In many instances, creative programming became discipline focused and schools became a place to house disruptive students (Aronson, 1995; Raywid, 1999).

Chalker (1996) provided the explanation that alternative education programming was very much what the school district wanted it to be; it typically depended on the needs of the school district and the students who attended school there. Many researchers agreed and added that alternative education programs took many forms. Programs ranged from magnet schools to home schooling and store-front locations to atypical school hours (Koetke, 1999; Barr & Parrett, 1995) as well as services provided that were non-traditional by design. Morley (1991) offered the following:

Alternative education was defined as:

a) a means of ensuring that every young person may find a path to the educational goals of the community;

b) a means of accommodating our cultural pluralism, making available a multitude of options;

c) a means of providing choices to enable each person to succeed and be productive;

d) a means of recognizing the strengths and values of each individual by seeking and providing the best available options for all students;

e) a sign of excellence in any public school system and community; and

f) a means for addressing the transformation of schools.

Morley (1991) also acknowledged that schools should not be the same, but adapt to the individual needs of its students. He further claimed that alternative education means that students learn differently and those differences must be embraced through innovative curriculum. To sum up Morley's beliefs, "Alternative education is a perspective, not a procedure or program. It is based upon the belief that there are many ways to become educated, as well as many types of environments and structures within which this may occur" (p. 8).

At their best, alternative schools were designed to dramatically change the teaching and learning process:

Alternative education is designed to offer a completely different kind of school experience with a variety of elements that attract the disheartened

> or at-risk student and the dropout. Flexibility and choice are key elements. Instead of operating factory-style, like the traditional school, many alternative programs offer open entry and exit, shortened hours and/or an extended school year . . . It is not enough, however, to restructure the school day; choice for both students and staff in the area of academics is essential. Different methods of instructional delivery such as individualized or small-group instruction, self paced or independent studies, video and computer-guided instruction, and/or vocational components and other support services usually are integrated into innovative programs (De La Rosa, 1998, p. 271).

Alternative education programs enriched student lives in a variety of ways. Duckenfield and Swanson (1992) suggested that students grew personally because characteristics such as self-confidence, a sense of identity and purpose, independence, and the ability to accept responsibility were developed. They also believed that students experienced social growth by the development of communication, interpersonal, and leadership skills. Alternative education programs provided students the opportunity to learn to work with others, develop a caring attitude, and become affiliated with a positive program. Duckenfield and Swanson (1992) further reported that students became more aware of their community, democratic participation, and developed the attitude that they (students) could make a difference in the lives of others. Moreover, because many of today's youth had not been afforded the opportunities to become valued members of society, they could feel alienated with no meaningful role in society.

Teachers played an important and powerful role in the lives of students. It was reported that the positive relationships students built with their teachers was powerful in protecting them from risky behavior (Barr & Parrett, 2001). Their research indicated that it was extremely important for students to have positive connections with teachers. They also indicated that the positive relations developed between teachers and students had powerful positive effects and were more influential and more important than class size or teacher training.

Barr and Parrett (2001) claimed that early researchers of alternative education programs noted that these programs shared similar characteristics whether they were located in isolated or metropolitan communities. These characteristics included: small in student population, designed to address the needs of a particular group, voluntary participation, teaching and learning styles were matched, and they were evaluated on factors other than achievement.

Four key elements must be intact for an alternative education program to be considered successful (Barr & Parett, 1995). Those elements included a clear mission, an orderly learning environment, academic engagement, and frequent evaluations. Raywid (1999) further claimed the flexibility and the adaptability offered in alternative education programs left many of the programs to be viewed as a "fringe" rather than a "fully accepted member of the educational establishment" (p. 47). This has led these same alternative education programs to be required to use more extensive formal evaluation procedures than traditional educational programs (Dunn, 1997). However, it has been difficult to use those traditional testing methods to demonstrate alternative education

program success. A scarcity of literature regarding program evaluation of alternative education programs existed (Dunn, 1997; SEDL, 1995) to understand why or if alternative education programs were successful. In fact, according to the Educational Testing Service (n.d.), large-scale studies of alternative education programs were rare and the true number of alternative education programs in the United States was unknown. Researchers estimated the number of programs from 1,000 (Grunbaum, Kann, Kinchen, Ross, Gowda, Collins, & Kolbe, 1999) to 20,000 (Barr & Parrett, 2001; Boss, 1998).

Alternative Education Program Types

Previous research reported that schools could not be effective with poor students, students from dysfunctional families, or those meeting other at-risk criteria. Current research reversed those conclusions. The updated research on effective schools demonstrated that a good school taught students to read, assisted them in meeting basic core curriculum, increased self-esteem, and helped them meet standards to complete requirements toward obtaining a high school diploma (Teddlie & Stringfield, 1993; The Education Trust, 1999; The U. S. Department of Education, 1998).

Due to the trend of alternative programs turning from innovative concepts to disciplinary programs, three types of alternative education programs were defined by Mary Anne Raywid (1994, 1999). These programs included the Type I voluntary alternative education program, the Type II punitive alternative education program, and the Type III therapeutic-based alternative education program. The lines of distinction between the three have grown less diverse. Because funding increased for alternative

education, mandates also increased. These mandates led to a decrease in program autonomy. The three types of alternative education programs were described and defined (Raywid, 1994, 1999) in the following paragraphs.

Type I alternative education programs were considered schools of choice for attending students. These programs sought to "change the school" so that participating students could experience innovative instruction and engaging curriculum. In her 1999 article, Raywid described the Central Park East Secondary School in East Harlem, New York as the nation's best- known Type I alternative education program. This program addressed student need through a basic belief that the difference lied with the school, not its students. The school curriculum was nontraditional and relied on student portfolios as a method of evaluation plus a "heavily inquiry-oriented" instructional approach. Newman and Wehlage (1995) claimed that this form of instruction resulted in the active engagement of the learner and aided them in true understanding of the material being taught. These programs were student-oriented and personal relationships developed between faculty and students. Students were encouraged to participate in decision-making and were responsible for learning.

Type I programs looked differently in different school districts and included (Raywid, 1994), alternative education classrooms, schools within schools, separate site schools, continuation programs, or magnet schools. These models were defined by Hefner-Packard (1991) as follows.

Alternative Education Classrooms: Students experienced a self-contained program within a traditional school. While attending this type of program, students

worked on self-image, academic, vocational, and social skill improvement. The class size allowed for low student-teacher ratios as well as team and peer tutoring. The instruction was competency based and individualized per student, and instructional periods were extended.

School-Within-a-School: Students usually attended the alternative education program half of the school day and the traditional education program the other half of the school day. The pressure of the traditional environment was decreased and students worked in skill improvement and social skill areas.

Separate-Site Schools: These schools sought to keep potential dropouts in school. These self-contained programs used nontraditional formats to make school a good place to be and one in which students experienced success. Students participated in individualized competency-based instruction. The school setting was small, flexible, and integrated life skills, careers, and academics, which made instruction relevant to the learner.

Continuation Programs: These programs primarily operated during nontraditional school hours. They targeted students who dropped-out, were parenting, or those who needed to attend for other reasons. Here, academic and vocational skills were emphasized. Instruction could be year- round with flexible hours. Instruction was also individualized and interrelated with academics, life skills, and vocational skills.

Magnet School: This program could stand-alone or function in numerous other ways. Students participated in an intensified curriculum area as well as other related areas. A student's talent was cultivated while learning through an individualized competency-based instructional method.

In addition, these programs had other components that helped make them successful. They all considered parents and family as integral components and they made counseling available to students. Students were actively engaged in the curriculum and functioned individually. In fact, when students chose to participate in programs with relevant and high-interest curriculum, they became increasingly motivated and increasingly interested in learning when academics were combined with real-life experiences (Gamoran, 1996).

For any program to be considered a successful Type I program, ways to enrich students must be implemented. Raywid (1994) stipulated that Type I programs should be educational in nature with an attitude of "fixing the environment" rather than "fixing the child." For these forms of programs to continue to enjoy success, they must remain as schools of choice for students with a voluntary enrollment process. Voluntarism was the third essential element in Kellmayer's (1995) list of ten characteristics (class size, program site, participatory decision making, student-centered curriculum, separate administrative unit, clear mission/family atmosphere, flexibility/autonomy, access to social services, and use of technology) of effective Type I alternative education programs.

Moreover, the educational format must not only be challenging and nurturing, but student-centered as well. It was essential for at-risk programs to contain seven elements.

These included a comprehensive approach, improving self-concept, high expectations, social skill instruction, agreement of expectations, parent/family involvement, and learner responsibility (Barr & Parrett, 1997).

De La Rosa (1998) reported survey results showing that students with extenuating circumstances had difficulty functioning in the rigid confines of traditional education. Many students indicated that they "hated school" or disliked their classes or teachers. The alternative education program provided the flexibility and choice these students needed in order to complete their education while dealing with life's burdens. Barr and Parrett (1997) also specified choice as one of their four critical characteristics of an effective alternative school. De La Rosa's study also reported that the alternative education program offered a completely different school experience. Students enjoyed flexible hours, an extended school year, and different methods of instruction that included individual, small group, and self-paced learning. Other components and support services were integrated as well. However, the key ingredient in successful alternative education programs was the teacher (Beasley, 1994; OTAC, 1998; Richardson & Griffin, 1994). Moreover, a community of support, or even a surrogate family atmosphere, appeared to be the single most important factor in assuring an at-risk student's academic success (Barr & Parrett, 1997; Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko, & Fernandez, 1989).

Based on 25 years of research, Barr and Parrett (2001) developed and described three essential components of effective Type I alternative programs. They believed that "when a school incorporates these components into its educational program, success with at-risk students can be virtually guaranteed" (p. 72).

Positive School Climate

Choice, commitment, and voluntary participation

Small, safe, supportive learning environment

Shared vision, cooperative governance, and local autonomy

Flexible organization

Community partnerships and coordination of services

Customized Curriculum and Instructional Program

Caring, demanding, and well-prepared teachers

Comprehensive and continuing programs

Challenging and relevant curricula

High academic standards and continuing assessment of student progress

Individualized instruction: personal, diverse, accelerated, and flexible

successful transitions

Personal, Social, and Emotional Growth

Promoting personal growth and responsibility

Developing personal resiliency

Developing emotional maturity through service

Developing emotional growth

Promoting social growth

The individualized approach of a Type I program not only helped students to be successful academically, but provided a small working environment where students were treated as individuals and not merely a number. Individual, personalized learning was

found to be essential for at-risk students to be successful (Barr & Parrett, 1997; Wehlage et al, 1989; Young, 1990). These programs strived to get and keep students connected to school. Students were motivated to set goals because of voluntary enrollment and choices provided to them (Morley, 1991; OTAC 1994-95; Raywid, 1994).

Type II alternative education programs, as defined by Raywid (1994), were disciplinary in nature. These punitive programs sought to "fix the child." Typical Type II programs were not schools of choice, but were mandatory, often an alternative to expulsion presented to students. These programs were highly regulated with the educative focus on student compliance. The instructional environment focus was "skill and drill" basics with no electives provided. Students returned to their traditional placement once the behavior requirements were met. Unlike the Type I programs, Type II programs encouraged minimal student-teacher interaction. Raywid (1999) indicated that changing the student seemed to be what many educators desired. These individuals viewed alternative education programs as a place to put disruptive students, following an "out of sight, out of mind" approach to education. In fact, many students were told that this was a "last chance" opportunity for an education. This form of placement as a temporary assignment and when the student "shapes up," they may return to the traditional program. The Oklahoma Technical Assistance Center (OTAC) (1995) research reported that students placed in punitive programs were less successful when returning to the traditional program. Both OTAC (1995) and Raywid (1994) concurred that alternative discipline programs rarely led to substantial gains for students.

It was feared by some that when alternative education programs limit choice, the purpose of its "being" was threatened as well as the population served (Raywid, 1994; SEDL, 1995). Moreover, it was suggested that by limiting choice and requiring student participation, the overall success rate might decrease. Reasons cited by Hahn, Danzberger, and Lefkowitz, (1987) were that student motivation correlates with applying to attend school. Those who are required to attend would be less motivated and even more at-risk. The difference in the population that chose to attend and those who are placed in the programs could depress the dropout rate simply because students with severe risk factors have higher drop out rates, even at alternative schools.

Type III alternative education programs were therapeutic by design. Like the Type II program, Type III programs were in place to "fix the child." However, students attended by choice, much like the Type I programs. The Type III programs placed a heavy emphasis on therapy, while academics received less focus. Basic core subjects were provided in the curriculum using an individual approach. Counseling was an important part of the academic day. Students participated in very small classes for personal attention that were designed to be flexible to meet individual student need. The program could take place away from the traditional school or within the school. The major difference between the Type III programs and the other two was that collaboration with service providers occurred. The climate was supportive of students and their behavior was mediated by counseling. In fact, the focus was on behavior and attitude. Type III programs boasted that collaboration with the students' home school to provide a support system for the returning students took place. However, Raywid's (1994) research

demonstrated that while students showed improvement while enrolled in the program, any gains achieved soon dissipated once the student returned to the traditional educational environment.

