

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL PLACEMENT
AND ACADEMIC FUNCTIONING

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The Relationship between Alternative School Placement
And Academic Functioning

A Field Study

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The College of Graduate Studies

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In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Education Specialist


Patricia J. Golden

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TO THE GRADUATE COUNCIL:

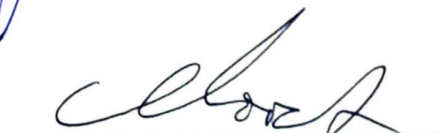
We are submitting herewith a Field Study written by Patricia J. Golden entitled "The Relationship between Alternative School Placement and Academic Functioning." We have examined the final paper copy of this Field Study for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Education Specialist.



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DEDICATION

I began this journey some eight years ago without knowing where it would lead me. I have experienced many changes in my life during that time, and through it all my children have made a very special impact on my life. To Sara, Adam, and Rachel: Thank you for the sacrifices you have made while I have pursued my goals. You have been my inspiration to become the person and the professional I want to be. I love you.

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Abstract

PATRICIA J. GOLDEN: The Relationship between Alternative School Placement and Academic Functioning (under the direction of DR. LU ANNETTE BUTLER).

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study was to investigate whether or not students who were assigned to a small alternative school facility in rural Tennessee revealed both social and academic improvement following their assignment to the facility.

Declining graduation rates and student behavior that was evident in the schools during the latter half of the 20th century reflected the social unrest and rebellion that became iconic of the era, and resulted in increased numbers of youths in the United States who arrived in adulthood unprepared to be competitive in the job market. With estimates as high as five to ten million young persons who could be described as “disconnected”, Aron and Zweig (2003) indicated the social and economic implications to society were immeasurable. While some of these young people became acquainted with the criminal justice system, others were given another chance to become successful through assignment to an alternative education program, which Souza (1999) suggested could avert both the short and long-term social and financial impact that uneducated, discouraged, and often delinquent juveniles effect on society.

Lange and Sletten (2002) noted that interest in providing these options in education increased during the 1970s, resulting in exponential growth in alternative school availability. While alternative school placement has become an accepted practice in addressing student disciplinary infractions in the public school system, little research has been accomplished to determine the ultimate outcomes of these students upon their return to a traditional educational environment.

This study used data for 12 students who were assigned to a disciplinary alternative education facility during the 2007-2008 school year. Records were examined to establish academic standing, attendance, disciplinary infractions, and social behavior for the years before, during, and after assignment. In addition, recidivism and graduation data were reviewed. Analyses included a comparison of one year pre-assignment to the year of assignment, the year of assignment to one year post assignment, and a three year analysis of seven students whose data was available for all three years. Results indicated that assignment to an alternative learning facility can produce significant effects on academic standing, attendance, discipline, and social learning toward a more positive outcome. These results are discussed in terms of their implications to educational success and the importance of future research.

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CHAPTER I

Everything depends upon the quality of the experience which is had.

~John Dewey (1938/1998, p. 16)

Introduction

The American education system has been in crisis since the latter half of the 20th century. Declining graduation rates resulted in increased numbers of youths in the United States who arrived in adulthood unprepared academically to be competitive in the job market; increased student violence and disrespect toward authority gave pause to many teachers who faced heightened regulation on classroom management of their students, school shootings inspired security measures to prevent tragedy, and discipline policies seemed ineffective in motivating students toward success. The behavior that was evident in the schools reflected the social unrest and rebellion that became iconic of this epoch in American history. A number of these young people became acquainted with the criminal justice system, with some becoming career criminals. Others were given another chance to become successful through assignment to an alternative education program, which Sagor (1999) suggested was often little more than social policy during this era.

Yearwood and Abdum-Muhaymin (2007) proposed that the alternative learning environment offered an opportunity to focus on these youths who were at risk of “academic failure, grade retention, negative school attitudes, and school dropout because traditional methods of discipline (i.e., out-of-school suspension and student expulsion) ... exacerbated poor academic performance and contributed to higher dropout rates” (p. 47). Souza (1999) indicated these facilities could avert both the short and long-term social and financial impact that uneducated, discouraged, and often delinquent juveniles effect on

society. However, this researcher pointed out the importance of shared goals between teachers and students for successful transitions into the alternative program and in maintaining a positive school climate.

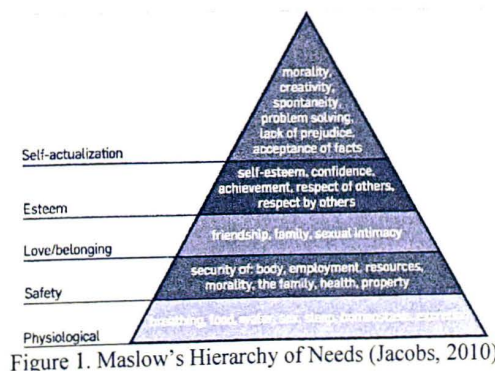
While the progression of these students into the alternative school environment shares commonality, program effectiveness is diverse. Yearwood and Abdum-Muhyamin (2007) reported varying criteria that have been used for evaluation, including student motivation, self-esteem, classroom size, and program structure to determine the impact these dimensions had on self-regulation and learning goals. However, these colleagues suggested that the most valuable insights have been revealed from evaluations based upon student achievement data and student outcome (promotion, graduation, dropout, and discipline), such as that developed by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Positive impact has been noted on attendance, behavior and discipline, reintegration into the traditional school, academic performance, graduation, and postsecondary education or employment (Yearwood & Abdum-Muhyamin, 2007).

Conrath (1986) proposed that these adolescents shared some common characteristics: They were low in self-confidence and avoided school because it was unresponsive to their needs. They were distrustful of adults and did not see the future as either bright or positive. They most often had poor academic skills and came to see themselves as “dumb” rather than unskilled. Their parents often exhibited similar characteristics, with few marketable skills and little self-confidence; they placed only slight trust in institutions, sometimes avoided situations that required change, and had low expectations of the future. These students were often seen as disruptive, and they did

not see a relationship between effort and achievement. They saw their experience as something over which they had little control, especially in their failures and successes.

Theoretical Framework

Maslow (1943) described a pyramid of basic human needs that impact an individual's motivation (Figure 1), the most important of which are physiological. While these needs can be individually defined ad infinitum, there are some generalized needs which must be met, such as the needs for nourishment and rest. When these needs are persistently unmet, they remain dominant in the goals the individual must achieve. The next hierarchy according to Maslow concerns needs for safety; these needs emerge when physiological needs are met and these too may become a focus when unmet. Without satisfaction of the needs for safety, the "attitudes of fear and threat reaction to a dangerous world" (Maslow, 1943, p. 380) are retained, and these individuals are unable to progress to the next level of satisfying a sense of belonging and love. Each level depends upon fulfillment of needs at the preceding level, and in order to achieve one's highest goal, that of self-actualization, all of the lower level needs must be met (Maslow, 1943). While Maslow's discourse was directed toward those who had attained adulthood, the principles of the hierarchy can easily apply to children whose physiological, safety, and family needs have gone unfulfilled.



Other prominent theories promote the soundness of psychological health in relationship to chronological development. According to Marcia (2002), Erikson proposed a theory of human development whereby “an individual’s life cycle is divided into chronological periods, each of which is marked by a crisis in ego growth, a chance to move forward, to remain static, or even to regress” (p. 200). While each of the eight stages offered its own unique psychosocial issue that must be resolved, Erikson’s developmental chart reflected the contribution of the preceding stages of development, as well as those which were identified as occurring later in the life cycle. “Hence, each stage occurs at every other stage in some form” (Marcia, 2002, p. 200). This framework suggested that adolescents faced not only the primary issue of identity vs. identity diffusion, they also must resolve issues of trust vs. mistrust, autonomy vs. shame and doubt, initiative vs. guilt, industry vs. inferiority, all of which are primary concerns between infancy and school age. In addition, those concerns that are primarily adult psychosocial issues—intimacy vs. isolation, generativity vs. self-absorption, integrity vs. despair—must be addressed during the adolescent stage as well (Marcia, 2002; Steinberg, 2005).

Bandura (1977) emphasized the importance of self-efficacy in achievement. Repeated failures were discouraging while successes enhanced motivation. The author noted that “improvements in behavioral functioning transfer not only to similar situations but to activities that are substantially different from those on which the treatment was focused” (p. 195). Bandura further asserted that personal experiences were only one source of mastery expectations; vicarious learning also provided impetus to persist in the efforts toward a goal. Bandura suggested that observing others being successful

demonstrated that even under adverse conditions perseverance could produce positive outcome; these experiences were more valuable to the development of personal efficacy when the consequences were unambiguous. While Bandura acknowledged the ready use of verbal persuasion as an efficacious remedy, the author reported this method had only limited influence in changing one's beliefs regarding the ability to be successful. "In the face of distressing threats and a long history of failure in coping with them, whatever mastery expectations are induced by suggestion can be readily extinguished by disconfirming experiences" (Bandura, 1977, p. 198). Steinberg (2005) further contended that achievement depended upon an individual's beliefs about intelligence—whether it is fixed or changeable, the source of motivation—whether extrinsic toward performance or intrinsic toward mastery, and the level of confidence in his or her ability to be successful.

Statement of the Problem

While alternative school placement has become an accepted practice in addressing student disciplinary infractions in the public school system, little research has been accomplished to determine the ultimate academic and behavioral outcomes of these students upon their return to a traditional educational environment.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether or not students who were assigned to a small alternative school facility in Tennessee revealed both social and academic improvement following their assignment to the facility. The research objective was to evaluate student grade point averages, attendance, discipline referrals, and counseling referrals both before and after assignment. The framework for the school

counseling program and the role of the school counselor in alternative settings will be highlighted.