DeBlois (1994) summed up the brief life cycle of alternative schools from enthusiasm . . .

a) Begin with a small program

b) Run by a small group of teacher

c) Paid for with outside funds

d) Teachers have a lot of freedom to design a program that will work

e) Students' needs are met, original problem fades from attention

. . . to despair

f) Program forced to take other students

g) Students are PLACED in the program

h) Mission of program is muddled

i) Teacher/student frustration

j) Original teachers ask for transfers

k) Unhappy teachers/unhappy students

l) Too few students to justify program

The At-Risk Student Defined

Students who were defined as at-risk emerged from school unprepared for further education and unprepared in skills necessary to be gainfully employed (Barr & Parrett,

2001). It was also estimated that one million students leave school without completing the basic academic core educational requirements completed and 700,000 graduate yearly with skills deficient as compared to those who dropped out of school. Slavin and Madden (1989) stated that factors including individual personality, achievement, home life, community, school, low socio-economic status, attendance, grade retention, behavior, and attending schools with large numbers of poor students could be used to "predict, with remarkable accuracy, which students will drop out of school and which will stay to complete their education" (p. 4). An interrelation of at-risk factors was also suggested by Pallas, Natrielle, and McDill, (1989). They claimed that students became more at-risk for dropping out of school when they represent minority, racial or ethnic groups, came from poverty households, were reared by single parents or poorly educated mothers, and hailed from a non-English speaking background. Still, Goodlad (1984) cited five reasons students drop out of school that still holds true today; large class size leading to student disassociation, adverse effects of student tracking, misinterpretation of standardized test scores, little remediation provided those most in need, and nominal support for minority students. The interactions of these factors were found when a student decided to leave school.

The literature, however, did not offer a universal definition of what an "at-risk" student was or even what alternative education meant. The Institute for At-Risk Infants, Children, and Youth and Their Families (1991, p. 8) defined the at-risk population as "those who are likely to leave school at any age without academic, social, and/or vocational skills necessary to lead a productive and fulfilled life."

Program Evaluation

The evaluation of alternative education programs is problematic; a scarcity of literature exists regarding program evaluation of alternative schools (Dunn, 1997). Because of the innovative teaching and learning that takes place in alternative programs, evaluations should be designed to assess the phenomena that occurred in these schools. Unfortunately, as Dunn (1997) related, "The most unique characteristics of alternative schools are not easily detected using traditional methods and instruments" (p. 2). At the same time, she and Raywid (1983) added that alternative schools were far more likely than traditional programs to undergo formal program evaluations. Raywid (1983) reported from her study of alternative schools that 85% of the programs underwent some form of formal evaluation. She claimed that to be true because traditional schools did not have to prove their existence, while alternative education programs must constantly justify their own. Raywid added that traditional schools would probably be stronger institutions if they participated in the extensive evaluations that alternative education programs did. In fact, she also reported that early studies showed that alternative schools were among the first in America to establish agreed upon, school-wide goals, and routinely measured the effectiveness of programs in achieving their goals.

Clearly, evaluations were necessary to validate claims made by alternative education programs. OTAC (1995) offered other reasons that alternative education programs were scrutinized so closely. Reasons included (1) special funding or grants were often used to support alternative education financially, thus requiring evaluations

and (2) alternative schools were assumed to be doing something innovative and worthwhile to evaluate.

While these evaluative methods seemed cumbersome, they proved beneficial for the alternative schools. Evaluation led to increased autonomy and program improvement (Hickey, 1972; Raywid, 1983). Moreover, Hickey (1972) claimed that, "First, and perhaps of highest priority, is the purpose of internal self improvement for the program, which in turn relates to the ongoing planning process . . ." (p. 2). In order to look at evaluation to improve programs, quantitative and qualitative empirical materials should be considered.

Quantitative Data

Standardized test scores provided important information about each student's achievement as well as how each alternative education program was doing in comparison with other alternative education programs (Dunn, 1997). Because of public scrutiny of whether alternative education programs were valid forms of education, any claim that the programs made must be validated through evaluation (Dunn, 1997). Although many forms of evaluation existed, Dunn (1997) claimed it remained that the measurement of student outcomes were the most prevalent. Many were interested in student outcomes such as attendance, standardized test scores, discipline issues, grade point averages, and number of classes passed/failed to determine program success (Hickey, 1972; Skager, 1973).

A large-scale research project in Oklahoma demonstrated that students involved in alternative education programs showed improvement in the area of grade point average, attendance, number of classes passed/failed, and discipline referrals. These same students out performed students who were similar to those enrolled in alternative programs, but were not enrolled in any alternative education program. This was particularly remarkable since most studies about alternative education failed to include comparison groups (OTAC, 2000; SEDL, 1995). SEDL (1995) also noted that lawmakers must understand the connection between program goals and student outcomes to best determine whether or not to financially invest in those programs.

In Oklahoma, legislatures looked to the yearly OTAC Program Evaluation to determine student success. OTAC reported student success from the following quantitative variables: grade point average, attendance, classes passed/failed, discipline referrals, and standardized test scores to the Oklahoma State Department of Education and the Oklahoma Legislature.

It was reported in the yearly summary written and evaluated by OTAC (1999-2000) that when looking at Oklahoma's alternative programs, differences were noted between students' pre-program and post-program status on a set of four variables. It was determined through quantitative data collection that students involved in alternative education programs were absent less often, earned higher grades, failed fewer courses, gained a greater number of credits, and were referred less often for disciplinary reasons. OTAC also claimed in their end of year report that Oklahoma's alternative education programs "had a reliable impact on reducing students' level of risk" (p. 3663).

Although it was uncommon for a comparison group to be compared with a treatment group (SEDL, 1995), the OTAC report (1999-2000) included an analysis for both groups. It was reported that the students involved in alternative education improved, while the comparison students' performance declined. In fact, OTAC claimed that "eligible students who were placed in alternative education programs became less at risk and eligible students who were not enrolled in alternative programs became more at risk" (p. 3669). All of this was determined through quantitative data collected from the respective school sites.

Quantitatively, alternative education programs appeared to be successful. These programs were evaluated in terms of numbers dealing with absences, grade point averages, pre-and post-achievement test scores, classes passed and failed, and discipline referrals. This large-scale study in Oklahoma demonstrated that in the aggregate, programs were successful; however, it remained undetermined whether or not each program was successful. It also remained undetermined under what instances other than numerical data could programs demonstrate success.

Qualitative Data

Because of the unique nature of alternative education programs, quantitative data collection alone had not demonstrated a true picture of what a successful alternative program was comprised of. Many dilemmas occurred when traditional evaluation tools were used to evaluate non-traditional programs. Alternative schools worked diligently at being schools that were non-traditional in nature. Therefore, to use traditional methods of

evaluation (which were quantitative) to determine program success presented quite a dilemma (Chenowith, 1984). Still others (Ralph & Dwyer, 1988; Skager, 1973) conceded that when evaluations were limited to particular methods, a narrow view ensued.

Although alternative schools were evaluated formally, much more than traditional schools were, broader evaluative methods should be used due to the uniqueness of alternative programs (Barr & Parrett, 1997; Hickey, 1972; Raywid, 1983; Young, 1990). Student need was addressed in alternative schools when it was not in traditional programs. Also, according to Hickey, " . . . evaluations must be designed on the basis of what the alternative school was designed to do" (p. 2). This led to numerous possibilities on what could and should be evaluated. Worthen and Sanders (1987) claimed that because of these possibilities, the focus of the evaluation would be determined by the needs and interests of the alternative education program.

While standardized test scores and other quantifiable data provided valuable information regarding a student's achievement or for school comparisons, " . . . reliance on standardized test scores was not likely to yield enough data about an alternative program" (Dunn, 1997, p. 13). Still yet, other researchers (Stufflebeam & Webster, 1983) agreed that while standardized test scores reported information about a student's individual performance, the quality of teaching and learning remained unevaluated.

It was reported that teachers must care for at-risk students and believed that those students had the ability to achieve as well as holding those students to high expectations. Program effectiveness was jeopardized if these factors were not in place (Barr & Parrett, 1997; Teddlie & Stringfield, 1993). It was believed by Barr and Parrett (2001) that

students performed better in alternative education programs versus their performance in traditional education programs because of the combination of caring teachers and of shared visions. These ideas were mirrored by Sergiovanni and Starratt (1998) regarding what they believed to be true about teaching and learning. According to these two researchers, learning occurred for students when they were actively involved in the process of learning through cooperative work with peers, when the lesson was made relevant in the student's life and they were then able to apply that lesson in their own life, and when learning skills were content- and context-specific. Sergiovanni and Starratt also claimed that teachers must ensure that students do the work of learning. This was accomplished by providing experiences in which students solved complex problems by working together in groups and even by allowing students to engage in class discussions or arguing their point convincingly. These were the most effective teaching strategies for at-risk students because they called for affective and higher order cognitive skills, which included: self-esteem, critical thinking, and organizational skills (Dunn, 1997). These were also behaviors that teachers observed in their classes rather than through their test scores.

One of the few program reports that included extensive attention to the assessment of learning was from an alternative school of the "Foxfire" variety (Bogus, 1995). The Foxfire model has been recognized as one of the models for the federal Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1998). Foxfire-type alternative schools focused on improving learning rather than changing student behavior. The results of a study of a participatory assessment process in a Foxfire alternative program mirrored those found in other educational settings that

emphasized assessment – that student participation in the total assessment process resulted in improved learning (Bogus, 1995).

Eleven core practices defined Foxfire programs. These practices incorporated (or, perhaps, embody) the elements of a successful alternative school noted above, but with a definite focus upon the teaching/learning process rather than on the non-educational needs of students. The eleven core practices included:

1. The work teachers and learners do together was infused from the beginning with learner choice, design, and revision.
2. The role of the teacher was that of facilitator and collaborator.
3. The academic integrity of the work teachers and learners do together was clear.
4. The work was characterized by active learning.
5. Peer teaching, small group work, and teamwork were all consistent features of classroom activities.
6. Connections between the classroom work, the surrounding communities, and the world beyond the community were clear.
7. There was an audience beyond the teacher for learner work.
8. New activities spiraled gracefully out of the old, incorporated lessons learned from past experiences, built on skills and understandings that could now be amplified.
9. Imagination and creativity were encouraged in the completion of learning activities.

10. Reflection was an essential activity that took place at key points throughout the work.

11. The work teachers and learners do together included rigorous, ongoing assessment and evaluation (Starnes, 1999).

The importance of assessment was discussed in two of the cores. Interestingly, "reflection" was called for in the tenth practice, while core practice eleven called for "evaluation and assessment." Teachers in the Foxfire program provided their students with time to reflect on what they had learned and how they learned it during the instructional process. The program philosophy was that by providing a reflective environment for students, the transfer of knowledge increased. The reflection and assessment activities, while frequent and formative in nature, were designed to initiate thought and contribute to reexamination crucial to ameliorating learning, as well as to address accountability.

The Foxfire emphasis on reflection and assessment echoed Dewey (1933), who considered reflection a key to learning. Reflection and assessment, in Dewey's view, allowed teachers and learners to build learning experiences upon what learners know, what they need to know, and how they come to know.

Furthermore, teacher attitude and behavior impacted a student's learning as well as an alternative education program's effectiveness (Barr & Parrett, 2001; Ralph & Dwyer, 1988). To determine whether something different has actually happened in an alternative education classroom, an evaluation of teacher attitude and behavior could be particularly useful (Dunn, 1997). In fact, since many alternative education programs

emphasized the process of learning over rote memorization (Hickey, 1972), it would be worthwhile to develop and include a process evaluation when a program's effectiveness is assessed in terms of student performance.

Alternative education programs, by nature, seek to provide innovative and interesting curriculum for its students. Research demonstrated that typical evaluation criteria such as standardized test scores were not likely indicators of program success or even to determine whether program objectives were met. The research team of Uslick and Walker (1994) found that standardized test scores were not aligned with a novel math enhancement program; hence, lacking validity. Teachers reported that a conflict existed for them between attempting to fulfill program goals and achieving acceptable test scores. Interestingly, Brown's (1992) study found that teachers believed that standardized test scores simply would not be analogous to the classroom focus on learning, student collaboration, and higher order thinking skills that were all demonstrated in the classroom setting. According to Dunn (1997), frustration could occur because little information about student growth and school improvement was provided through reliance on quantitative data. In fact, Dunn provided a clear example of what it would be like to rely solely on quantitative data.

> Evaluating an innovation solely on the basis of quantitative information is comparable to placing a value on a precious stone on the basis of size and weight alone. This method would fail to detect the difference between a diamond and zircon, and similarly, purely

quantitative information about innovative programs may not detect the differences between them and their conventional counterparts.

Taking the physical measurements of a precious stone is a step in the process of placing a value on it, but a jeweler must also skillfully assess the quality of a gemstone. Qualitative methods can be used to assess the essential qualities of a program that may be missed using only quantitative measures such as test scores and attendance figures. (p. 15)

Chenowith (1984) found that the qualitative research conducted in a San Francisco school found what standardized test scores, could not; the unique features of the program were more symbolic than substantial. Still yet, Shapiro (1973) discovered that while no differences were noted between standardized tests in an enrichment program and that of a comparison group, notable differences were found during the classroom observations. As Uslick and Walker (1994) reported in their evaluation of an innovative math program, "Participating in the individual classroom was the only to describe the essence of *if*, *when*, and *how* changes would occur" (p. 7).

It would appear that the more sensitive information provided through qualitative methods could describe the mere "essence" of an alternative education program in a way that quantitative evaluations do not. Qualitative research provided a human aspect that numbers deny. Study participants were just that in qualitative research – participants. These individuals were allowed the opportunity to tell their own story in their own words. Patton (1980) believed that qualitative research had the distinct advantage of producing pertinent information because of the human element involved in this format. Alternative

schools tended to focus on the individual needs of its students and Dunn (1997) stated that fact "makes aggregation of data difficult, intensive qualitative case studies may provide a more vivid picture that quantitative data can portray" (p. 17).

Qualitative research provided a rich, thick description that was imperative when evaluating alternative schools (Dunn, 1997; Raywid, 1994; Shapiro, 1973). However, Shapiro cautioned that the evaluator must ensure that the descriptions provided do not outweigh the assessment needed. Duke and Muzio (1978) provided an example of what happens when too much descriptive information is given. They reviewed 19 alternative schools and found that there was so much descriptive information that the "archival value thus outweighs their usefulness as input to decision making" (p. 464). Researchers typically agreed that if a school had distinctive features, like alternative schools, it was important for the evaluator to offer a coherent description to demonstrate how it differed from the traditional school.

Summary

Students continue to leave the traditional education programs in record numbers. The literature explained that these individuals have commonalities such as poverty, poor academic skills, and even family situations that preclude achievement. These students became disenfranchised from the traditional education program and often turned to alternative education programs to complete their education.

While the literature is filled with descriptions of alternative education programs, little assessment of their effectiveness is noted. What has been noted tends to be

quantitative in nature and has not shown the whole picture of program effectiveness. The literature does suggest the type of programs that have been the most successful. Type I alternative education programs, or schools of choice, have been proven models of effective alternative education programs. Program effectiveness, however, cannot be determined through one method. The dominating research is quantitatively based. To use quantitative or qualitative information only to determine alternative education program success would not allow for the alignment of the program's goals and philosophy (Dunn, 1997). As Skager (1973) stated,

> If we are to go on ignoring process while seeking information on only a limited set of standardized outcomes, selected on the basis of an unexamined and inarticulate core of values, the movements towards alternatives are doomed to have little support and impact. (p. 118)

It was suggested that evaluators include processes as well as outcomes in their scope to demonstrate true program effectiveness. Reliance on standardized test scores and other numerical data was not likely to produce enough information about an alternative program. Numeric data provided information about each student's performance, but was negligent in providing information about the quality of teaching and learning (Stufflebeam & Webster, 1983). Together, quantitative data and qualitative empirical materials collection provided a clear picture of alternative education program success.

CHAPTER III

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

Alternative education programs were increasingly viewed as the solution to a number of student social and emotional problems. As the number of alternative education programs increased dramatically over the last decade, alternative education changed. Raywid's (1994, 1998, 1999) studies described those changes and placed alternative education programs into three basic categories: Types I, II, and III. Still though, little research has been conducted relating to the efficacy of these programs. However, in Oklahoma, the state legislature funded an on-going program evaluation of its several hundred alternative education programs, and the results have continuously indicated that alternative education was effective (Oklahoma Technical Assistance Commission [OTAC], 1995, 1998, 1999, 2000).

The Oklahoma evaluations, conducted by OTAC, were typical of other alternative education program evaluations in that they were quantitative in nature. Oklahoma's evaluations were based on quantitative assessments of program success based on pre and post student information such as attendance, grade point average, standardized and norm-referenced testing, classes passed and failed, and discipline referrals. This data indicated numerically what happened in these various programs, increases and decreases that were both positive and negative in terms of programmatic success. Additional quantitative

analyses were conducted to determine factors related to program success. These analyses were limited because most of the variance across programs was attributable to factors that were difficult to quantify such as teacher quality, atmosphere, expectations (Dunn, 1997).

Moreover, this was not the only way that students were being evaluated in alternative education programs. Individuals working with at-risk students told stories that indicated students improved despite what numbers showed. Often, these individuals were more enthusiastic when talking about the qualitative changes students made more than the quantitative changes. In addition, student surveys that allowed a small amount of qualitative feedback indicated that quantitative information alone was insufficient to identify or describe the factors related to the success of students in alternative education programs (Castleberry & Enger, 1998).

It would seem then, that both numbers and stories were needed to fully understand the impact of alternative education programs. But that was not the case nationally. Reliance on and acceptance of the description of program realities in terms of numbers alone, despite an awareness that these realities were but part of the picture of program evaluation, can be explained in a variety of ways. The dominance of the quantitative paradigm provided one explanation. Ease of access to numeric documentation and the time intensive nature of story collection was another.

In this chapter, the Earhart Youth Academy is described not only in terms of quantitative data but also through a rich picture that provides the qualitative information. EYA staff interviews included stories and examples of student and program success. The student surveys reflected a rating scale of responses to forced-choice questions. How

the numerical data and the qualitative empirical materials were analyzed is discussed as well.

Earhart Youth Academy

The Earhart Youth Academy program was chosen for this study for several reasons. This program turned three years old during the 2000-2001 school year. It had demonstrated excellent student outcomes during the first two years of operation (OTAC, 1999, 2000). Interestingly, in the first year of operation, EYA's quantitative results mirrored those of a long-standing successful Type I program. I found these results fascinating since EYA was a new program. Moreover, the staff were involved in numerous professional development activities and care was given to select a staff with experience in working with at-risk youth. The effectiveness of the Oklahoma Statewide Alternative Program was determined when OTAC (2000) collected data on four common variables highly related to dropping out of school: grades, credits earned, absences, and disciplinary referrals (Table 1). The performance of students in the Oklahoma Statewide Alternative Education Program exceeded that of at-risk students not enrolled in alternative programs. The results of the OTAC 2000 evaluation reinforced those of prior years. Eligible students who were placed in alternative education programs became less at risk and eligible students who were not enrolled in alternative programs became more at risk.

Table 1

Pre-Post Means by Group

Categories		Group			
		Alternative	Change	Comparison	Change
Days absent	Pre	15.35	↘	11.41	↗
	Post	10.54		15.51	
GPA	Pre	1.41	↗	1.63	↘
	Post	2.50		1.52	
Days suspended	Pre	3.19	↘	1.74	↗
	Post	1.05		1.90	
Courses failed	Pre	2.43	↘	1.84	↗
	Post	0.38		2.11	

Note: Directional arrows indicate statistically significant pre-post changes.

During the 1999-2000 school year OTAC (2000) reported that the Earhart Youth Academy demonstrated success on the same four common variables, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Earhart Academy Statistics

Earhart Academy	Pre	Post	Change
Days Absent	20.34	13.09	Favorable
GPA	1.15	2.77	Favorable
Days Suspended	28.15	2.19	Favorable
Courses Failed	2.79	0.07	Favorable

The school district followed Raywid's (1994) definition of a Type I program in that it was a school of choice, the instruction and curriculum were designed to enhance student success, class size was small, and support services were offered to the program's students. The district director purposefully designed a program to be successful. He related to me in a personal communication (January 10, 2001) that:

> A new building was constructed especially for at-risk students. The idea of the school was to be student-centered. The building was constructed with that in mind. The physical environment was designed based on the research from safe schools. The building comes complete with controlled access. High visibility exists in the hallways and there are no blind corners – even the bathrooms were designed to prevent potential problems. Several classrooms are equipped with collapsible walls, which allow for and encourage team teaching – the room size can also fluctuate, but were designed to limit class size. Also, two corner classrooms are set-up like lecture halls which give the feel of a college-like atmosphere.

During the same personal communication, he informed me that he and the site principal "hand-picked" the teaching staff. Moreover, the staff was involved in a multitude of professional development activities (e.g., T.R.I.B.E. Training, P.E.A.C.E.

Curriculum Training, Managing Disruptive Youth, Managing Aggressive Behavior, Classroom Activities that Teach, Engaging Students with the Arts, Designing Thematic Teaching Units, Brain Based Learning) to enhance their knowledge of at-risk youth as well as how best to meet the needs of the students they would serve. This was an exciting concept to me since in the three years I have been employed by OTAC and in the six years I have been involved in alternative education, I had never encountered a district that placed such an emphasis into an alternative education program.

Data Collection

To help determine whether the alternative program was successful qualitatively, several variables of interest were discussed in the interview process. Examples included: class size, effective instruction, experience of teaching staff in working with at-risk youth, individualized instruction, and student connection to the alternative program. The interview questions (Appendix C) were designed as suggested by Kvale (1996). Interview questions had structure, but allowed for follow-up or probing questions that encouraged each participant to provide fuller, richer descriptions of what was asked them. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Field notes were also taken during and after each interview. These notes helped me to make follow-up questions during the interview. Furthermore, the interview setting and body language of each participant was described in the notes that the audio recordings missed.

Faculty interviews were conducted during school hours in a private area within the Type I school setting in the fall semester of 2000. The interview questions dealt with

each subject's teaching background, perceptions of alternative and traditional education programs, and program success in relation to instruction and student learning. Because I had a professional relationship with the staff that was interviewed, confidentiality was not problematic. Confidentiality was nevertheless assured to the participants. The subjects were assigned pseudonyms and the school site was renamed as well.

Observations took place in the classroom or office settings of the study participants. Field notes were taken during the sessions. During these observations, I noted staff/student interaction, the types of instruction used, and/or how learning took place. Study participants were told that any field notes would be destroyed upon study completion.

Numeric data was provided by OTAC (1999-2000) and included student information such as surveys, attendance, grade point average, standardized and norm-referenced pre- and post- testing, credits earned, classes failed, and discipline referrals.

Data collection techniques were varied and designed to gather information from the staff who were involved in alternative education. The following array of data collection techniques were used in the study:

- Observation – Observations took place in the classroom, lunchroom, and during class change. I took notes about activities that the students and teachers were engaged in as well as their interactions with each other.
- In-depth interviews – The program administrator and teachers were always considered key informants. The interviews were semi-structured, which allowed for the exploration of unanticipated topics.

- Documents – Relevant documents were collected from the site. These included state mandated program plans and budgets, student and/or staff handbooks, disciplinary procedures, intake and screening forms, student graduation planning forms, student newsletters, and articles from the local newspaper.

I served the Earhart Youth Academy as their technical assistance provider and program evaluator through the Oklahoma Technical Assistance Center since the program's inception. The staff had grown accustomed to seeing me in their building and classrooms as well as attending faculty meetings. Invitations were extended to me for holiday dinners, open houses, and other special functions prior to the study. The staff expressed their comfort level with me through comments such as, " She's one of us," or "Oh, it's just Lori, she can hear what we're talking about." The comfort level was also expressed in their body language. They smiled at me or approached me with a handshake or hug. This relationship began during the onset of the 1998-1999 school year.

I told the building principal and faculty that I was excited about the reported data after the first year of operation. Admittedly, it was exciting for me to be part of a program from the beginning, and to see such tremendous outcomes. These outcomes rivaled long-standing Type I programs. I believed the selection of the teaching staff and administration were key to the success of this program. I felt that my enthusiasm was apparent to the staff because I voiced that I enjoyed being in their school and I looked like I was glad to be there. Moreover, I listened to what the teachers and the students were doing in class, made inquiries about class activities, and expressed an overall interest in the program and

the individuals involved in the program. It was my belief that all of these efforts helped to develop and promote trust between the staff and me. Based on previous experience, these individuals had the knowledge and assurance that I kept their confidences. It was natural for me to interview and observe these individuals based on our relationship.