Research Questions

This study will address the following questions as they apply to the alternative school program under investigation:

Research question #1: *Do students who have been involuntarily assigned to a disciplinary alternative school improve their grade point average during assignment and continue to improve academic performance upon re-entering a traditional educational environment?*

Research question #2: *Do students who have been involuntarily assigned to a disciplinary alternative school improve their school attendance during assignment and continue with improved attendance upon re-entering a traditional educational environment?*

Research question #3: *Do students who have been assigned to a disciplinary alternative school improve their behavior during assignment, as evidenced by discipline and counseling referrals, and continue with improved behavior upon re-entering a traditional educational environment?*

Research question #4: *Do students who have been assigned to a disciplinary alternative school ultimately have a positive academic outcome?*

Limitations

This study employed a quantitative research method which may have overlooked specific elements of success that were not evident in data gathered from standardized test scores, grade point averages, attendance records, disciplinary referrals, counseling

records, records of recidivism, and graduation data. The focus was a small student population in a rural county in Tennessee; as such, the results may not be generalizable to larger student populations or to those located in urban communities. Students were assigned to this school for disciplinary infractions with no element of choice, which may have impacted students' academic achievement upon reorientation to the traditional educational environment. In addition, the alternative school also housed an adult high school, which may have influenced motivation for some students who may have been better suited to that option but who may not have met the criteria for candidacy.

The results of this study were determined by the accuracy and consistency of the record keeping methods employed within the school district under examination. In addition, this study may not reflect changes in standardized testing material or alteration in the criteria for assignment to the disciplinary facility, including reassignment to the traditional educational environment, which may have influenced results.

Implications

This study has the potential to add to the literature which can benefit all stakeholders in the public education system. Boards of Education will be able to examine alternative programs to determine specific options that can be provided within their school systems and, with the assistance of faculty and staff, administrators can identify students who would be most likely to benefit from alternative educational environments to work toward the goal of academic achievement and a successful transition into adulthood. In addition, this study will provide information which can contribute to an alignment of alternative education with the generalized goals of the public school systems: meeting the needs of students.

Definitions

Alternative education school. According to the US Department of Education (2002), alternative school is defined as “a public elementary/secondary school that: 1) addresses needs of students that typically cannot be met in a regular school, 2) provides nontraditional education, 3) serves as an adjunct to a regular school, or 4) falls outside of the categories of regular, special education, or vocational education” (p. 55). For the purposes of this study, this term refers to programs of involuntary assignment that result from disciplinary infractions and/or academic failure. The terms “alternative education center,” “alternative learning center” and “alternative learning facility” will be used interchangeably throughout the paper.

At risk. This term is used to infer students who have disciplinary infractions or low academic achievement.

Disconnected youth. Students who struggle to be successful as adolescents and who are socially, educationally, and economically disadvantaged in relation to their peers (Aron & Zweig, 2003).

Marginalization. Placing little importance on the needs of students who are adversely affected by poverty, academic failure or dropping out of high school, mental health problems and/or substance abuse, and involvement in violent behavior (Hair, Moore, Ling, McPhee-Baker, & Brown, 2009)

Social norms and mores. Prescribed rules of conduct, customary and acceptable behavior representing the values of society. These informally learned rules include expectations for how persons should not as well as how they should behave.

SPSS. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences is a Predictive Analytic SoftWare (PASW) that provides data analyses for research purposes. Both descriptive and bivariate statistics were included in this study.

TCAP. The Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program currently includes the Achievement Test (grades 3-8), the Writing Test, the Gateway Tests and the End of Course Tests (TN Department of Education, n.d.).

Zero-tolerance offense. The Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 mandated that all states receiving federal money for education enact legislation requiring expulsion of students who were determined to have brought a weapon on school property; case by case exceptions could apply. Tennessee law was enacted in 1996: Public Chapter 888 (*TCA* §49-6-4216), which specified three categories of violations that constituted zero tolerance offenses, including use/possession of drugs or drug paraphernalia; assault of a teacher, student, or other person; and possession of dangerous weapons. Students who violated this policy were suspended or expelled, often without placement in alternative education programs (Morgan, 2003).

Chapter II

A shared vision is not an idea...it is, rather, a force in people's hearts...At its simplest level, a shared vision is the answer to the question 'What do we want to create?'

~Peter M. Senge (2006, p. 192)

Review of the Literature

Introduction

Aron and Zweig (2003) pointed out that while most adolescents experience little difficulty during the transition into adulthood, a growing number of youths in the United States view adolescence from a very different perspective. The authors suggested that “these youth are vulnerable to further failures and continued disconnection from society, often resulting in lifelong economic and social hardship” (p. 3). Measurable standards to evaluate the extent of disconnection among adolescents included education and employment; among the risk factors associated with long-term marginalization were poverty, academic failure or dropping out of high school, mental health problems and/or substance abuse, and involvement in violent behavior (Hair et al., 2009).

In addition to psychosocial and behavior issues, the *Gun Free Schools Act of 1994* introduced zero tolerance policies, mandating suspension or expulsion for possession of firearms on school grounds (Aron & Zweig, 2003). In more recent years the policies have been expanded to include other acts of violence; McWhirter and Burrow-Sanchez (2009) indicated this policy was also applied in disciplining students who used alcohol or drugs. Aron and Zweig (2003) considered this policy as making a significant impact on the rise in suspensions and expulsions, even though juvenile violence has declined since the law was implemented. Furthermore, these authors maintained that not all school

districts offered placement in alternative school programs for suspended or expelled students. While most alternative programs offered students the opportunity to return to the traditional education environment, some did not (Aron & Zweig, 2003). Improved behavior and attitudes in conjunction with student motivation to return were central to granting that return, and were deemed more important than academic improvement and standardized assessment scores (Aron & Zweig, 2003).

With estimates as high as five to ten million young persons between the ages of 16 and 23 who could be described as “disconnected”—either short term or long term—Aron and Zweig (2003) indicated the social and economic implications to society were immeasurable. Vulnerable youth who dropped out or were forced out of school without options to pursue education were more likely to socialize with other deviant youth and to become involved with the criminal justice system, ultimately remaining unskilled, uneducated, and unemployed in early adulthood (Aron & Zweig, 2003). According to these researchers, alternative education schools and programs were capable of addressing the needs of this at risk population, yet those needs were not being met. Aron and Zweig proposed that these adolescents and young adults would benefit from interventions, strategies, and services through alternative programs that are designed to focus on their educational and developmental needs. Shirley (2009) pointed out that the United States cannot afford to leave this population unserved.

Evolution of the Alternative School

Lange and Sletten (2002) explained that even though alternative programs in some form have been present since the early history of American education, the contemporary idea of public alternative schools had its origins in the civil rights

movement of the late 1950s and early 1960s. With the advent of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, equality of educational opportunity became the impetus for providing alternative education to disadvantaged and minority students (Lange & Sletten, 2002). These authors asserted it was during the decade of the 1960s that alternative schools followed two paths: those available within the public school systems and those supported through private funding.

Lange and Sletten (2002) described non-public alternative schools during this era as being of two types: *Freedom Schools*, which were designed as community schools to offer a higher quality education to minority children than was available to them in the public school system; and the *Free School Movement*, which was based on individual aspirations and goals rather than emphasizing a sense of community. These authors pointed out that while academic excellence was valued in this movement, personal happiness and fulfillment was the primary objective. Simultaneous development of alternative programming within the public education system was seen in *Open Schools*, which were designed as schools of choice (Lange & Sletten, 2002). According to the authors, these schools initiated a child-centered environment and offered individualized instruction with non-competitive evaluation, and provided the most significant influence on the metamorphosis of public alternative schools.

Lange and Sletten (2002) noted that interest in providing these options in education increased during the 1970s, resulting in exponential growth in alternative school availability; by the end of the 1970s more than 10,000 public alternative programs were documented. The authors proposed that the 1980s offered a more narrow definition than that of the open schools, many of which failed to thrive during this decade;

alternatives became more conservative and focused on remediation in academics and behavior to serve the needs of a growing number of children who were disruptive in school and/or unable to achieve at grade level. Lange and Sletten pointed out that it was during this time as well that magnet schools became another option for students.

Defining Characteristics of Alternative Programs.

Because the term *alternative schools and programs* had a variety of meanings, Lange and Sletten (2002) deemed that an inclusive definition remained unclear. However, there were a number of defining characteristics common to all of these schools, even though the emphasis on each varied. Alternative programs were small in size, promoted individual attention between students and teachers, offered a supportive environment, considered student goals to create opportunities, were flexible in structure, and encouraged student decision-making (Lange & Sletten, 2002).

Raywid (1994) described three types of alternatives: Type I was a school of choice, resembling a magnet school, which emphasized programs and strategies to encourage enrollment; Type II used assignment to the school or program as a sentence rather than a choice, and emphasized behavior modification or remediation as a “last chance” to avoid expulsion from the school system; Type III focused on academic and socio-emotional remediation. Lange and Sletten (2002) pointed out that the number of alternatives doubled in the last two decades of the 20th century, making further description of categories more difficult. These authors noted that the term was applied to a variety of options for education, including home-schooling, detention centers, and programs supported through both public and private funding.

Lange and Sletten (2002) summarized essential elements for providing relevant services to students who were identified as at risk and who ultimately became part of the student population in an alternative program, either by choice or assignment. The authors pointed out that among these attributes were: establishing clear goals for both enrollment and evaluation; providing a student-centered atmosphere; offering training and support for teachers, implementing evidence-based practice in assessment, curriculum development, teacher competencies, and special education services; and creating links to community agencies for providing services to students with special needs. These commonalities offered educational opportunities for students who dropped out of school or who were at risk of dropping out as a result of academic failure in a traditional school environment (Lange & Sletten, 2002). Specific characteristics and strategies for reaching these students included small size, emphasis on caring relationships between students and faculty, and unambiguous rules and expectations; according to Wehlage (1983, as cited in Wehlage & Rutter, 1985), case studies of successful programs for at-risk students indicated “that such students respond positively to an environment that combines a caring relationship and personalized teaching with a high degree of program structure characterized by clear, demanding, but attainable expectations” (p. 50).

Students with Disabilities.

According to Lange and Sletten (2002), students with special needs became an important population whose needs may better be served in an alternative program or school. Furthermore, the authors indicated that these students dropped out of school at a higher rate than their non-disabled cohorts; a high percentage of special needs students who dropped out were identified with emotional-behavioral disorders. In response to

these statistics, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) (1994) recommended that schools encourage learning environments that “respond to the needs of all students, teach both academic and social skills, and build on each student’s strengths and interests” (Strategic Target 1, para. 3). Lange and Sletten pointed out that these characteristics are among those ascribed to alternative programs.