Procedures

A qualitative study was conducted to identify the variables that contributed to the success of a Type I alternative education program. A descriptive study of a Type I alternative school in a metropolitan area in Oklahoma was conducted through observations and interviews of practitioners. Six staff members were involved in the interview and observation processes. I designed the interview questions to be used as a guide, as suggested by Kvale (1996). The interview questions (see Appendix C) had structure, but allowed for follow-up or probing questions that encouraged each participant to provide fuller, richer descriptions of what was asked. While extensive notes were take during each interview, the interviews were also audio recorded. I transcribed the interviews later.

The quantitative portion of this study was provided by OTAC (2000). Data was collected from the school site and included each students' pre/post attendance, grade point average, standardized test scores, classes passed and failed, and discipline information. OTAC analyzed the numeric data using one of three statistical means of analysis.

Study Site

The alternative school studied, the Earhart Youth Academy, was considered a Type I program. This program was a school of choice for the students enrolled. The school offered its high school students full-time instructional opportunities to earn credits leading to a diploma. Middle school students were also offered full-time instructional opportunities. Like other Type I programs, it differed from traditional school programs in that deregulation, flexibility, autonomy, and teacher/student empowerment existed.

The Earhart Youth Academy (EYA) alternative education program was located in Oklahoma. EYA, a Type I alternative program, was the newest alternative school in the area and has been in operation since the 1998-1999 school year. During the first two years of existence, the program shared a building with another alternative education program and head start program. A new building was designed to fit into the existing neighborhood and the corresponding alternative school located on the same block. A parking lot was shared by the two alternative schools; the opposite side of the EYA building was landscaped with grass and trees. EYA was located at the edge of a neighborhood, which made it close to a local park and restaurant that students and staff frequented for social activities. The surrounding neighborhood patrons were accepting of EYA because of the 20-year relationship developed by the other alternative education program located on the same property. EYA was also centrally located which allowed students to use many forms of transportation to get to and from school. A total student population of approximately 150 could be accommodated at EYA. At the time of this student approximately 90 students were enrolled. The Earhart Youth Academy staff

included one principal, one registrar, one receptionist, ten teachers, two counselors, one security guard, and one custodian. Other counseling was provided through at least two outside agencies for more specific student need.

Initially the EYA enrollment was approximately 60 students at any given time. The lack of available space precluded the enrollment of more students even though ten teachers were responsible for instruction to these middle and high school students. Typically, Oklahoma's alternative education programs did not exceed a student-teacher ratio of 15:1. However, the end of the 1999-2000 school year was fraught with many changes for EYA. The new building had been under construction for two years. During that time, the site administrator, program director, and school staff expressed their excitement over a new building and their frustrations about the delays in construction to me. Finally, in May 2000, the students and the staff moved into the new location. While the staff and the students expressed their excitement, they also indicated a certain sadness about leaving their former familiar school, one in which they had their beginnings. What made this move particularly unique was that, for the first time in Oklahoma, a new construction of this proportion occurred. The building was built and designed strictly for at-risk students. The staff hosted a very special Open House in May, complete with media attention, area dignitaries, and company representatives from a local corporation (who had recently adopted EYA in the district's "Adopt-a-School" program). During this Open House, students hosted the event by guiding facility tours, giving speeches about the school, and serving refreshments. Staff and students alike had a good time showing off their classrooms, describing the program, smiling, laughing, and exhibiting an overall

enthusiasm that was contagious to those in attendance. It appeared that the students and staff were quite proud of their new school.

Because of the relationship I had enjoyed with the staff, I was more than familiar with the enthusiasm that this group exuded. In the past I heard several faculty members discuss moving into the new building with some trepidation. They all started together in the old, cramped location that became "home." At the end of the 1999-2000 school year when staff and students moved into the new building, fears began to dissipate and the realization that a new building had been constructed for at-risk students. The facility was "theirs;" everything was brand new.

As I entered the EYA building walking through a metal detector (which was a district mandate for all middle and high schools) and was greeted by a smiling security guard, I felt a building full of excitement. The new smell of the building and breakfast filled the air. The building principal, teachers, and counselors were available throughout the building and were greeting and teasing with students upon their arrival. Comments could be heard by staff such as, "Hey, get over here and give me a hug, " "Are you feeling better today?," or "It's so good to see you today – we're going to be doing some fun things today!" I overheard students comments, "Did your daughter have her baby yet?," "Are we going to play Math Bingo today?," or "Man, it was raining hard when I got up, but I came anyway."

A unique aspect of the program was that the students were accustomed to meeting in groups every morning prior to attending first hour, and meeting in groups prior to leaving for the day. The philosophy of the staff was that student problems were dealt with

prior to beginning the school day and students could leave school on a positive note after meeting at the end of the school day. Prior to the move, and when fewer students were enrolled in the program, both middle and high school students met as one group. After enrollment increased, due to moving to the new location, the groups were divided into two: middle school students and high school students. I had the privilege of observing both groups. During the group time, the teaching and the counseling staff led activities that involved social skills, life skills, and various discussions. I observed an activity in which students drew pictures of their families and then shared a story. The two groups came together every Friday for a general school meeting and to help the students and staff to function as a cohesive group.

The school day began at 8:30 a.m. and ended at 1:50 p.m. Breakfast was available to students prior to the beginning of the school day from 8:00 a.m. until 8:25 a.m. Students met with their respective groups until 9:00 a.m. EYA students followed a block schedule by attending classes in 80-minute increments. They adjourned for lunch from 11:45 a.m. until 12:10 p.m. in the school student commons area. Students could eat the school cafeteria meal, bring their lunch, or select from the vending machines. All students had the opportunity to apply for the free or reduced lunch program.

After lunch, they resumed their school schedule. The middle school students attended elective classes that included computer technology, art, and life skills. Math, language arts, science, and social studies were offered as core classes. The high school students attended elective classes such as, street law, art, computer technology, or

advanced core classes. English, science, math, and history were offered as core classes. Students also had the option to join school clubs or service organizations the included Key Club, Junior Achievement, Choir, and Chess Club. Participation in these organizations was high. It was related to me by staff members that most of the EYA students had never been involved in school activities or school clubs in their former schools. Several of these activities took place before or after school hours and staff members volunteered their time to these organizations. In fact, I observed students playing chess after school. Students commented that they never wanted to stay after school before being involved in the Chess Club. One administrator chuckled and said that he usually has to "run them out of school because he has to close the building." During my interview with this individual, I was told that the students playing chess had begun to demonstrate critical thinking skills, were having fun thinking, and were getting along with each other.

The school was unique in the way it was designed with at-risk students in mind. To account for the different needs the students, one side of the school served middle school students and the other side served high school students. The middle portion of the facility was used as the student commons area, complete with a gymnasium and lunchroom encased with windows for easy viewing from any area. Students shared restrooms, located on the high school side. The open atmosphere of the building was even depicted in the restroom facilities. Doors were not found to the entry of the restrooms, instead a row of sinks could be viewed from the hallway. The individual stalls were built at the back and students had to walk in front of a locked faculty restroom. It was viewed

by administrators that potential problems such as student confrontations or smoking would be decreased since a student would never be sure if a faculty member was in the restroom and the non-private areas were quite visible from the hallway.

Lockers lined each hallway for student use. A portion of the building was designed as a daycare center for children of the program's participants. Another interesting aspect of the building design was the counselor's offices. At the end of each respective hallway, a counselor's office was located with a large window overlooking the length of the hallway.

Many of the staff felt they should have been included in the classroom design and several felt their classrooms were too small to accommodate more than ten students in any one session. These simply were not the typically designed or furnished classrooms that one sees in traditional education programs. Two classrooms were lecture style with leveled, raised seating for the students. These two rooms were used for high school students and gave the feeling of a more college-like setting. Both rooms were very large, with high ceilings and many windows that allowed for lots of natural light to filter into the room. Other classrooms were equipped with collapsible walls to encourage team teaching or other types of group activities. The staff was free to and encouraged to make their classrooms and offices comfortable and to create a "homelike" atmosphere, rather than typical rowed student desks often seen in traditional schools. Motivational posters flanked the walls, student projects that appeared to be in progress lined shelves, and a beehive of activity existed in the classrooms that I observed. Several classrooms looked like greenhouses, full of plants to be learned from and cared for by students. Animals

were another important part of the program. It was common to see a teacher in the hallway with a baby ferret, another staff member with a lop-eared bunny, or snakes, fish, and birds in classrooms. The staff indicated that students would become calmer when petting the animals, and caring for the animals gave them a sense of responsibility.

Students and their parents/guardians met with an intake and screening committee (comprised of the principal, counselor, teacher, and a currently enrolled student) to decide if their needs would best be served at EYA. Students and their parents/guardians received program information, a facility tour, and learned of the school expectations. Several forms must be completed prior to a student's program entry. Each student was required to complete a student application form and student contract. The student contract made the student responsible for their attendance, behavior, and personal attitude. Each parent/guardian was required to complete a parent information sheet and sign a contract in which they agreed to work cooperatively with the school, support their child and the school, and keep open lines of communication between the home and the school. They were also given a copy of the school's mission statement:

> The mission of the Earhart Youth Academy is to invite students and educators to share in a supportive and flexible learning community in which all participates:
> A. Experience belonging and acceptance in the midst of diversity;
> B. Learn the joy and rewards of learning;
> C. Master academic and life skills to achieve their personal potential;
> D. Develop independence and the ability to determine their own future;
> E. Practice generosity and understanding in the community and beyond.

An "open door" policy existed in which students could enroll at any time during the school year. Students could remain in the program from nine weeks to program

completion/graduation. A variety of students enrolled in and exited the program for a variety of reasons (OTAC, 2000).

The demographic characteristics presented in Table 3 represented at total of 123 students. The data collected and analyzed by OTAC (2000) indicated that the dropout rate was 14.8%. Staying in the program made a difference as it was noted that the rate was only 4.2% when students remained in the program for at least eighteen weeks.

The staff that I interviewed had 80 combined years of public school professional experience. They were all certified in the areas they taught as well. Teaching was cited as the major profession of those I interviewed. At least one individual had several years of experience in business. The average age of these six individuals was 43 years. The confidentiality assured to them prohibited me from listing other demographics. Six staff members were selected based on the varied educational experience they possessed as well as their experience teaching in the traditional educational setting. Each of these individuals had at least seven years of teaching experience. During the interviews, they all spoke frankly about the program, past experiences, and the students they served. During the classroom observations, I noticed that they were comfortable with me being in the room and it was "business as usual." The students, after being introduced to me, participated as if it was any other school day.

Perhaps the most startling feature at EYA was the "look" of the classrooms. These were purposefully decorated to reflect a non-traditional approach. The classrooms and offices had a "homey" feel. These classrooms were equipped with textbooks, marker presentation boards mounted on the walls, and computers. That was where the

comparison stopped between alternative school and traditional school. These classrooms were decorated with comfort in mind. Students were allowed to work from sofas, recliners, carpeted areas on the floor, or even round tables that seated six students easily. The teacher's desk was not the first thing that I saw upon walking into these rooms. Teachers were sitting with students or moving about the room helping students. The teacher's desk seemed, in many cases, as another storage unit. The staff indicated to me that they wanted to be a "wandering re-enforcer" and this interaction with students helped keep potential problems to a minimum. Strong relationships were formed between the students and the teachers through this interaction as I overheard students refer to teachers by nicknames such as, "Aunt Paula" or "Grandma Helen."

The main office was located in the front corner of the school. Upon entering the office, students were greeted by the receptionist and the registrar. Comfortable chairs were provided for students or visitors. The principal's office was located in the corner and was private enough that conversations could not be heard in the outer office. Students were free to use the office telephone and I observed several students congregate in the office to tease with the registrar or principal. It appeared to me through student and staff behavior that the principal's office was a friendly place. At least one counselor's office was very non-traditional. This space was student-friendly. The counselor indicated to me that the office should be one in which student comfort was the utmost consideration. All of the office furniture, except the work-desk, was owed by the counselor. To help the student's comfort level, outdoor style furniture was used. A two-person glider and a

Table 3

Earhart Youth Academy Demographics

Demographic Category	Percent
Grade	
6	5.7
7	17.1
8	21.1
9	26.8
10	15.4
11	8.9
12	4.9
Gender	
Female	46.3
Male	53.7
Race	
African American	30.9
Caucasian	48.8
Hispanic	3.3
Native American	17.1
Referral Code	
Excessive Absences	4.9
Behavioral Difficulties	34.1
Pregnant/parenting teen	2.4
Adjustment problems	44.7
Recovered dropout	1.6
Juvenile Justice Referral	.8
Other	11.4
Exit Code	
Early exiter	.8
Graduated	2.4
Returned to traditional school	18.7
Continuing in program	41.5
Moved	4.9
Referred to another program	12.2
Dropped out	14.6
Suspended from program	4.1
Other	.8

wrought iron chair and table both covered with cushions of brightly colored fabric created an open atmosphere. The picture was complete with a lop-eared bunny that made the office his home away from home. The counselor communicated to me that the bunny often soothed upset or distressed students because they would pat the bunny and become calmer.

Students and staff adhered to a dress code. Several staff members corrected me when I referred to this dress as a uniform. They indicated that the dress code allowed students some choice where a uniform did not. Three colors comprised the dress code, black, white, and khaki. Students could mix any of these colors, but were not allowed to wear them in a monochromatic style. Students could also purchase EYA t-shirts, complete with the school logo. The principal had explained to me in the past that students understood at the intake meeting what clothing was expected. If students had difficulty meeting the criteria, clothing was donated to them. He showed me the storage room with new and donated items for students.

Interviews of Middle School Staff

I interviewed several members of the EYA middle school staff. Several themes evolved from these interviews. These staff members described their experience in the traditional education programs as structured, confined, and regimented with students acting as "passive participants." One teacher informed me that traditional teachers she knew were "quick to pre-judge students based on student history or family background." She further explained, "While here, they (students) are free to change."

They also discussed how the alternative education program and the traditional education programs were different or similar. All acknowledged that their alternative education program class size was much less than the class size in traditional education. Most of these individuals stated that the average enrollment was approximately eight students per instructor. They indicated that they were free to try varied teaching techniques to encourage students to use higher order thinking skills. Real life situations were provided students to help make assignments relevant. In math class, for example, it was common to find students using fractions in meal preparation, sewing, or measurement. Cooperative learning was also encouraged among students. Many times, the students worked together in class to problem solve. To assist students in problem solving, activities were provided to them that included solving riddles, group projects, or peer tutoring. One interesting point of peer tutoring, as it was explained to me, was that "colors" were gone. When I inquired what that meant in the classroom, one teacher described to me how peer tutoring took place. "Students often move around the room to help other kids – colors are gone. Rival gangs help each other – it doesn't matter who or what you are, they begin to see themselves as family – not just a gang member."

One dominant theme, in fact, was the idea of "family." The staff told me that another difference in the alternative education program versus the traditional education program was the connection students felt through the family atmosphere that the school personified. During the interviews, I probed further with these individuals to try and understand what was meant by their concept of "family." I was told that students were greeted when they arrived at school, that they (staff) find out why students have been

absent, and they want all of the students to succeed. The staff felt that they have built a "community" where students and staff felt an ownership of the program. One teacher told me that students felt a sense of "solidarity" that they had not experienced in prior schools. I was told that students felt connected to school, often for the first time. The group I interviewed collectively agreed that the majority of students they served now wanted to succeed and that was due, in part, to the connection students had with the staff. They believed that the teachers at EYA were "absolutely key to a student's success."

The middle school staff reported to me that their students had a great deal to say about their experiences in the traditional education program. Students told them that they felt they did not belong, they acted out for attention, teachers had no time for them, and others felt lost in a large school. These staff members noted positive changes in these students after enrollment in EYA. Many of the students were defensive in the beginning, but developed peer and staff relationships as well as the "sense of community" and responded positively. One teacher told me that she has seen some students enter as "social outcasts" and develop into "social participants." It was also reported to me that many students experienced an increase in their self-esteem after program enrollment. The staff observed many of the student's scowls change to smiles. Other comments included that students became more willing to participate in group activities, began to make friends, and became more secure about school.

I was most interested in discovering how the middle school teachers defined program success. It was related to me that program success was not defined by a student test score, but rather by smiles on faces and the fact that a student chooses to return every

day. A teacher told me that many of the students come early to help and they "are just like fly paper and that's something since so many of them hated school!" Program success was also defined as seeing students begin to take responsibility for their actions and the fact that they stayed in school one more day. "By providing students with choices, personal power increases and resistance decreases, that is what we do at EYA," summed up the mission of the middle school teachers.

Interviews of High School Staff

Members of the high school staff were interviewed, along with a site administrator. Other than telling me that the traditional education program typically had a "strict academic focus," the high school staff seemed to have difficulty describing a traditional education program. The site administrator communicated to me that little, if any, flexibility existed in the traditional school – it was simply important to "get kids in and out."

The staff members were very vocal when asked to describe any differences or similarities between the traditional and alternative education programs. "Smallness" was a prevalent theme when these individuals were describing how their alternative program differed from traditional programs. Limited class size was imperative as was a small teaching staff to building unity within the program. One of the staff members indicated that "we worry about the well-being of every student and by keeping things small, kids feel like a part of the program. Still yet, I was informed that "the family atmosphere helps us see what kids need." The administrator told me that the teachers really get to know the

students because of the class size and overall size of the school. One teacher told me that the one thing she liked best about alternative education was that it gave students "the chance to change."

Like their middle school counterparts, the high school staff and administrator stated that students often talked about their experiences in the traditional education program. The responses mirrored that of the middle school respondents. Students communicated to their teachers that they felt excluded from activities in the traditional programs, that their teachers did not care about them, "nobody knew my name," or even believed that nobody (in the school they attended) cared or was interested in them. Many of the staff that I interviewed wanted to tell me specific stories that students told them about their experiences in the traditional program. They felt these stories were important because so many of their students came to them with a general dislike of school and mistrust of school officials, yet they still wanted another opportunity to be successful.

Interestingly, these staff members stated to me that they often enjoy the changes that they have observed in students once they were enrolled in the program awhile. Several high students were described as defensive or standoffish when they first entered the program, not dissimilar to their middle school peers. High school instructors informed me that this behavior often dissipated after a student experienced success. They said the change in students was attributable to peer pressure, leadership opportunities, and a connection with a teacher. I inquired about each of these areas in search of more information. It was explained to me in one example that a new student was bragging about using alcohol over the weekend. Several students who had been in the program

awhile shook their heads, told the student they did not want to "hear it," and ignored that student until his behavior improved. The teacher who reported this story to me said that it did not take too long for that student to get the message that his behavior "wasn't cool" to the other students.

Cooperative learning activities were important to the high school staff and administrator. Collectively, they believed that part of their job was to prepare their students for life after high school and that included learning to work together. These cooperative activities provided students the opportunities to problem solve. In fact, one teacher described a group game used in class that not only encouraged cooperation, but also competition. I observed during this game of competition, students were into the spirit of the game and were helping each other to find the correct answers – rather than worrying whether, as an individual, they were winning. I asked this same teacher how, during these or other activities, did she know that students did the actual work of learning. She looked rather puzzled at me as she responded,

> It's pretty simple, I talk to my students about the work they do. In my class we work together, the class is small and I have a real good take on who is doing what. It's important for me to get feedback from my kids, I find that interacting with them is the best way.

I discovered that teachers used alternative forms of assessments such as portfolios to determine what students learned. I also discovered that these staff members relied on student work projects that allowed students to demonstrate their individual depth of understanding. The belief existed that by providing students choice, they will do the work of learning.

When I inquired about a definition of program success, the respondents were quite passionate in their responses; they smiled and were very talkative when answering the question. One individual explained to me that the program was deemed a success when students participated in class and other school activities, when those students who did not get along with their peer group begin to include others in group projects, and when former students return to school to talk about the program's impact on them. At EYA, I was told, students feel cared about and through the bond with teachers, students were turned "into believers again." Another told me that the entire staff accommodated the students and that promoted program success. Students, many who were accustomed to seeing poor grades on their report cards, were now showing them off to anyone nearby. Program success was also described as seeing students smile, hearing them ask for help, introverted students becoming more open, and students learning to use anger management strategies. Finally, one person summed up program success this way, "they come back." Interestingly, these individuals never mentioned an increase in test scores, or any other numeric method, as a way to determine program success.

Student Surveys

Forty-six EYA students were administered surveys by OTAC (see Appendix B). Thirteen forced-choice statements were presented to students with a rating of strongly disagree to strongly agree when asked about their views of their alternative school and their traditional school. They were also asked to answer open-ended questions about their alternative program.

Table 4

Student Survey Results Earhart Youth Academy

	% Positive	% Negative	% Don't Know
Question: When at my alternative school, I feel. . .			
My teachers like me	62.2	15.6	22.2
Listen to me	70.5	9.1	20.5
Safe	70.5	9.1	20.5
Other students like me	63.6	11.4	25.0
Self-confident	71.1	20.0	8.9
Proud of my school	73.3	11.1	15.6
My counselors like me	53.3	13.3	33.3
Satisfaction with school	70.5	15.9	13.6
In control of myself	77.8	13.3	8.9
My teachers respect me	73.3	8.9	17.8
Understood	64.4	8.9	26.7
Other students respect me	57.8	6.7	35.6
My counselors trust me	37.8	8.9	53.3
Question: When at traditional school, I feel . . .			
My teachers like me	44.2	27.9	27.9
Listen to me	53.5	27.9	18.6
Safe	55.8	25.6	18.6
Other students like me	69.0	14.3	16.7
Self-confident	61.4	27.3	11.4
Proud of my school	47.7	29.5	22.7
My counselors like me	40.9	34.1	25.0
Satisfaction with school	54.5	34.1	11.4
In control of myself	50.0	32.5	17.5
My teachers respect me	35.7	40.5	23.8
Understood	54.8	28.6	16.7
Other students respect me	45.2	26.2	28.6
My counselors trust me	33.3	28.6	38.1

When asked what students would tell a friend about their alternative education program and their traditional education program, they responded with a variety of answers. Many students claimed that at EYA, they were like "family." The vast majority of students reported that EYA teachers were "nice," it was a "good school to attend," it was a "fun place," they felt "listened to," and were able to work at their own pace. Of the 46 responding students, five indicated that they did not like the program. When talking about the traditional program, the majority of students indicated that school was "bad," they "did not like their teachers," and a few reported that it was "all right." However, when asked what changes they would make to their current program the typical suggestions were the desire to participate in more off campus field trips and to change the dress code.

Interestingly, when students described how their EYA teachers differed from their traditional teachers, their responses were overwhelmingly positive. Students reported that their teachers at EYA were more understanding, worked harder, showed students respect, were nicer, were happier, and cared for students more than the traditional educators. Because of their relationship with the EYA teachers, students indicated that their attitude about learning had changed. Many merely described the change as "better," while others were more descriptive. The majority of those reporting claimed that they "loved to learn again," and that they "want to keep working." Student said that the EYA teachers provided explanations, answered their questions, helped them, were understanding, and stayed after school to provide further assistance.

Program success was described in a variety of ways by staff and students. Both discussed the impact of the teacher in the program. Teachers, as reported by both groups, were the main ingredient to the success of the program. A familial atmosphere was created by the staff and enjoyed by both staff and students. The staff also created an environment in which students not only wanted to return to every day, but also one where students embraced the act of learning.

Summary

Only through a qualitative study could more complete information about program success be gained. Using multiple data sources (Creswell, 1994) rather than relying specifically on numeric data, provided important data as to why program success existed in alternative education programs. The broader range of perspectives that qualitative research offered helped make this study richer. Interviews, observations, and other records provided participants accounts of what made an alternative education program successful – or even what made students successful in them. Mere numbers would not produce these facts that could not be counted.

All parties were assured confidentiality. A variety of data collection techniques were employed to best gather pertinent data, as well. Program success had been documented through numeric data rather than through staff stories. It is my belief that numbers alone did not adequately explain program success. It was possible that through faculty interviews combined with the numeric data that the true picture of program success was told.

While research has been limited regarding what constituted successful alternative education programs, several researchers agreed that programs must have certain criteria in place to be considered successful (Barr & Parrett, 1995, 1997, 2001; Duckenfield & Swason, 1992; Kellmeyer, 1995; Morley, 1991; Raywid, 1994, 1998, 1999; Teddlie & Stringfield, 1993). They found that several variables led to success, which included (but were not limited to) class size, school choice for students, flexibility, positive teacher/student interaction, individualized and relevant instruction, and input from students into their school day.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This chapter examines ways in which quantitative and qualitative information explain program success in the Earhart Youth Academy (EYA). Each set of data were analyzed individually and then collectively.

Quantitative Data Analysis

While an abundance of research was not available regarding alternative education program evaluation, Dunn (1997) determined that typically what was reported was quantitatively based (SEDL, 1995; OTAC, 1995, 1996, 1999, 2000). In Oklahoma, through the Oklahoma Technical Assistance Center (OTAC), alternative education programs are required to report data in the following categories per student: pre/post grade point average, pre/post attendance, pre/post standardized test scores, pre/post classes passed and failed, and pre/post discipline referrals. Table 2 (as shown in Chapter III, p. 57) reports these demographics.