Lange and Sletten (2002) emphasized the importance of specific characteristics that facilitated learning for this population; students with disabilities performed better when high standards of achievement were set and enforced. The authors also considered it essential that these students receive instruction on living skills as well as vocational skills, with meaningful goals toward the transition to future education or work. In addition to encouraging a relationship with an adult member of school faculty or staff, Lange and Sletten recommended that the alternative program provide counseling for these students.

Galloway (2003) acknowledged the criticisms of the alternative school system, and indicated that the process of removing students from the mainstream school also affected the school system’s commitment to serving those students within the mainstream. According to this author, rather than accept fault for contributing to student failure, the system placed this responsibility on the student. Galloway expressed that discipline alternative schools became “a dumping ground for undesirable students and an easy ‘fix’ for the larger problems in education” (p. 6). The author suggested that the reasons for the disconnection from the mainstream these students experienced were not investigated because the problem students were removed.

Galloway (2003) proposed two philosophies in the educational approach to the problems these students faced: separation and support. The author maintained that disruptive and violent students were removed from the mainstream school but without a supportive environment in the alternative school students had no opportunity to improve social behavior. Galloway contended that contemporary alternative programs merged these two strategies, and during the time the students were removed to an alternative setting they were provided support and guidance on the skills they needed to be successful.

Galloway (2003) outlined defining characteristics of an alternative school as being more responsive to a community's educational need, being more focused in instruction, sharing goals between staff and students, holding a noncompetitive student-centered philosophy, having greater autonomy from administration, and providing a more personalized relationship between students and staff.

Meeting the Needs of Students

Shirley (2009) suggested that the curriculum of the traditional public school system “may have lost relevance not only to the alternative student body, but also pragmatically to the global economy of the 21st Century” (p. 16). This author perceived this disconnection as a significant cause of academic failure among all students, not just those who are identified as at risk. The National Center on Education and the Economy (1998, as cited in Aron & Zweig, 2003) agreed with this evaluation:

America's alarming school dropout rate—an estimated 10 percent nationwide and 50 percent in some inner cities—is as vital a problem as any plaguing the public schools... The United States has no real national system of alternative education

that offers out-of-school kids a second chance: What we have is a wide array of mostly underfunded programs that serve only a tiny percentage of this population. (p. 1)

Shirley suggested that to prevent students from dropping out of school, schools must be able to present instruction in such a way as to provide a clear connection to the world of work. This author also pointed out that public education has failed to provide this relevance to real life, which is particularly essential to at risk students who are by definition less motivated by traditional standards. Shirley asserted this population entered adulthood prematurely and unprepared to meet the expectations of a traditionally structured classroom, and the author called for an urgent resolution to arm these students with knowledge and skills to facilitate successful transition into adulthood.

Assessing needs. Smith, Gregory, and Pugh (1981) examined the Statements About Schools (SAS) Inventory based upon Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which identified basic human needs of security, social, esteem, and self-actualization. Security represents the need for a stable, orderly, and controlled environment with a minimum of threat from both physical and psychological harm, yet without being oppressive (Smith et al., 1981). The authors identified social needs as providing opportunities to develop both peer and adult relationships and providing a sense of belonging to a group; esteem characterizes the school's ability to encourage students to feel capable of being successful. Self-actualization reflects how well the school encourages personal growth and emotional maturity (Smith et al., 1981).

Using this Inventory, Smith et al. (1981) gathered data from 13 schools, seven of which were alternative and six were traditional, with student populations ranging from

about 50 to more than 2,800. The researchers noted the schools were located in different sized communities, from small towns to suburbs to large metropolitan areas, with diverse curricular offerings; all of the alternative schools were available to students as school of choice. Smith et al. reported that “students in the alternative schools were much more satisfied with how well their schools were meeting their needs than were students in the conventional schools” (p. 562). The authors reasoned that these results clearly indicated that alternative schools are better equipped to meet the needs of their students than traditionally structured educational programs. In summarizing the full results, Smith et al. suggested that the most significant contributing factor influencing these results was the element of free choice.

According to de la Ossa (2005), alternative programs in education have historically targeted a population of students who were identified as at-risk of failure for both academic and disciplinary reasons. The author noted that while that premise remains the focus of many public alternative schools, some school systems have implemented alternative schools of choice for students who are disillusioned with their educational experience in traditional schools, which have become increasingly popular with students in spite of the negative perception in the communities where they exist. The researcher investigated the motivations for students who elected this option for continuing their education and how the alternative school program influenced their educational experience. However, with the rising numbers of students who continued to be assigned to public alternative schools for disciplinary reasons, the author considered it imperative that the educational system understand how this experience impacted the lives of students.

Even though the philosophy was articulated in a variety of styles, de la Ossa (2005) noted there was general agreement among students, parents, and educators that “the purpose of schools is to meet the needs of students” (p. 25). The author also proposed that even though very little research has explored precisely how alternative schools approached meeting the needs of their students, there was evidence that these schools were more effective at accomplishing that goal than traditional schools, and indicated that schools could evaluate how well they met this goal using the SAS. Results from SAS testing suggested that students in alternative programs demonstrated greater improvement in attitudes, attendance, academic performance, and behavior than when they attended traditional schools (de la Ossa, 2005); however, there were no residual effects when students returned to traditional schools. The author’s purpose for this study was to investigate those techniques and policies of alternative school programs that seemed to result in greater satisfaction for students during their high school experience.

De la Ossa (2005) acknowledged the effect that school policies and structures had on school climate; “school policies and structures immediately affect students, and...their perceptions and beliefs can provide insight that challenges and explicates school policies and structures” (p. 27). It was this personal philosophy that influenced the focus of this qualitative study research. In addition to a report detailing the results of the research, the author filmed, edited, and produced a 29 minute video capturing the candor of students who shared reflections on their experience in alternative school programming. While this study was not intended to suggest views that may be generalized to all students attending alternative school, it did embrace the idea that students themselves have a valid

understanding of their educational experience and often make significant contributions toward ensuring school success (de la Ossa, 2005).

To investigate these concepts, de la Ossa (2005) invited students from eight public alternative schools in the state of Washington to participate in the study; all of the schools shared similar structure and philosophy that encouraged student participation in the operation of the school. The researcher noted that all of these schools shared characteristics common among alternative programs: small school size, low student/teacher ratio, individual attention, and diverse methods of instruction; all were considered school of choice. According to de la Ossa, participating schools represented different school districts, with diverse racial and socioeconomic student populations, and each school had unique curriculum and graduation requirements. The researcher requested that each school select participants with common attributes: willingness to participate, ability to articulate candid responses, comfortable speaking in a group, and relaxed in front of video equipment. A total of 78 participant students were all of traditional high school age. Using a focus group format, the researcher sought to answer specific questions relative to the alternative school experience. Sessions were video taped, allowing the researcher to use a participant-observational approach to data collection.

De la Ossa (2005) identified several guiding questions to elicit discussion among the students that addressed the research questions, which explored the impact of school size on the educational experience; how the noncompetitive environment affected learning; how the student-centered environment addressed individual feelings about education; whether students and teachers shared a sense of purpose; how the school

acknowledged and accepted individuality; what benefits were realized; and what improvements could be suggested, either for the student's school or for high schools in general. Although these topics were not used to exclude extemporaneous data, they did focus on the strengths of alternative programs.

Important themes emerged from the researcher's discourse with students that had the potential to provide the basis for effectively designing both alternative and traditional schools for the future (de la Ossa, 2005). Smaller school size encouraged better communication between students and teachers, and the smaller class size facilitated students' requests for instructional help when they needed it. Participant students also suggested the smaller class enhanced the feeling of community and friendship. Both of these characteristics improved students' sense of support and their ability to achieve academically. While students expressed concern about the negative perceptions of the community toward their schools, their comments suggested support for the structure of alternative programs. Students believed that the smaller size allowed for addressing different learning styles; de la Ossa (2005) included one student's eloquent comment: "Saying there is one way that everyone should learn is pretty ridiculous" (p. 34).

De la Ossa (2005) encouraged students to voice complaints about their school experience and received some poignant responses, from feelings that the school in general seemed outdated and failed to meet even its own expectations, to discussions surrounding a later start time for high school students. Other remarks suggested that some teachers seemed to be bored with their profession, and students sometimes felt overwhelmed with homework assignments. The author indicated that some students

expressed their preference for quality of learning rather than quantity of information, in spite of the current emphasis on test scores.

De la Ossa (2005) articulated the belief that this project confirmed the effectiveness of the more than 20,000 alternative programs and schools in the United States. In addition, the student's candid responses confirmed the belief that student perceptions of their experience can offer important detail for school system administrators in designing and implementing reform. According to this researcher, students who believe their school is unresponsive to their needs will lose interest in the process of education and remain at risk of failure.

Focused needs of dropouts. Adolescents in need of alternative programs have faced a number of personal and educational challenges; in order to achieve positive educational objectives the National Center on Education and the Economy (see also Aron, 2006, p. 7) recommended programs focused on a standards-based alternative curriculum offering credit retrieval, on-line learning, and work based learning. In addition to these academic needs, disconnected youth also needed services to be available through the educational facility: access to drug rehabilitation and health care, personal and college-career counseling, work readiness training and employment services, flexible hours, and day care.

Aron (2006) reported that 39% of public school districts operated at least one alternative school program during the 2000-01 school year. These accommodations were more likely to be available in urban school districts, those with high minority student populations, and those with high poverty rates (Aron, 2006). Yet the author acknowledged that demand for alternative education far exceeded the districts' capacity

to provide services; most districts established a waiting list for the overflow. Aron pointed out the urgency of defining the characteristics of the various programs to identify what gaps existed in the system, where they were, and what needs remained unmet.

The Role of the School Counselor in Alternative Programs

Van Acker (2007) suggested that alternative educational programs have become a realistic option for addressing the educational needs of students who display antisocial, aggressive, and violent behavior while maintaining a safe school environment. The author contended these youth were more vulnerable to negative life outcomes such as school dropout, poor transition into the workforce, substance abuse, involvement with the criminal justice system, relationship problems, and greater risk of hospitalization and mortality. The author identified specific risk factors that contributed to the development of deviant behaviors, including heredity and neurotransmitter imbalances; family issues such as abuse and neglect, domestic violence, and family history of criminal behavior; peer relations, including bullying, social rejection, and isolation; academic failure and adverse relationships with teachers; and community factors that allude to poor social control. In addition, the author noted these behaviors may result from ineffective schooling and feelings of frustration and failure. Van Acker referred to recommendations by the American Psychological Association that effective intervention programs for these youth employed an understanding of developmental and sociocultural risk factors, and based interventions on theory-based, empirically supported strategies with validated efficacy in changing behavior.