From these quantitative demographics, we know that students in the EYA program came to school more, their grade point averages improved, they earned more semester credits, they experienced fewer discipline referrals, and they failed fewer classes than when they were enrolled in traditional education programs. They also enjoyed lower

(14.8%) than the state average dropout rate (15.5%) and lower number of suspensions. The data also showed that students who remained in EYA for at least one semester were less likely to dropout of school. Their dropout rate was only 4.2 percent, as compared with 10.4 percent of students who dropped out after attending less than one semester. These demographics would indicate the program was gaining ground in important areas related to student and program success.

At the same time, standardized math and reading test scores of attending students did not show increases. Table 5 reports the pre- and post- scores of the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) of reading and math for EYA students. The test scores alone would indicate that student learning diminished while in this alternative program. From these statistics, the academy could not claim program success.

Table 5

Reading and Math Test of Adult Basic Education Scores

Variable	Pre-Program	Post-Program
TABE Reading NCE Score	48.00	46.33
TABE Math NCE Score	39.19	35.22

Note: Oklahoma Technical Assistance Center, 2000.

In sum, the quantitative data reported "what" happened in terms of test scores and student demographics. These data, however, provided mixed messages in terms of

program success. No inferences can be made from these quantitative data about "why" or "how" scores either increased or decreased.

Qualitative Data

Type I alternative education programs have been described through the literature (Hefner-Packard, 1991) in a variety of ways (classrooms, schools within schools, separate sites, continuation or magnet schools). According to the literature, commonalities existed between these various Type I educational settings (Gamoran, 1996; Newman & Wehlage, 1995; Raywid, 1994). Kellmeyer (1995) summed up these commonalities in a list of essential elements: small student/teacher ratio, program site, participatory decision making between students and teachers, a student-centered curriculum, voluntary enrollment, a clear mission statement, familial atmosphere, flexibility and autonomy, student access to social services, and the use of technology. Evaluation of the effectiveness of program components such as these is necessarily qualitative.

Echoing Raywid (1994), Kellmeyer (1995) and others, overwhelmingly, the staff indicated that the changes they had seen in their students could not be measured by statistics or numbers. The staff acknowledged that student attendance increased, that grade point averages increased, and discipline referrals decreased, and that those variables could be measured. However, they indicated that a bigger picture of program success existed, a picture that could only be viewed qualitatively.

To better explain qualitative program success at EYA, Kellmeyer's (1995) list of essential elements of a successful Type I program was examined by looking at how the academy implemented each element.

Class Size

The typical class size at EYA was approximately 8 students per teacher. One teacher expressed concern that the numbers could increase to 15 students per teacher. She felt with these increases the classes would be too crowded and individuality would be threatened. Several teachers indicated that they were able to effectively "reach" their students and believed that their students bring certain issues to school that might be overlooked in a larger setting.

One middle school teacher told a story of a student who was late for class because he spent the night in a shelter due to family problems. She told me when she taught in the traditional education program, there were so many students in class that she would never have known about this student's circumstances and their potential impact on his academic success.

Program Site

The program site was unique; a new school was designed and constructed specifically for the Earhart Youth Academy. The EYA program was a separate site alternative school, meaning it did not share location with any traditional education program. The staff at EYA felt this was important so that students got a "real feel that

they were enrolled in a real school." Many classroom atmospheres were "homelike" in the way they were decorated. It was explained to me that the idea is for students to have a new start in a new environment that does not look like their former schools. It was common to see sofas, recliners, cushy chairs, carpeted reading areas, and round tables in the classrooms. At the same time, the staff was very pleased that certain design features helped prevent disruptions (restroom designs) and protected the "learning" environments at EYA. The staff believed that the new environment was meaningful to their students and that these students "rose to the occasion" by exhibiting well-disciplined behavior. Several teachers told me that students who attended school at the old site were more polite and seemed to take school more seriously.

The staff worked diligently at making EYA student-centered. Middle and high school students were separated by hallways, classrooms were furnished with comfortable chairs, round tables for student work, motivational posters and student work lined the walls, and animals could be found in many classrooms. One of the math teachers told me that students often walked into her room and look confused and relieved. She went on to explain that many students are intimidated with her subject matter and when they see that the class has a different appearance, they feel more relaxed. Determining the subject being taught was difficult to discern in many classrooms because of a focus on integrating a homely environment with the academic setting.

Students were very proud of their new building. I observed them picking up trash and cleaning up pop spills. One day, the school next door to EYA received a bomb threat and students had to wait outside of the EYA building until they received the all-clear

sign. EYA students were observed watching the other students on their campus and were overheard making comments they were watching to make sure the other students did not destroy their school in any way. One student said, "This is the nicest school I've ever been to and I want it to stay that way."

Student-Centered Curriculum/Participatory Decision Making

EYA teachers developed a student-centered curriculum in which students and teachers enjoyed participatory decision-making. I observed students choosing a group activity from a list they had developed with their teacher's help earlier in the school year. I asked the group why they chose the activities on this list and was told that the list "represents things we are interested in." They also told me that they have learned to take turns in choosing group activities and have found they "learned something new all of the time."

It was important to the teachers to provide students with choices for individual as well as group activities. A high school teacher reported to me that her students seem to "buy into" a project when they choose or help to develop the project. She further explained that while she knows what needs to be done in class that day, giving students a choice of "how to get there has been helpful in getting students to own their assignment." The students at EYA learned not only to work cooperatively, but they had a safe environment in which to risk failure. According to the staff, it was okay for students to fail, as long as they "took a chance."

Voluntarism

While the enrollment at EYA is voluntary, some students still enter the program reluctantly. During an interview with a middle school teacher, I was told that many of the enrolling students have not experienced success, and are reluctant about the program in the beginning. One student entered EYA as an eighth grader. His parents were convinced this was the right program for him; he was not quite convinced. Apparently he was a challenge for the teachers initially as it was reported to me that he would refuse to work, pretended to be sick, and argued with his classmates and teachers. He has been in the program for 3 years and told me that he was never leaving and would graduate from the program. He told me, "I love the Earhart Youth Academy!" Until recently, he was a special education student, but now has tested out of special education.

Furthermore, teachers believed because students elected to attend EYA, the students took ownership of the program in the way that they expected other students to behave and in the relationships they built with the staff. As their teachers indicated, many of these students were disenchanted with school and felt uncared for and lost while attending the traditional education program. Staff reported that students changed once they entered EYA. Students were happier and became involved in class as well as school activities. Students who were rarely involved in social activities and who were uninvolved in classroom activities in those traditional programs suddenly began demonstrating leadership qualities as observed at EYA. Moreover, the faculty claimed that students learned to help each other, even if that meant helping a peer who represented a rival gang.

Mission Statement

The EYA staff developed a clear mission statement that included students. The idea behind the mission statement was to establish a community in which staff and students participate. This community would embrace the differences that all members bring, help students learn to love school, to reach their potential, to take control of their lives, and to develop an understanding of the world beyond that community.

Students had the opportunity to be involved in Key Club and enjoyed the many service projects in which they were involved. One of the counselors expressed to me that the students involved in the club never participated in any kind of organization at their former schools. She also told me that the students would meet with her every day if she let them! They have chosen to give back to the community by working at a local food bank, working with nursing home residents, adopting needy families, and working with the local humane society. The counselor said that she believed that students involved in Key Club and other organizations keeps them coming back to school. In fact, she claimed that, "These kids seem to feel they have a place, a place where they are accepted and their contributions are valued."

Familial Atmosphere

The EYA staff indicated that many students who enrolled in the program were behind academically because they had dropped out of school, either literally or figuratively. These students indicated to the staff that in their former schools they did not feel like they were an important part of that school. The staff used words such as

solidarity, community, or family to describe the climate at EYA. It was also related to me that students kept each other "in check." The best example of this was when a new student began the program and was boasting of partying over the weekend during a morning group session. His peers let him know that they did not approve of his inappropriate behavior and ignored him until he stopped talking about it. The message was loud and clear to him from his peers that his behavior was unacceptable. The teacher reporting this claimed that the student's behavior improved because of peer pressure.

Social Services

At EYA, students were provided regular counseling services. Agencies met students at the program site. Group and individual counseling sessions were provided to students. Examples of the group session offerings were substance abuse, teen parenting, anger management, conflict resolution, and life skills. Students met weekly in their respective groups and individual sessions were scheduled weekly as well. Counselors were available to students for crisis intervention, too. When necessary, students were referred to outside agencies. It was common to hear a student ask a teacher if his or her counselor was available. It was understood that when a student needed to leave class, a signal could be given to the teacher and the student could give himself a timeout or see the counselor if needed.

Technology

To help students compete and prepare for the world after high school, EYA provided a technology class for its students. Students participated in a computer lab where they learned pertinent skills to prepare them for future employment. The EYA administration indicated the desire to fully integrate technology into all curriculum areas to better prepare students to function as a "technologically literate member of society."

Outside of class size, these elements were qualitative. These *essential* elements, imperative to program success according to the literature, could not be measured using numeric methods. These elements were highly related to program success in that they helped explain that other factors had to be in place to determine program success.

The EYA faculty never equated program success to student grades or test scores. The staff interviewed spoke about students who enjoyed coming to school, students who now smiled, students who now participated, and students who developed positive peer and teacher relationships. Moreover, it was believed that the teachers at this facility were the key to program success. The teachers set the tone for the class environment and the total school environment. These staff members gave of themselves. They greeted students, they spent time with students, they met regularly as a staff to debrief each other about students, and they participated in extra-curricular activities with students on their own time. The staff indicated that EYA was a community and worked hard to develop a family atmosphere that was enjoyed by all participants. The students who participated in the student surveys indicated that EYA was "like a family." The EYA environment was inviting to students and a place that they wanted to return to every day.

According to stories told by the EYA faculty, the program was successful even when student test scores showed no increase. The program features that led to program success were important to consider. These features could not be measured quantitatively and if they were not considered, a complete picture of this program's success would be missing. These stories revealed, that despite no increase in students' math and reading scores, success still took place. The qualitative information provided some answers as to why the program was successful. Factors that were found to be the most important to program success were the teachers, the school environment, and the familial atmosphere. While student test scores did not increase, student behavior markedly improved, as described by the EYA staff. These components: teacher attitude, the environment, the sense of community and family, and student behavior could only be assessed using qualitative methods. These are components that explained how the program success at EYA occurred. The way this success was demonstrated could only be shown qualitatively.

Quantitative and Qualitative Combined

The literature indicated that quantitative factors exist that can determine the eventual dropping out of school by particular students. Students who have poor attendance, low grade point averages, failed classes, low standardized test scores, and high numbers of discipline referrals are typically students who are most at-risk of dropping out of school. However, these data could not explain "why" some alternative education programs were successful while others were not. At EYA, the program could

boast several numeric successes: attendance, grades, classes passed, and discipline referrals. However, student standardized math and reading test scores did not increase.

When looking at Table 1 (as shown in Chapter III, p. 54), the total numbers of alternative education programs in Oklahoma were compared to a comparison group of at-risk students. The students in the comparison group do not demonstrate gains in any of the areas. They continued to be absent from school, decreased in grade point average, were suspended more, and failed more courses than their alternative school peers. The at-risk group of students enrolled at EYA made numeric and behavioral gains, due to placement in the EYA. If these same students were placed back in the traditional education program, their results could mirror those numbers of the comparison group. EYA offered to its students caring teachers, an engaging learning environment, and a familial atmosphere. As reported, EYA staff and students claimed that the majority of their students had never experienced those factors and believed those were things key to the success of the program. The difference between these two groups of students is an alternative education program.

The observations allowed me to see "how" and possibly "why" learning took place in this alternative education program. I watched students working cooperatively, I saw happy faces and heard students and staff tease with each other. I saw the community that the staff told me they worked diligently to create for themselves and their students. I heard students refer affectionately to their teachers, which reflected a familial atmosphere. None of these variables could be measured quantitatively, yet they were crucial to program success, according to the participants in these programs.

Looking at this study using only numbers presents a partial view of program success because variables exist that cannot be measured numerically. Likewise, looking at this study using only interviews and observations also presents a partial view of program success. This study required data to be gathered using both quantitative and qualitative empirical materials collection strategies. Both methods can be linked to support what the others claimed and each could explain what the other could not. The qualitative research provided information about "how" students learn and "how" the program has been successful. The quantitative research provided the numbers that were necessary to demonstrate pre/post program success; they presented "what" had happened in the program. Using both methods provided a more complete picture of program success.

Interpretations

Logical outcomes could be explained using both quantitative data and qualitative empirical materials. Both mattered when determining program success; both could explain the outcomes differently. The quantitative data provides the product, while the qualitative information provides the process. At times, the quantitative data provided clarification and support was lent qualitatively. Other times existed when the opposite was true; the qualitative empirical materials provided clarification while the quantitative data lent support. Still yet, sometimes neither could provide an explanation for the outcomes. An example of this is reflected below:

Table 6

Logical Outcomes

Quantitative	Qualitative
+	+
+	0
0	+
0	0

Key: + means that an adequate explanation to logical outcomes was provided
O means that no adequate explanation to logical outcomes was provided

Student attendance and grade point averages increased while attending EYA. I learned through staff interviews and observations that students participated in cooperative learning activities and enjoyed school again. The staff also helped to create a familial atmosphere in which students were comfortable and one where faculty members volunteered their time for extracurricular activities. Students also indicated on student surveys that they were happier in school at EYA, their teachers liked them, they were more satisfied with school, and they felt respected. The quantitative data demonstrated in numeric terms that student attendance and grade point average increased. However quantitatively, no explanation as to how or why that took place was provided. The qualitative empirical materials provided the explanation missing from the numeric data. It was apparent that gains happened, but until the qualitative information was provided, no explanation existed as to why or how these changes occurred.

was apparent that gains happened, but until the qualitative information was provided, no explanation existed as to why or how these changes occurred.

It was reported in quantitative terms that student math and reading scores did not increase. It could not be determined whether learning took place or not. Students participated in small class sizes and received individual attention. They also experienced positive relationships with the EYA faculty, participated in classroom decisions, participated in cooperative learning, and were provided with a safe learning environment. Even with all of the qualitative information available, it could not be determined why test scores did not increase.

However, even though it could not be determined that learning did or did not take place through quantitative measures, speculations exist. Student discipline referrals decreased once they attended EYA. The staff was working diligently with students to help them overcome social and behavioral problems that precluded them from showing increases in their standardized test scores. Students were involved in many activities to increase their socials skills and to improve their behavior. They participated in group activities before and after school, group and individual counseling sessions, and cooperative learning activities (both academic and social). The qualitative information could explain that because the staff was concentrating on behavioral issues before working on test taking skills, test scores did not increase but student behavior increased positively.

Together, quantitative data and qualitative empirical materials provide a clearer picture of program success. They intertwine to tell a story using numbers and words. However, there are times in which neither can explain why something occurred as it did. For this study, they are both important to help fill in the missing pieces that each leave.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research indicated that Type I alternative education programs generated features that were crucial elements to program success. Those elements mentioned in the research were school culture, the organizational structure, curriculum and instruction, and other school-linked services. Raywid's idea (1990) of true educational alternatives was based on the theory that when students were presented with the appropriate educational environment and those environments strove to meet student need, program success was inevitable. The purpose of this investigation was to examine the different ways in which quantitative and qualitative empirical materials best described alternative education program success.

Summary of the Study

Oklahoma's alternative education programs have been deemed a success through numeric data. This was the case for the Earhart Youth Academy. However, this data could not always suggest that learning took place in the program. While certain gains were evident (attendance, grade point average, classes passed, and discipline referrals), student test scores did not improve. Therefore, it was not possible to say learning took place without considering the qualitative empirical materials. The qualitative empirical

materials suggested that other forms of evaluation occurred in the EYA program. Stories that explained why and how the program was successful were told. The numeric data called for the program to be accountable, but only through observations and interviews could the impact of the program be seen. It was necessary to use both quantitative and qualitative empirical materials to explore program success.

Data Needs and Sources

Two forms of data were needed for this study, quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative information from the EYA program was provided by the Oklahoma Technical Assistance Center (OTAC, 2000). The numeric data included pre/post changes in the areas of student attendance, grade point average, courses failed, discipline referrals, and standardized test scores. Student surveys were administered by OTAC to EYA students in which they were asked to compare their experiences in their alternative education program to their former traditional education program. These surveys as well as the other numeric information provided the quantitative insight into the EYA program. Interviews and observations were another important requirement for this study. EYA staff agreed to be interviewed by me about the program, their teaching strategies, and their students. I was able to observe the interactions and listen to conversations between the staff and students, as well.

Data Collection

The collected data included both qualitative and quantitative information. I was able to collect qualitative empirical materials through interviewing the staff at EYA. During the interviews, it was related to me how students feel about EYA and their former programs, how teachers encourage students to learn, that teachers were the key to program success, that students and staff developed a sense of family and community at EYA, and numerous stories of how student behavior improved. These interviews took place in classrooms or offices on the campus. I audio-recorded and transcribed each interview session, with permission of each participant. It was also important for me to take notes during these interviews because I used them for making follow-up questions or to probe for further information. The qualitative portion of the study also allowed me to observe staff and students in their school environment. These observations gave me the opportunity to watch interactions and hear private comments between these individuals that I would not normally be privy to hearing or seeing. OTAC (2000) provided the quantitative data that included pre and post information per student as well as the student surveys. The pre and post data included information on the average scores Oklahoma's alternative schools and compared those scores to that of a comparison group. The scores from EYA were also provided.

Analysis Strategies

Analysis was conducted on both the quantitative and qualitative empirical materials collected. The numeric data was analyzed by OTAC (2000). Five indices:

pre/post absences, discipline referrals, courses failed, grade point average, and standardized test scores were analyzed from the EYA program. The data was analyzed in one of three ways: basic descriptive statistics, repeated measures analyses of variance or correlated t-tests, and univariate and multivariate analyses of variance and covariance. The qualitative empirical materials was analyzed using the interactive model from Miles and Huberman (1994) in an effort to reduce the data, display the data, and draw conclusions from the data. Data reduction involved finding themes or clusters from the information gathered which decreased the large amounts of collected data and placed them into a manageable form. Related themes were the importance of teachers in this alternative education program, the environment that was created, and the familial atmosphere that was inviting to staff and students. Once the data was reduced, the data needed to be displayed. Here, repeated themes were discovered using Venn diagrams. Finally, based on the information from reducing and displaying data, conclusions were drawn.

Findings

The research indicated that Type I alternative education programs had features that included, but were not limited to, volunteer student enrollment, small class size, active learning, and individual and cooperative learning. These features were designed to enhance program success. Research also indicated that the teacher was the key element in an alternative program and students enjoyed a sense of belonging, attention, and a trusting, respectful relationship with their teachers. I found that the Type I program,

EYA, I studied echoed what the related research claimed. Those interviewed gave numerous examples of the student-centered and familial atmosphere that they helped to create. Teachers' classrooms were nontraditional in design, decor, and furnishings so that students would be greeted by a comfortable, cozy setting. The classroom environment was such that students were encouraged to work together and camaraderie developed. The relationships that occurred between the staff and the students were also unique. Students felt comfortable teasing staff and they often used affectionate names for their teachers. The faculty indicated that the flexibility allowed to them instructionally, and the warm relationships they developed with students, all helped to create a successful program. Bucci and Reitzammer (1992) reported that in order for teachers to improve the educational environment, they must communicate that they believe in the self-worth of every child. The staff at EYA understood that concept and used instructional strategies to address the learning needs of their students.

Students who participated in the student survey expressed how they felt about their school and the staff. The majority indicated that they felt teachers listened to them, cared for them, helped them develop a love for learning, and treated them as family.

When program success was discussed, the staff interviewed described program success in qualitative form. They described various students by telling me stories about those who had changed (students who now smile, became happier, were more extroverted), but summed up program success with the explanation that EYA was a school in which students wanted to return to every day. Staff interviews, student/teacher observations, and student surveys provided important information to help validate

program success. It provided a missing piece. While the numeric data from EYA showed many gains, the reading and math scores did not increase. Some would claim that the program was not successful if these scores did not increase, still others would look at the rest of the quantitative or qualitative picture and decide otherwise. Those who worked day to day with these students insisted that program success could not be described by the use of only numbers. They saw positive changes in students that numeric data collection missed. It appeared that program success occurred, even for those students whose test scores did not increase. To determine program success, it was necessary to use both forms of data collection, as both were important tools.

Conclusions

Quantitative and qualitative research brought valuable information to this study. The importance of both methods to evaluate program success was necessary; one method provided accountability through numbers collection and the other provided an explanation of how success took place. Logical outcomes were discussed from Table 6. While the quantitative data clarified outcomes, the qualitative information provided support. Naturally, when the qualitative empirical materials provided clarification, the quantitative data provided support. Times existed when neither could provide an explanation for the outcomes.

Earhart Youth Academy demonstrated accountability numerically. While these numbers alone could not explain program success, they provided another way to demonstrate program success. The numbers showed where the student was prior to

entering the program and if the student progressed during the course of the school year while enrolled in the program. The academy could boast success in attendance, grades, classes passed, and discipline referrals. These numbers were important because the way program success in Oklahoma is currently defined is through quantitative means. Alternative education program survival is contingent upon being able to demonstrate that students are coming to these programs, that they are increasing grade point averages and passing classes, and that programs are helping students to decrease discipline referrals. Quantitative data is an easily collected and a time efficient method of gaining information on program success. However, it does not explain how a program is successful.

Qualitative empirical materials collection helped to explain how the Earhart Youth Academy was successful. Staff interviews provided stories to explain student progress, the environment, and how success was achieved at EYA. These were things that could not be measured, but were important to program success. Qualitative empirical materials collection is time consuming, but provides information that numbers would never reveal. The staff involved in this study never described success in terms of numbers, but reveled in their descriptions of students who had turned their lives around and enjoyed coming to school. These are stories imperative to showing how programs are successful. Even though the math and reading scores of the EYA students did not improve, students were coming to the program, they were observably happier, were part of a community, and felt they belonged which many had never experienced in school. Still, stories were but a portion of explaining program success.

The elements imperative to program success: school culture, organizational structure, curriculum and instruction, and other school-linked services were looked at in quantitative and qualitative terms. The school culture at EYA was very different than a traditional program. OTAC (2000) reported that when answering the forced choice questions, students responded positively about how they felt when at their alternative school. The average of these responses was 70% from the students. They felt that teachers liked and respected them, felt they were listened to, that they were safe, and they were proud of their school, and satisfied with school. When responding to the same questions about their former traditional program, students responded with an average of 48%. That information explained what students felt about the school culture, but it did not explain how and why this took place. Stories told by EYA staff explained the culture. The staff created a warm, caring environment in which students thrived.

The Earhart Youth Academy, its students, and its staff can all be described as special. From the moment one enters EYA, the familial atmosphere and non-traditional school environment are evident. The students who attend EYA are special. Special in their at-risk~~kness~~s, in their desire to be in a school, in their willingness to learn, and in their effort to work in the community called EYA. They have learned to work cooperatively, often crossing color and gang lines for the good of their school community. The EYA staff are also special. They express care and concern for one another and their students. They have worked diligently to create a safe, home-like environment in which students are not afraid to take a chance. They involve students in classroom choices and volunteer their own time for extracurricular activities. The relationships between the staff and the

students are returned through personal interactions that are not only seen, but are heard. The specialness of this learning community makes it unique.

The organizational structure of EYA was a Type I program. OTAC (2000) reported that Type I programs enjoyed more success than Type II programs. Their research showed that punitive programs do not demonstrate the numeric gains that the Type I programs do. EYA, a school of choice, emphasized a student-centered curriculum and provided students opportunities for decision-making. The outcomes of this were that students exhibited improved behaviors, became more socially appropriate, learned to work in a group, and learned to love school.

Curriculum and instruction were quantifiable through student test scores, grade point averages, discipline referrals, and attendance. Quantitatively, the test scores did not increase, so it could not be established that learning took place. However, qualitatively, because of the caring teachers, engaging curriculum, and individual instruction, students benefited.

OTAC (2000) noted that students participated in two counseling sessions per day that they were enrolled. No other numeric data was collected regarding school-linked services. Students did participate in after-school activities, school clubs, and were provided counseling opportunities. Staff indicated that these activities were imperative to helping the students have ownership of their school as well as addressing personal problems.

It was apparent that both quantitative and qualitative research should be conducted to describe alternative education program success. Quantitative data provided

information on the type of student prone to be at-risk of dropping out of school. It also provided pertinent information about where a student was academically before alternative placement and where a student was academically after alternative placement. Qualitative empirical materials helped explain why EYA was a successful alternative education program. Staff interviews and observations assisted in reporting substantive information that filled in any gaps left by the quantitative data. Both forms of data collection were found to be important in explaining alternative education program success.

Discussion

Certain limitations of this study existed. The research included one Type I alternative education program, a relatively small interview sample, and no student interviews were conducted. However, EYA was a Type I alternative education program and paralleled the research regarding what should be in place for a successful program.

Oklahoma recognized the need to develop alternative education programs to recover those who had dropped out as well as to prevent further dropouts. Certain criteria were put in place to assist schools in determining which students were the most at-risk. The research listed three forms of alternative education programming, Types, I, II, and III. Because research described Type I programs as the best method to determine program success, a Type I alternative education program was studied.

Raywid (1994) pointed out that the best opportunity to achieve program success was provided through Type I alternative education programs. The variety of educational options and student/teacher relationships were noted as key features in the development

of a successful program. However, it was also made evident in the research that a lack of data existed to determine what made an alternative education program successful. Most of the research conducted dealt with program success in numeric terms. The small amount of qualitative research available indicated that students experienced success in non-numeric ways, thus leading to another way to determine program success.