A working job description. According to Downs (1999), the role of the school counselor within alternative educational institutions has traditionally been limited to

classroom observations and making referrals to other mental health professionals. The author proposed that this practice suggested that school counselors were not competent to address student problems that were unrelated to academics or college and career. Downs pointed to a distinct definition of an educational counselor as being focused on developmental problems and who is capable of providing guidance, working with developmental issues, and actively participating as a member of the student services team. Even so, many counselors in alternative programs have expressed being inadequately prepared for the disabilities they encountered in that environment, yet were otherwise very well trained (Downs, 1999). The author further asserted that even though the literature alluded to the need for an educational counselor in the alternative setting, the responsibilities of the position remained ill-defined.

Downs (1999) proposed the best description of the counselor's role in alternative education included responsibilities for helping parents develop realistic expectations of their children, helping students overcome personal and social problems, interpreting test results, interpreting special education services to parents, taking part in case conferences, helping evaluate the guidance program, and serving as a resource person for students. In addition to these duties, as the case manager for students the counselor serves in meetings and hearings that determine alternative school placement or Individualized Education Plans (Downs, 1999). Downs recommended that alternative school counselors have three primary responsibilities: Client profile development, including assessment, interpretation, and case management as well as offering a therapeutic environment to students; Consultant to staff, committees, educational planning teams and hearings, and to parents; and Professional development to ensure adequate knowledge for in-depth interventions.

Models of school counseling. Whiston, Tai, Rahardja, and Eder (2011) suggested that just as education has become evidence based in its instructional methods, so have psychology and counseling. Theories and models of school counseling programs have emerged since the 1970s, the first of which was Gysbers and Moore, later revised by Gysbers and Henderson, which “encouraged school counselors to provide a comprehensive school counseling program that would meet the needs of all students” (Whiston et al., 2011, p. 37). According to these colleagues, this model proposed four intervention strategies: guidance curriculum, individual planning, responsive services, and system support. However, the authors asserted there has been little investigation into the effects of school counseling programs, and without strong empirical support key stakeholders could be persuaded to divert the counselor’s salary to other more tangible purposes.

In 1997, Campbell and Dahir introduced *The National Standards for School Counseling Programs*, promoting a coordinated program of academic, career, and personal social development (Whiston et al., 2011). The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) further delineated a comprehensive approach which incorporated the concepts of responsibility and practical interventions (Whiston et al., 2011). Using Gysbers model as a basis, ASCA suggested that a comprehensive school counseling program provided all students with developmentally appropriate guidance and prevention content; involved individual meetings with students for academic and career advisement; incorporated individual and group counseling for students to address concerns or problems; and directed, preserved, and advanced the school counseling program (Whiston et al., 2011).

Whiston et al. (2011) selected 118 studies involving 16,296 participants to examine for empirical value of school counseling interventions using a meta-analytic approach. The results indicated the counselor interventions provided a positive impact on cognitive, behavioral, and affective outcomes (Whiston et al., 2011). These researchers noted particular significance in improving students' problem solving skills, which can be a life-long benefit, and reducing disciplinary referrals, which not only helped the student but decreased disruptive classroom behavior. Whiston et al. suggested that, because of the small effect size of interventions designed to enhance self esteem, school counselors should focus on more important outcomes.

Whiston et al. (2011) proposed that school counselors and administrators evaluate interventions provided through the school counseling program. Furthermore, these colleagues stressed the importance of treatment integrity and using standardized outcome evaluations. Even though the authors were unable to identify specific strategies that affected positive results, there remained evidence of encouraging outcomes. Whiston et al. specifically recommended "additional research that addresses what works, with what students, and under what circumstances" (p. 48).

Outcomes

Van Acker (2007) pointed out the inadequacy of research to establish effective practices for alternative educational programs or long-term outcomes of treatments. This author noted inconsistencies in reports of effectiveness; the Minnesota State Department of Education and Jefferson County Public Schools in Kentucky have both reported positive outcomes, yet North Carolina's alternative education programs have not had similar results. Other research has revealed small improvements in performance,

attitudes toward school, and self-esteem, but incidents of juvenile delinquency did not improve (Van Acker, 2007).

Raywid (1994) also noted similar discrepancies in reported successful programs. For instance, each of the three types was characterized by specific results: early studies of Type II, or Last-Chance programs, reflected no difference in outcome or discipline referrals for students who were assigned (Raywid, 1994). However, student behavior, attendance, and credits toward graduation often improved in Type III environments, the Remedial alternative schools (Raywid, 1994). Inherent to these programs were two major disadvantages: the low student-teacher ratio made them costly, and positive outcomes are often only temporarily successful. Raywid (1994) reported that when students returned to the traditional environment, the troublesome behavior, absenteeism, and/or lack of initiative persisted. However, in defense of the programs Raywid claimed that despite the ambiguities and the emergence of multiple alternatives, two enduring consistencies have characterized alternative schools from the start: they have been designed to respond to a group that appears not to be optimally served by the regular program, and consequently have represented varying degrees of departure from standard school organization, programs and environments. (p. 26)

Van Acker (2007) remarked on several personal and behavioral characteristics of students that may have affected the potential for positive outcome in these alternative programs, especially in the disciplinary alternative environment which is often referred to as last-chance alternative. However, the author also noted that these characteristics may be representative of the profile for students who have faced this assignment.

Van Acker (2007) described empirically supported interventions to affect positive outcomes, including psychotherapy, applied behavior analysis, cognitive-behavioral methods, youth involvement and opportunity initiatives (service learning, academic and cultural enrichment, job training and employment), and social casework. The author pointed out that family interventions were especially successful, connecting families with resources in the community to address social, psychological, or economic needs within the family.

Implications for Best Practice from Existing Literature

Raywid (1994) and Van Acker (2007) acknowledged the capability for alternative education programs to meet the needs of disruptive and behavior disordered students. These environments were structured to focus on individual needs and to provide effective interventions that addressed problem behaviors while facilitating academic achievement (Van Acker, 2007). Both authors suggested that Type I, or alternative Schools of Choice, offered greater potential for both immediate and long-term successful outcomes.

Quinn, Poirier, Faller, Gable, and Tonelson (2006) indicated that investigation into this realm of education “is a relatively new area of study [that] requires development of a body of knowledge and understanding about alternative schools so that meaningful experimental studies can be designed” (p. 15). These colleagues reported the value of teacher-student interaction as an important issue; personal involvement between staff and students elicited more positive outcomes than a similar program focusing on external control and disciplinary measures. Even though the latter program produced academic commitment, both student attitudes toward school and behavior deteriorated (Quinn et al., 2006). Student perceptions of fairness, dignity, and flexibility among staff promoted

attachment and commitment to school, a belief in rules, and improvement in behavior (Quinn et al., 2006). These researchers maintained that students in alternative educational programs prosper in non-authoritarian environments.

Reimer and Cash (2003) offered recommendations for enhancing the potential for a successful alternative educational program. The authors proposed a student population of no more than 250 students, and a maximum 1:10 teacher/student ratio. Furthermore, the school should have a clear Mission Statement and discipline code that is fairly and equitably supported and administered (Reimer & Cash, 2003). Students should face high expectations for achievement and the staff should be totally committed to the success of each student (Reimer & Cash, 2003). Staff must be flexible and use creative strategies for developing curriculum with experiential learning, and instruction should be individualized according to particular learning styles (Reimer & Cash, 2003). In addition to these academic needs, staff should use a holistic and humanistic approach to address the emotional, physical, and academic needs of all students, and should encourage significant involvement of the parent or guardian (Reimer & Cash, 2003).

Dressman, Wilder, and Connor (2005) provided some insight into the complexity of providing solutions to the struggles of students who ultimately have populated alternative programs. These colleagues suggested that “perhaps the real obstacle to explaining school failure ... *lies in the very notion that there is one point of origin out of which all students' struggles spring*” (p. 56). Dressman et al. encouraged future case study research to begin designing a framework to examine school failure. These researchers suggested this approach will provide a more realistic and comprehensive perspective of this phenomenon that has eluded educators and researchers alike. Students

do not present problems that are uniform in their nature or their origin; likewise, they cannot be addressed through a homogeneous approach (Dressman et al., 2005).

CHAPTER III

The future cannot be determined. It can only be experienced as it is occurring.

Life doesn't know what it will be until it notices what it has just become.

~Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers (1998, p. 69)

Design and Methodology

Even though alternative school placement has become an accepted practice in addressing student disciplinary infractions in the public school system, little research has been accomplished to determine the ultimate academic and behavioral outcomes of these students upon their return to a traditional educational environment. The purpose of this study was to investigate whether or not students who were assigned to a small alternative school facility in Tennessee revealed both social and academic improvement following their assignment to the facility. The research objective was to evaluate student grade point averages, attendance, discipline referrals, and counseling referrals, both before and after assignment, and to evaluate recidivism and rates of graduation and school dropout.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The research focused on the following questions as they apply to the alternative school program under investigation:

Research question #1: *Do students who have been involuntarily assigned to a disciplinary alternative school improve their grade point average during assignment and continue to improve academic performance upon re-entering a traditional educational environment?*

Research question #2: *Do students who have been involuntarily assigned to a disciplinary alternative school improve their school attendance during assignment and*

continue with improved attendance upon re-entering a traditional educational environment?

Research question #3: *Do students who have been assigned to a disciplinary alternative school improve their behavior during assignment, as evidenced by discipline and counseling referrals, and continue with improved behavior upon re-entering a traditional educational environment?*

Research question #4: *Do students who have been assigned to a disciplinary alternative school ultimately have a positive academic outcome?*

Nine (null) hypotheses were used to address the research questions:

1. *Students will not show improvement in Grade Point Average during the year of assignment to the alternative school.*
2. *Students will not show improvement in school attendance during the year of assignment to the alternative school.*
3. *Students will not show improvement in discipline and counseling referrals during the year of assignment to the alternative school.*
4. *Students will not show improvement in counseling referrals during the year of assignment to the Alternative Learning Center.*
5. *Students will not show improvement in Grade Point Average in the year following assignment to the Alternative Learning Center.*
6. *Students will not show improvement in school attendance during the year following assignment to the Alternative Learning Center*
7. *Students will not show improvement in discipline referrals during the year following assignment to the Alternative Learning Center.*

8. *Students will not show improvement in counseling referrals in the year following assignment to the Alternative Learning Center.*
9. *Students will not have a positive outcome following their assignment to an Alternative Learning Center.*

This study used a quasi-experimental research design which employed quantitative statistical analyses. Records for all students who were assigned to the alternative school were examined to establish academic standing, infractions of prescribed student conduct, and social behavior both before and after assignment to this facility. The dependent variable was assignment to the facility, while the independent variables were grade point average, attendance, records of disciplinary referrals, and counseling records. In addition, there was an examination of ultimate outcome: rates for promotion and graduation, school drop-out, and recidivism.

Selection of Participants

This facility is geographically located in a northwestern Tennessee county with a population of approximately 13,000 people; the county seat has a population of approximately 1,600 (MTIDA, 2011). According to the U. S. Census Bureau (2005-2009), the racial makeup of the city is approximately 93% White and 7% Other. An estimated 77% of the population is age 18 or older. The median family income is approximately \$31,000, some \$20,000 lower than the national average. As of March 2011, the unemployment rate in this community is 11.9%. This town is home to two elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school, all of which are public institutions; in accordance with state law, the county also operates a disciplinary alternative school which offers educational services to students at the middle school and

high school levels. Total student population in these schools is approximately 2,100 (MTIDA, 2011).

The county's alternative school is a separate facility which also houses an adult high school for those with chronic truancy and academic failure and who are age 17 and over; the school currently hosts a population of 22 students (R. Ross, personal communication, October 29, 2010). During the 2009-2010 school year the school's population was 20 students, two of whom were eligible for special education services. The criteria used for assignment to this facility are: 1) possession or use of a firearm or other weapon; 2) possession, distribution, or use of alcohol or drugs (excluding tobacco); and 3) physical attacks or fights. Assignment is usually for a period of 45 days to one academic year. Those students who are assigned to this facility for disciplinary reasons may return to the traditional school when their behavior/attitude has improved, and they also have the approval of teachers, school counselor, and/or administrator. Student motivation to return is another consideration (R. Ross, personal communication, October 29, 2010).

This school employs the same zero tolerance criteria for assignment as most non-voluntary alternative schools. While the results may not be representative of metropolitan schools with predominant minority student populations, this study can offer insight into the practices and patterns of predominantly White rural schools.

Data Obtained

This study included scores from standardized tests administered under the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP), which is comprised of Achievement, Gateway, End of Course, and Writing Assessment (TN Department of

Education, n.d.). The Achievement Test is a timed, multiple choice measurement of skills in Reading, Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies, and is administered to students in grades three through eight. Gateway Tests are administered to all freshmen students entering high school in Mathematics, Science, and Language Arts; students must pass these tests to earn a high school diploma. The Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) Writing Assessment requires students to write a rough draft essay in response to an assigned prompt within a limited time period. End-of-Course examinations are given in English I, English II, English III, Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, U.S. History, Biology I, Chemistry and Physics. The scores for these examinations are considered in the calculation of the student's grade for the course. The Writing Assessment is presented to eighth-grade students, who must write an expository essay, and to eleventh-grade students, who prepare a persuasive essay.

Procedures

Application to the IRB to conduct this study was forwarded on November 1, 2010, along with a letter of consent from the Superintendent of the school system under investigation, which was obtained on November 1, 2010. Since this study was requested by the school system, there was no hesitation in providing the letter. Approval from the IRB to proceed with the study was given on December 9, 2010. Electronic data from the school system included grade point average and standardized test scores for all years under investigation. There was no information released to the researcher that revealed the identities of the students.

In addition to standardized scores, information was gathered from school files for grade point averages, attendance records, disciplinary referrals, and counseling records

both before assignment to the alternative school facility and upon the students' return to the traditional school. There was also a query into any incidence of recidivism. This information was gathered by an employee of the school system and released to the researcher in such a form so as to conceal the identities of students.

Upon receipt of the data, it was entered into a statistical analysis software package (SPSS) for organization, and preliminary analyses included a Comparison of Means. Additional analysis was performed using a General Linear Model, *ANOVA* Repeated Measures. The objective of the analysis was to establish a profile: What were the academic attributes of these students both before and after their assignment to the disciplinary alternative facility. Student ages, gender, socioeconomic status, rates for graduation, subsequent drop-out of school, and incidence of recidivism was noted. In addition, TCAP scores were provided for each student under investigation.

CHAPTER IV

Results

*Statistical thinking will one day be as necessary a qualification
for efficient citizenship as the ability to read and write.*

~H. G. Wells (as cited in Hogg, Ritter, & Starbuck, 2000, p. 1)

The data released to the researcher was for 2007-2008, with 12 students assigned to the alternative facility during this academic year. Data for 2006-2007 (one year pre-assignment) was included for each of the students under investigation. Initial review of the data revealed gender composition to be 58% male ($N=7$) and 42% female ($N=5$), all of whom were White. Sixty-seven percent of this population ($N=8$) participated in the Free or Reduced lunch program. The violations of student conduct included alcohol and/or drugs (including tobacco), 83% ($N=10$), and threats, 17% ($N=2$). Table 1 reflects the distribution of these students by age:

Table 1

Age Distribution of ALC Students 2007-2008

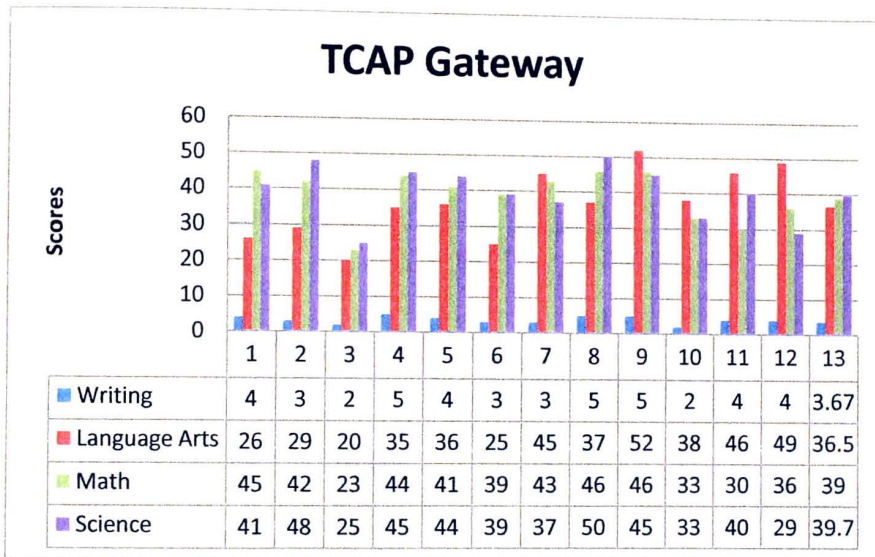
Age	Percentage	N
13	8	1
14	33	4
15	25	3
16	17	2
17	17	2

TCAP Scores

TCAP scores for Writing, and Gateway Language, Math, and Science were included in the data; Figure 2 reports these scores for each student as well as reflecting

the group averages (Column 13) for each test. It was unclear during which year these scores were recorded; consequently, they are reported here only to establish academic potential of the students who were assigned to the Alternative Learning facility during the year under investigation. Reported scores below 40 were considered Proficient in Language Arts, Math, and Science; scores 40 and above were categorized as Advanced. Writing is scored from 1 Deficient to 6 Outstanding; a score of 5 is regarded as Strong, with 4 being Competent. According to the TN Department of Education (n.d.), a 3 paper illustrates limited proficiency.

Figure 2 Standardized Test Scores



Column 13 represents the mean score of the group.

Analysis of Data, One Year Pre-assignment and Year of Assignment

The results reported in Table 2 indicated a slight increase in Grade Point Average ($M=2.3000$ to $M=2.4333$) from Pre-assignment to Year of Assignment; absences also increased ($M=9.50$ to $M=12.33$) during the same time period. However, Discipline Referrals ($M=6.67$ to $M=1.25$) and Counseling Referrals ($M=2.83$ to $M=1.08$) declined during the Year of Assignment.

A Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance (*ANOVA*) was conducted to compare the effect of assignment to the Alternative Learning Center on grade point average, attendance, discipline referrals, and counseling referrals from one year prior to the assignment and the year of assignment. Table 2 and Table 3 show the Descriptive Summary Statistics, also illustrated graphically in Figure 3.

Table 2

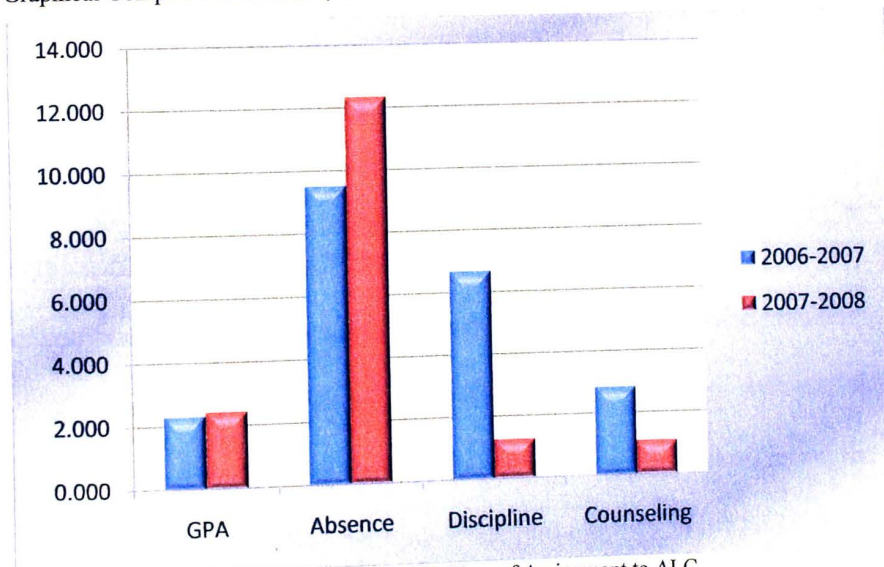
Descriptive Statistics, 2006-2007 and 2007-2008