Typically program success was described if an alternative education program demonstrated positive gains in the areas of student attendance, grade point average, discipline referrals, pre- and post- testing, credits earned, and classes failed. However, success was determined in other ways, too. While guaranteeing the success of any program would be an impossible task, the research indicated that certain features must be in place in any alternative program to lead to program success. Smith, Gregory, and Pugh (1981) reported that students in alternative education programs claimed that they were satisfied with their alternative school as well as believed that their needs would be meet more than the needs of their traditional school peer group. Moreover, in Castleberry's and Enger's (1998) study, alternative education students were interviewed. The purpose of their study was to determine students' perceptions of success. It was discovered that students favored their alternative education program over the traditional education program because their teachers listened, worked one-on-one with them, were helpful, cared, showed students respect, were like family, believed in them, and were flexible. Interestingly, these concepts mirrored the responses found in the OTAC (2000) student survey.

Lange (1998) claimed that teachers reported a higher level of satisfaction when working in an alternative school environment. She also discovered that teachers in alternative schools enjoyed the ability to be flexible and creative. It was also revealed that these teachers used small-group instruction, worked with students one-on-one, and socialized with their students more than their traditional school counterparts. The staff interviewed in this study verified Lange's research. Furthermore, it was discovered that the Earhart Youth Academy staff involved their students in active learning as they engaged them through instructional techniques. It was important to teachers for students to perform the act of learning by demonstrating higher order thinking skills, understanding concepts presented, and relating the knowledge learned to the outside world. They followed the model dictated by Sergiovanni and Starratt (1998) that students learned best when they were active participants in their learning process.

The EYA program data was compared to Oklahoma's alternative education programs and to a comparison group of students who were determined to be at-risk, but were not involved in any form of alternative education program. Several members of the EYA staff were interviewed about program success and students were administered a survey by OTAC (2000) to discuss program success as well.

Implications and Future Research

In theory, effective teaching strategies were believed to provoke student learning. It was apparent through observations that EYA teachers put effective teaching strategies in place to help students learn. The instructional techniques that these teachers put in

place were nontraditional. Students were often grouped together to encourage cooperative learning as well as to encourage working cooperatively with one another. Sometimes texts were used, but more often teacher-created materials, manipulative materials, and games were used to assist students in understanding concepts. The teaching strategies engaged students in the learning process, further leading to program success.

Traditional education programs have much to learn from alternative education programs. The research showed that when students were actively engaged in the learning process, educational programs were more successful. Type I alternative education programs have been defined and the research described the elements that should be in place for an alternative education program to experience success. Still, some alternative education programs fall into the Type II category. The research has shown that punitive Type II programs have not been successful, still many school districts use these types of programs as alternative forms of education. While an abundance of qualitative studies have not been conducted in the area of alternative education, research has demonstrated what makes an alternative education program successful.

Realizing that alternative education programs can be successful by providing students with appropriate teachers, student-centered curriculums, familial atmospheres, active learning, decision making opportunities, small class sizes, and support services, any school district could establish an effective Type I program. Putting those factors into practice not only personalizes an alternative education program, but also establishes a community in which students and teachers prosper.

The quantitative data for this study was readily available. Typically, program success had been demonstrated through quantitative indices such as the number of days absent, credits earned, course grades, achievement test scores, etc. While these indices were easily aggregated and analyzed, they failed to provide information on other ways in which students demonstrated improvement, and no information was provided as to the reasons for program success or lack of success.

Similar measurement issues were debated by researchers in the quantitative and qualitative paradigms. According to Punch (1988), quantitative data collection "is about how the variables are to be measured" and quantitative data analysis "is about how the measurements of the variables are to be analyzed" (p. 59). Denzin and Linclon (1994) and Creswell (1994) claimed that the qualitative researcher would be more likely to use "multiple data sources" in a study. Due to the nature of the data, the qualitative researcher used a broader array of materials in any study than did the quantitative researcher, who relied on numeric data (or information that can be quantified) alone.

Creswell's (1994) reasons for choosing one of these paradigms dealt with the researcher's worldview, training and experience, psychological attributes, the nature of the study, and the audience for the study. The qualitative paradigm allowed the researcher to deal with ambiguities and often was of longer duration. It was a less restrictive endeavor; researchers used this design because it allowed them to be free in accepting emerging concepts. Punch (1998) echoed the comments of Creswell and added that while qualitative empirical materials seemed simplistic, it was actually quite complex in that the researcher must not only demonstrate great care in the data collection process, but must

also be aware of any biases brought to the research. Both authors agreed that qualitative research reflected a broader range of perspectives as well as offering a more varied and diverse study.

While the unique features of the Earhart Youth Academy paralleled the research, the recommendation of future research was nevertheless made. The direction of future research could involve more Type I programs and a greater number of subjects. A larger number of programs and participants might provide a different insight into program success. Information about student opinion regarding traditional school enrollment was gained through talking with the EYA staff. Using student surveys provided some insight into student opinion as well. Perhaps involving students in focus groups would provide more information in regards to future research. Focus groups would allow the researcher to delve into issues important to students.

The lack of research on the effectiveness of alternative education programs presented a problem when looking to site or find comparisons of program effectiveness. While literature existed regarding features that alternative education programs should have in place to be considered effective, little research existed on the effectiveness of alternative education. Further research to show how alternative education programs are successful would be beneficial.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

RUBRIC TABLE

OKLAHOMA TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER (OTAC) STANDARDS FOR EVALUATION – 17 CRITERIA FOR ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

	1 Non Compliance	2 Minimal Compliance	3 Satisfactory	4 Excellent	5 Exemplary
Intake and Screening	No intake or screening; forced participation; administration only in charge of placement	Criteria ignored or circumvented and/or inappropriate population identified and served	Written criteria identifying appropriate population in place; "takes all comers"	True committee decision; appropriate at-risk population identified and served	Placement team assesses and matches needs to services; appropriate number served
State and Local Collaboration	No Collaboration	Has vague knowledge of agencies; used as needed	Has isolated meetings with community agencies	Has advisory group; has regular meetings; sporadic services	Provides regular services with outside agencies; meetings held
Individualized Instruction	Same approach, same place	Has one of the four in #5	Has two of the four in #5	Has three of the four in #5	Has approach, pace, assessment, and relevancy matched to learner
Counseling and Social Services	No specific time and qualified person devoted to counseling	Provides regularly scheduled counseling; fewer than one session per two weeks; or uses an under qualified person	Group or individual sessions held at least once per week with a qualified person	Weekly group and individual with a good referral process in place	Weekly group and individual counseling with additional program features
Graduation Plan	No Plan	Transcript check	Individual plan with copy of transcript in student folder	Individualized plan with student participation	Student participation; periodic review; appropriate student progress
Life Skills	Not evident in alternative education	Knowledge level only	Infused into instruction to a minimum degree	Infused into instruction to a moderate degree	Infused into instruction to an exemplary degree
Self-Evaluation	Not Met	Incomplete data, written evaluation, or submitted late	Complete data, several errors; submitted on time	Complete with minimal errors, submitted on time	All parts complete, accurate, and submitted on time
Effective Instruction	Same curriculum and strategies used in traditional school	One dimensional; CAI, API, or other packaged curriculum	Fosters interaction with other students and curriculum	Student has input in learning activities; interests and competencies considered	Active learning; varied curriculum; acceleration encouraged; student achievement high
Arts Education	Not evident in alternative education	Knowledge level only	Infused into instruction to a minimum degree	Infused into instruction to a moderate degree	Infused into instruction to an exemplary degree

Designed to Serve Grades (check all that apply) 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

The following criteria are rated as met / not met

Certified Teachers	Not Met	Met
Courses Meet Curricular Standards	Not Met	Met
Clear and Measurable Goals and Objectives	Not Met	Met
Effective Student/Teacher Ratio	Not Met = More than 15 to 1	Met
Faculty Selection	Not Met	Met
Budget	Not Met	Met
Student Participation	Not Met	Met

APPENDIX B

STUDENT SURVEY

Student Survey

School: _____ Grade Level: _____

Dear Student: Your opinion is important to us. We will protect your privacy. DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THIS SURVEY. Answer questions as honestly and completely as possible.

For the following statements circle the answer that best gives your opinion:

SD=Strongly Disagree	D=Disagree	DK=Don't Know	A=Agree	SA=Strongly Agree

	When at my alternative school, I feel . . .						When at traditional school, I feel/felt . . .				
my teachers like me.	SD	D	DK	A	SA		SD	D	DK	A	SA
listened to.	SD	D	DK	A	SA		SD	D	DK	A	SA
safe.	SD	D	DK	A	SA		SD	D	DK	A	SA
other students like me.	SD	D	DK	A	SA		SD	D	DK	A	SA
self-confident.	SD	D	DK	A	SA		SD	D	DK	A	SA
proud of my school.	SD	D	DK	A	SA		SD	D	DK	A	SA
my counselors like me.	SD	D	DK	A	SA		SD	D	DK	A	SA
satisfaction with school.	SD	D	DK	A	SA		SD	D	DK	A	SA
in control of myself.	SD	D	DK	A	SA		SD	D	DK	A	SA
my teachers respect me.	SD	D	DK	A	SA		SD	D	DK	A	SA
understood.	SD	D	DK	A	SA		SD	D	DK	A	SA
other students respect me.	SD	D	DK	A	SA		SD	D	DK	A	SA
my counselors trust me.	SD	D	DK	A	SA		SD	D	DK	A	SA

1. What would you tell a friend about your alternative program?

2. What would you tell that friend about your previous (traditional) program?

3. In what ways do teachers in this program differ from your previous (traditional) program?

4. How is your attitude about learning different than it used to be?

5. If you could change one thing about your current program, what would it be and why?

6. How do your current teacher(s) help you?

7. How do your current counselor(s) help you?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDE

Interview Question Guide

This guide will be used with the knowledge that participant responses may provoke follow-up or probing questions that cannot be foreseen prior to the interview.

Please tell me about your teaching background.

How long have you been teaching?

Did you teach in a traditional education program prior to coming here?
(If so, how long?) (If applicable) What was the traditional school like?

Please describe this program.

How are the traditional and alternative programs different? similar?

Do your students ever discuss what things were like for them in the traditional program? What kinds of things do they tell you?

Do you see any differences between the traditional program and the alternative program? (If so, what are those differences?)

What kind of changes, if any, do you see in your students after they have been enrolled awhile in your program?

How do you define program success?

Instruction:

Describe your instructional style.

Describe a typical day in your classroom.

How do you deliver instruction to your students?

How do you ensure that students do the work of learning?

How do you define learning?

Students:

Regarding students, how would you say that successful learning is reflected?

Does cooperative learning take place in your classroom? In what way?

Before we finish this interview, is there anything else that you want to add?

APPENDIX D

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

APPROVAL FORM

Oklahoma State University
Institutional Review Board

Protocol Expires: 12/6/2001

Date : Thursday, December 07, 2000 IRB Application No ED0149

Proposal Title: A MIXED METHOD EVALUATION OF A TYPE I ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM IN OKLAHOMA

Principal Investigator(s) :

Lori McGinnis	Adrienne Hyle
2616 S. Richmond	314 Willard Hall
Tulsa, OK 74114	Stillwater, OK 74078

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s) : Approved

Signature :

Carol Olson, Director of University Research Compliance

Thursday, December 07, 2000
Date

Approvals are valid for one calendar year, after which time a request for continuation must be submitted. Any modifications to the research project approved by the IRB must be submitted for approval with the advisor's signature. The IRB office MUST be notified in writing when a project is complete. Approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. Expedited and exempt projects may be reviewed by the full Institutional Review Board.

7

VITA

Lori Elizabeth McGinnis

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: A MIXED METHOD EVALUATION OF A TYPE I ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM IN OKLAHOMA

Major Field: Educational Administration

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, June 29, 1961, daughter of Raymond and Sue McGinnis.

Education: Graduated from Charles Page High School, Sand Springs, Oklahoma, in May, 1978; received Bachelor of Science degree (cum laude) from the University of Tulsa in May, 1984; received Master of Science degree from Oklahoma State University in December, 1988. Completed the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education with a major in Educational Administration at Oklahoma State University in May, 2001.

Professional Experience: Special Education Teacher, Sand Springs Public Schools, 1984-1994; Alternative Education Program Coordinator, Sand Springs Public Schools, 1995-1998; Field Coordinator, Oklahoma Technical Assistance Center, 1998 to present.

Professional Memberships: Oklahoma Alternative Education Association, serving as President, 1999-2001; National Dropout Prevention Network; Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.