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
GPA 2006-2007†	2.3000	.66878	12
GPA 2007-2008^	2.4333	.63150	12
Absences 2006-2007†	9.50	6.403	12
Absences 2007-2008^	12.33	9.345	12
Discipline Referrals 2006-2007†	6.67	5.883	12
Discipline Referrals 2007-2008^	1.25	1.288	12
Counseling Referrals 2006-2007†	2.83	1.467	12
Counseling Referrals 2007-2008^	1.08	.996	12

† Pre-assignment to ALC; ^ Year of assignment to ALC

Figure 3

Graphical Comparison of Means, 2006-2007 and 2007-2008



2006-2007: Pre-assignment to ALC; 2007-2008: Year of Assignment to ALC

Table 3 Tests of Within Subjects Contrasts, 2006-2007 and 2007-2008

Source	Variable	Change	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Change	GPA	Linear	.107	1	.107	.540	.478
	Absence	Linear	48.167	1	48.167	1.993	.186
	Discipline	Linear	176.042	1	176.042	12.537	.005*
	Counseling	Linear	18.375	1	18.375	39.439	.000*
Error(Change)	GPA	Linear	2.173	11	.198		
	Absence	Linear	265.833	11	24.167		
	Discipline	Linear	154.458	11	14.042		
	Counseling	Linear	5.125	11	.466		

*Significant at .05

The results of the statistical calculations reported in Table 3 indicated that assignment to the Alternative Learning facility did not produce a significant effect on the Independent Variable Grade Point Average during 2007-2008, which was the year of assignment; $F(1,11)=.540, p>.05$. Therefore, (Null) Hypothesis #1, *Students will not show improvement in Grade Point Average during the year of assignment to the Alternative Learning Center*, was retained.

Analysis of attendance records for these students indicated their assignment to the Alternative Learning facility did not produce a significant effect on the Independent Variable Absences during the year of assignment; $F(1,11)=1.993, p>.05$. (Null) Hypothesis #2, *Students will not show improvement in school attendance during the year of assignment to the Alternative Learning Center*, was likewise retained.

Analysis of disciplinary infractions for these students indicated their assignment to the Alternative Learning facility did produce a significant effect on the Independent Variable Discipline during the year of assignment; $F(1,11)=12.537, p<.05$. These results

prompted rejecting (Null) Hypothesis #3, *Students will not show improvement in discipline referrals during the year of assignment to the Alternative Learning Center.*

Analysis of referrals to the school counselor was also performed, and these results indicated that assignment to the Alternative Learning facility produced a significant effect on the Independent Variable Counseling during the year of assignment; $F(1,11)=39.439, p<.05$. (Null) Hypothesis #4, *Students will not show improvement in counseling referrals during the year of assignment to the Alternative Learning Center,* was also rejected.

Analysis of Data, Year of Assignment and One Year Post- assignment

Results reported in Table 4 also indicated an increase in Grade Point Average ($M=2.5714$ to $M=3.1714$) from Year of Assignment to Post-assignment; Absences decreased ($M=15.14$ to $M=7.14$) during the same time period. Both Discipline Referrals ($M=1.57$ to $M=.86$) and Counseling Referrals ($M=1.14$ to $M=.57$) also declined during the Year of Post-assignment.

Further analysis of the data investigated the significance of assignment to the Alternative Learning facility for students during the year following assignment. Data was not available for 2008-2009 (one year Post-assignment) for five of the original students; however, a separate Repeated Measures *ANOVA* was conducted for the remaining seven students. Descriptive Summary Statistics are provided in Table 4 and Table 5, and are graphically illustrated in Figure 4.

Table 4

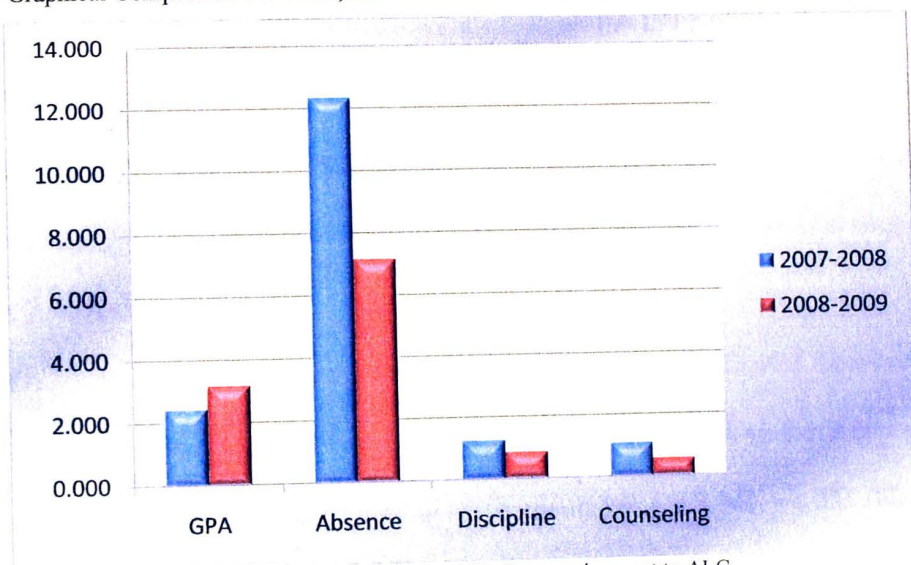
Descriptive Statistics, 2007-2008 and 2008-2009

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
GPA 2007-2008 [^]	2.5714	.59362	7
GPA 2008-2009 [†]	3.1714	.55891	7
Absences 2007-2008 [^]	15.14	10.189	7
Absences 2008-2009 [†]	7.14	3.891	7
Discipline Referrals 2007-2008 [^]	1.57	1.272	7
Discipline Referrals 2008-2009 [†]	.86	.690	7
Counseling Referrals 2007-2008 [^]	1.14	1.069	7
Counseling Referrals 2008-2009 [†]	.57	1.134	7

[^] Year of assignment to ALC; [†] Post- assignment to ALC

Figure 4

Graphical Comparison of Means, 2007-2008 and 2008-2009



2007-2008: Year of Assignment to ALC; 2008-2009: Post- assignment to ALC

Table 5

Tests of Within Subjects Contrasts, 2007-2008 and 2008-2009

Source	Variable	Change	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Change	GPA	Linear	1.260	1	1.260	27.000	.002*
	Absence	Linear	224.000	1	224.000	7.149	.037*
	Discipline	Linear	1.786	1	1.786	6.250	.047*
	Counseling	Linear	1.143	1	1.143	3.692	.103
Error(Change)	GPA	Linear	.280	6	.047		
	Absence	Linear	188.000	6	31.333		
	Discipline	Linear	1.714	6	.286		
	Counseling	Linear	1.857	6	.310		

*Significant at .05

The results reported in Table 5 suggested that assignment to the Alternative Learning facility produced a significant effect on the Independent Variable Grade Point Average between the Year of Assignment and Post-assignment; $F(1,6)=27.000, p<.05$. Therefore, (Null) Hypothesis #5, *Students will not show improvement in Grade Point Average in the year following their assignment to the Alternative Learning Center*, was rejected.

Analysis of attendance records for these students indicated their assignment to the Alternative Learning facility did produce a significant effect on the Independent Variable Absences during the year following assignment; $F(1,6)=7.149, p<.05$. (Null) Hypothesis #6, *Students will not show improvement in school attendance during the year following assignment to the Alternative Learning Center*, was likewise rejected.

Analysis of disciplinary infractions for these students revealed their assignment to the Alternative Learning facility did produce a significant effect on the Independent Variable Discipline during the year following assignment; $F(1,6)=6.250, p<.05$. These results indicated rejecting (Null) Hypothesis #7, *Students will not show improvement in*

discipline referrals during the year following assignment to the Alternative Learning Center.

Analysis of referrals to the school counselor was also performed, and these results indicated that assignment to the Alternative Learning facility did not produce a significant effect on the Independent Variable Counseling during the year of assignment; $F(1,6)=3.692, p>.05$. (Null) Hypothesis #8, *Students will not show improvement in counseling referrals in the year following assignment to the Alternative Learning Center*, was retained.

Three Year Analysis

Having three years of contiguous data on a group of these students provided the opportunity to perform additional analysis for students who continued in school following their assignment to the Alternative Learning facility during the academic year 2007-2008. A separate Repeated Measures *ANOVA* was conducted for these seven students for all three years, providing a profile of academic and social behavior for one year Pre-assignment, during the Year of Assignment, and one year Post-assignment. Results of this analysis are provided in Table 6 and Table 7, and are graphically illustrated in Figure 5. The results are corrected using the Bonferroni adjustment for multiple pairwise comparisons.

Table 6

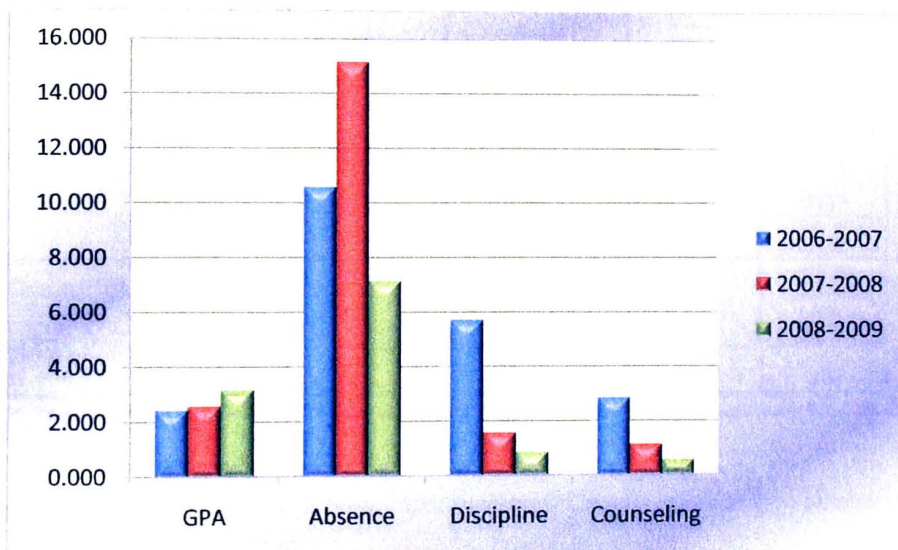
Descriptive Statistics, Three Year Analysis

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
GPA 2006-2007†	2.4286	.50897	7
GPA 2007-2008^	2.5714	.59362	7
GPA 2008-2009†	3.1714	.55891	7
Absences 2006-2007†	10.57	8.162	7
Absences 2007-2008^	15.14	10.189	7
Absences 2008-2009†	7.14	3.891	7
Discipline Referrals 2006-2007†	5.71	4.424	7
Discipline Referrals 2007-2008^	1.57	1.272	7
Discipline Referrals 2008-2009†	.86	.690	7
Counseling Referrals 2006-2007†	2.86	1.676	7
Counseling Referrals 2007-2008^	1.14	1.069	7
Counseling Referrals 2008-2009†	.57	1.134	7

† Pre-assignment to ALC; ^ Year of Assignment to ALC; † Post-assignment to ALC

Figure 5

Graphical Comparison of Means, Three Year Analysis



2006-2007: Pre-Assignment to ALC; 2007-2008: Year of assignment to ALC; 2008-2009: Post- assignment to ALC

Table 6 reports the mean and standard deviation for each of the Independent Variables for the seven students across the three year period; Year 1 represents Pre-assignment; Year 2, Year of Assignment; Year 3, Post-assignment. Grade Point Average

reflected an increase from Year 1 to Year 2 ($M=2.4286$ to $M=2.5714$), and again from Year 2 to Year 3 ($M=2.5714$ to $M=3.1714$); Absences increased from Year 1 to Year 2 ($M=10.57$ to $M=15.14$), then decreased from Year 2 to Year 3 ($M=15.14$ to $M=7.14$). Both Discipline Referrals and Counseling Referrals declined from Year 1 to Year 2, ($M=5.71$ to 1.57 ; $M=2.86$ to 1.14 , respectively) and again from Year 2 to Year 3 ($M=1.57$ to $M=.86$; $M=1.14$ to $M=.57$, respectively).

Table 7

Pairwise Comparisons

Variable	(I) Group 2	(J) Group 2	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	p^a
GPA	1	2	-.143	.246	.582
	-	3	-.743*	.217	.014*
	2	3	-.600*	.115	.002*
Attendance	1	2	-4.571	2.793	.153
	-	3	3.429	1.784	.103
	2	3	8.000*	2.992	.037*
Discipline	1	2	4.143*	1.455	.029*
	-	3	4.857*	1.471	.016*
	2	3	.714*	.286	.047*
Counseling	1	2	1.714*	.360	.003*
	-	3	2.286*	.474	.003*
	2	3	.571	.297	.103

1=Pre-Assignment (2006-2007); 2=Year of Assignment (2007-2008); 3= Post-Assignment (2008-2009)

Based on estimated marginal means

a. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Least Significant Difference (equivalent to no adjustments).

*Significant at .05

The Repeated Measures *ANOVA* output in Table 7 provided comparison of the year of Pre-assignment (1) to the Year of Assignment (2), the year of Pre-assignment (1) to the year of Post-assignment (3), as well as the year of Assignment (2) to the year of Post-assignment (3) for the seven students whose data was available for these three years.

These results indicated that, while there was no significant improvement in Grade Point Average from Year 1 to Year 2 (Pre-assignment to Assignment), the comparison between Year 1 and Year 3 (Pre-assignment and Post-assignment) revealed statistical significance at .014. Furthermore, the comparison of Year 2 and Year 3 (Assignment and Post-assignment) also revealed a significant improvement in Grade Point Average at .002.

While there was no significant improvement in school attendance (represented by Absences) between Pre-assignment and either of the two succeeding years, the improvement between Year 2 and Year 3 (Assignment and Post-Assignment) did reveal significance at the level .037. In addition, there was significant improvement between all years in Discipline referrals (.029, .016, .047, respectively), and between Year 1 and Years 2 and 3 in Counseling referrals (.003 for both years).

Recidivism and Outcomes

Of the 12 students who comprised the student population of this Alternative Learning facility during the year 2007-2008, only one student was reported to have dropped out of high school. Additionally, only one student subsequently was returned to the facility for further disciplinary infractions; however, that student was reported to have earned a high school diploma in 2010. All of the remaining ten students graduated from high school, five students in each of the years 2008 and 2009, establishing a 91.67% graduation rate over time for this group of 12 students. (Null) Hypothesis #9, *Students will not have a positive outcome following their assignment to an Alternative Learning Center*, was rejected.

CHAPTER V

Discussion of Findings and Recommendations

There can be no settlement of a great cause without discussion, and people will not discuss a cause until their attention is drawn to it ...

~William Jennings Bryan (1925, as cited in On This Day, 2010, para. 57)

Discussion of Findings

The students who were investigated for this study revealed a profile in the three year analysis of their academic and social behavior during the year just preceding their assignment to the alternative facility: they were in many cases above average in ability but achieving at a much lower level; they were not conscientious in their attendance, and their referrals for infractions of the discipline code were noteworthy. In addition, they spent time in the office of the school counselor. According to the breakdown by age, as many as one-third of these students were 14 years old at the time of their placement in the facility; the demographics revealed two-thirds were of low socioeconomic status. Most were caught by school officials in violation of the rules that govern possession and/or use of alcohol and drugs, a zero tolerance offense.

The data did not reveal the particulars to explain the seemingly dramatic increase in the number of absences during the year of assignment, nor did it indicate whether those absences occurred prior to assignment, thus contributing to disciplinary action. However, placement in the alternative school did improve the focus on academic standing and acceptable behavior. While the school counselor may have played an important role in these students' transition during that year, there were fewer referrals for improper social conduct.

These students completed their assignment to the alternative educational facility and returned to the conventional classroom, where they continued to improve their academic focus, were more diligent in their attendance at school, generally complied with the normative rules that governed their behavior, and experienced fewer social confrontations. In addition, all but one of these students successfully completed the requirements for graduation from high school.

There is no inference here that these students became model citizens during the time they spent acknowledging the consequences of their choices; while that may have occurred it is well beyond the scope of this paper to speculate on personal contrition following a disciplinary action. However, measurable change is apparent and the prudent person might inquire into the particular conditions that are considered essential in affecting this transformation.

Wehlage and Rutter (1985) reported the characteristics of those students most at risk of noncompletion as low socioeconomic status, poor school performance, and in-school delinquency. However, these colleagues considered that the school itself may contribute to some students' decision to leave school, and proposed that rather than focus on personal characteristics of dropouts, a more productive approach might reflect on the character of the school as an institution and its affect on students who are most at risk. For instance, students who have dropped out of school have reported the lack of teacher interest in students and ineffective and unfair discipline policies as critical in their decision to leave school (Wehlage & Rutter, 1985).

Lange and Sletten (2002) offered excerpts from a number of studies (Arnone & Strout, 1980; Hendrick, MacMillan, & Blalow, 1989; Natriello et al., 1990; Barr &

Parrott, 2001; Wehlage & Rutter, 1987) supporting goodness of fit between student skills and the academic program, recommending “multi-grade level classrooms that emphasize accelerated curriculum for mastery and attention to individual needs” (p. 17). The authors also noted the impact a negative, rejecting school climate can have on an already struggling student. These students need positive relationships with both peers and faculty and a strong sense of engagement with the school; according to Lange and Sletten, “alternative schools are cited as an example of programs well suited to facilitate these relationships” (p. 18).

Shirley (2009) suggested that alternative education means simply one that is different from the norm; in a contemporary sense of the term, alternative education is directed toward students who are at risk and implies disciplinary removal from the traditional educational environment. The author also pointed out the efforts to alleviate the disparities in public education, which has historically placed a higher priority on quality instruction for the elite mainstream students. If students who are involuntarily placed in an alternative facility can realistically expect to achieve to the level of high school completion, school system administrators must enforce a policy that ensures equality in both funding and resources.

The state of Tennessee has adopted the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model as a framework for the school counseling program in public schools statewide, including alternative schools. While the guiding principles are not mandated, the Model promotes the concepts of accountability in addition to employing effective interventions in a comprehensive program which stresses four components: guidance curriculum, individual planning, responsive services, and system support

(Whiston et al., 2008). ASCA National Standards for academic, career, and personal/social development identify student competencies that “define the knowledge, attitudes or skills students should obtain or demonstrate as a result of participating in a school counseling program” (ASCA National Model, 2003, p. 167). Among the responsibilities that are appropriate for a school counselor are counseling students with excessive absences and/or disciplinary problems, analyzing grade-point averages in comparison to achievement, assisting the principal with student issues, and designing student academic programs (ASCA National Model, 2003). The school counselor in an alternative school provides crucial services to the mission of the school and toward the success of each student.

Raywid (1994) determined three factors to be instrumental in the success of alternative schools: they generate a sustainable sense of community within themselves, they engage students in the process of learning, and they are structured and organized, which interacts with the other factors for success. Because of the small size of the alternative facility, the low teacher:student ratio, the student focused atmosphere, a challenging and inviting curriculum, and the teacher-student interactions, students often feel a sense of membership. “Membership is what makes students speak of alternative schools as caring places and liken their school to family” (Raywid, 1994). While some of these superlatives apply to voluntary alternatives (Type I), the ideals of acceptance, engagement, and individual attention could easily be transposed into disciplinary facilities.

Implications

Students who have been truant, behaviorally disruptive, disrespectful of rules and others, and who have failed to achieve academically in a conventional educational setting can and do achieve success in an alternative environment to which they are better suited. School administrators must be open to examining school policies to address the individual educational needs of students who are identified as at risk. Regardless of whether the causative agents are inherent to the child or to the school, marginalized students have a right to expect an education that will prepare them for a positive transition into adulthood and a productive life.

Recommendations

The literature exploring disciplinary alternative educational facilities is abundant; however, there are few studies that investigate reintegration to the traditional facility and ultimate outcome. More research is important to confirm the particular elements that facilitate a positive school experience for those students who have behavioral problems or disorders, poor social skills, and limited personal and/or financial resources. While this study examined a small rural student population, larger scale studies could produce results that would be more generalizable.

Conclusion

The purpose of schools is to meet the needs of all students. These students present in an array of physical and intellectual abilities, learning styles, interests, and dispositions. Education is not one size fits all, and despite the challenges, school systems have an obligation to provide each student with a meaningful educational experience. Alternative educational programs can be provided within the school systems for these

students who are likely to benefit from more individualized instruction, smaller class size, and more caring relationships with faculty and staff. Providing this kind of environment for at risk students will advance the goal of academic achievement and a successful transition into adulthood.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

AUSTIN PEAY STATE UNIVERSITY
APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN
SUBJECTS

Please read the entire application before completing.

TITLE OF PROJECT:

The Relationship between Alternative School Placement and Improved Academic Functioning

TITLE ON CONSENT FORM (If different than above):

N/A

FUNDING SOURCE:

N/A

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

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All of the questions below should be answered using lay language. The IRB is comprised of individuals from diverse scientific and nonscientific backgrounds. You should avoid all jargon and assume that IRB members have no prior knowledge on the research topic, theoretical or methodological approaches, or measurement techniques or instruments. The best way to avoid unnecessary delays is to provide the IRB with as much information about your study as possible. **You will need to attach a copy of all demographic forms, survey instruments, and other data collection systems.** If you are unable to attach the above please contact the College of Graduate Studies for advice. It is

important to remember that informed consent is a process not a document. Informed consent begins with recruitment and ends only after a study is completed.

1. **Describe the purpose of this study.** Be sure to clearly indicate the research question being asked.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the degree of improvement of students who have been assigned to the Alternative School in Stewart County, TN. The research objective will be to evaluate student achievement scores, social skills, and discipline referrals both before and after this assignment.

Hypothesis: Students who are transferred to the Alternative School show improvement in academic achievement, social skills, and discipline referrals.

2. **Briefly describe the research that has already been conducted in this area.** The IRB needs to understand how this study adds to the knowledge on this topic in order to be able to judge the risks and benefits to participants.

A review of the literature spanning the previous thirty years reveals that research into this topic is sporadic. While the goals of education and school counseling programs have evolved during that period of time, there has been little investigation into how these changes have impacted the needs of students who are at risk of school failure. Because of the relationship between academic success and contributions to society as an adult, it is important to examine the practices that are in place and evaluate their effectiveness. Reimer and Cash (2003) offer strategies for program implementation. O'Brien (2009) studied a variety of interventions that are useful in the alternative school setting. Shirley (2009) provides an evaluation of the needs of alternative school students.

3. **Describe the population from which your research sample will be drawn.** Be sure to indicate if subjects are from a vulnerable population such as infants, children, pregnant women, mentally disabled persons, prisoners, employees, students, economically or educationally challenged persons etc... What additional safeguards will be included to protect the rights and welfare of these participants

N/A. This study will not include human participants in data collection or analysis. Only archival student records (standardized test score data and other student achievement data and discipline and records of counseling interventions) provided and made anonymous by Stewart County, will be used to investigate the degree of improvement in these three areas over the past five years.

4. **Explain the inclusion and exclusion criteria that will be used (e.g., age, race, gender, language, academic abilities, academic major, pre-existing conditions, etc...).**

Archival student record data will be analyzed for inclusion in this study. Student records before and after their transfer to the Alternative School will be examined.

5. **Indicate how many potential participants will be approached.** The APSU IRB needs to know the maximum number that might be asked to participate, NOT the minimum number needed to adequately ask the research question. It is recommended that you choose a number higher than you expect to need because once the number is approved you will need to apply to the IRB for permission to recruit additional participants. Do not choose an unnecessarily large number however, because sample size may affect the risk/benefit ratio decision that the IRB must make. Please break down your maximum numbers by category (e.g., child, adult, male, female, depressed, non depressed etc...) such that the board can evaluate the risks for different types of participants.

N/A. No human subjects will be included in data collection or analysis. Only archival data will be collected and analyzed.

6. **Describe how participants will be identified, approached, recruited and consented.** Who will make the first contact and when and where will it occur. All materials used to recruit participants need to be submitted for review (e.g., media advertisements, brochures, email, poster/signs or sign-up sheets, etc...). If verbal announcements will be made for recruitment purposes please provide a script of how the study will be described or a list of the points that will be made.

There is no need to make contact with any human participants, as the data is owned and stored within the Stewart County School District. Permission from Stewart County administration to use the anonymous data provided by Stewart County to the investigators has been secured.

7. **Specifically identify all individuals who will describe the study to potential participants. Also, specifically identify all individuals who will obtain consent from potential participants.** Do these individual(s) have a dual relationship with potential participants (e.g., instructor, mentor, employer, caregiver, etc...) that might create the potential for the perception or actual existence of coercion or undue influence? What procedures will you put in place to reduce or eliminate potential/perceived coercive situations?

There are no human participants. Only archival data will be used. No consent will be needed from students or teachers. The above stated data will be gathered from archival student records already collected and stored in Stewart County School System files.

- 8. Describe your research procedures.** We need to know all of the procedures that will occur, but in particular we need a description of what the participants will experience. For example, a description of the instructions that will be given to them, activities in which they will engage, the length and timing of involvement, and the circumstances under which they will provide data (i.e., group assessments, one-on-one interview, videotaping, audio taping, phone calls, spending time in an uncomfortable position, etc...).

The research procedures for this study include the collection of archival student records, including student achievement data (TCAP, Gateway tests, Value-Added Assessment data, grade point average, and other archival student records including discipline and counseling referrals). The Superintendent of Schools of Stewart County School District has given permission for this research. Data will be entered into a statistical software package for analysis.

- 9. If this study involves deception, describe and justify its use.** Deception will require that subjects be debriefed following data collection. The purposes of the debriefing are to explain the true purpose of the study, reduce any negative consequences participants may experience from participation and to provide a clear, easy opportunity for withdrawal of consent. You must include a copy of the debriefing statement in your application.

There will be no deceptive practices in this study.

- 10. Describe any form of compensation that participants will receive (e.g., money, extra credit, toys, food, etc...).** If so, please describe amount, type, when they will receive it. If withdrawal from the study will change the amount or type of compensation please describe how (i.e., prorated, elimination, etc...). Note that academic extra credit can only be awarded at the discretion of the instructor, not the principal investigator.

There are no human participants for this study. There is no compensation for this study.

- 11. Explain if this research might entail psychological, legal, physical, or social harm or discomfort to the subjects.** What steps have been taken to minimize these risks? What provisions have been made to insure that appropriate facilities and professional attention necessary for the health and safety of the subjects are available and will be utilized? How will the participants be informed of these procedures? If an information sheet describing these resources will be provided to participants, please submit. If university or community professionals agree to provide their services, please submit a letter of cooperation from the individuals/agencies that describes the agreement.

There are no human participants for this study. There is no potential psychological, legal, physical or social harm or discomfort to any human participant. Procedures to protect confidentiality of district records will be the masking of personally identifying information from the researcher and the assignment of random Identification numbers to the subject.

- 12. Describe how the potential benefits of this activity to the participants and humankind outweigh any possible risks.** This opinion is justified for the following reasons:

There are no human participants for this study. There are no potential risks to any human participants. Masking of identity of any personal information in the records is addressed in the response to Item 11.

- 13. Describe how the confidentiality of data about participants will be protected.** What steps and procedures will be used? How (hard copy, electronic, etc...) and where (e.g., locked file cabinet in Pis campus office) will data be stored? If data will be destroyed please indicate when and how.

There are no human participants for this study. Collected and analyzed data will be stored in a locked cabinet in a campus office. All data received from Stewart County will be anonymous and no personally identifying marks will be made in any analysis or reports.

- 14. If data will be anonymous, explain how this anonymity will be achieved.** Note that anonymity requires that at no time can the data be connected to the participant by anyone involved in the research, even the PI. If data will be anonymous, explain how and where the consent document will be stored.

There are no human participants for this study. All data received from Stewart County is anonymous and no identifying marks will be made in any analysis or reports. No informed consent from participants will need to be made by the principal investigators or by the school district. All data is owned and stored by Stewart County. Permission to collect and analyze the data has been given by the administration of Stewart County.

- 15. Explain how any data collected relate to illegal activities.**

There are no illegal activities related to this study.

- 16. Please indicate by marking Yes or No whether the attached informed consent document includes each of the following elements as required by the Code of Federal Regulations: Title 45, Part 46.116.**

- No A statement that the study involves research,
- No An explanation of the duration of the subjects participation,
- No A description of the procedures to be used;
- No A description of any reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts to the subject;
- No A description of any benefits to the subject or others which can be reasonably expected from the research; (*Note: compensation is not a benefit*)
- No A statement describing the extent, if any, to which confidentiality of records identifying the subject will be maintained;
- No An explanation of whom to contact for answers to pertinent questions about the research and research subjects' rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research related injury to the subject; (*Note: should include APSU IRB, PI and if applicable, students' faculty sponsor*)
- No A statement that participation is voluntary, refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled, and the subject may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled. (*Note: this statement should be written in language at an appropriate level for the subjects in your study*)

The following may or may not apply to your study. Please carefully read and mark each one Yes or No.

- No An explanation of whom to contact in the event of a research related injury to the subject;
- No A disclosure of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if any, that might be advantageous to the subject;
- No For research involving more than minimal risk, and explanation as to whether any compensation and an explanation as to whether any medical treatments are available if injury occurs and, if so, what they consist of, or where further information may be obtained;
- No A statement that the particular treatment or procedure may involve risks to the subject which are currently unforeseeable;
- No Anticipated circumstances under which the subject's participation may be terminated by the investigator without regard to the subject's consent;
- No Any additional costs to the subject that may result from participation in the research; (*Note: This is not limited to monetary costs*)

- No** The consequences of a subject's decision to withdraw from the research and procedures for orderly termination of participation by the subject;
- No** A statement that significant new findings developed during the course of the research which may relate to the subject's willingness to continue participation will be provided to the subject; and
- None The approximate number of subjects in the study

- 17. If your study includes children please provide the committee with information about how you will obtain the child's assent to participate.** Children older than 12 are expected to be provided the opportunity to sign to indicate their assent to participate. Children 7-12 should be provided with a written document, which may or may not also be read. Depending on the research to be conducted children 6 years and younger may be read an assent script (please submit). In addition to your procedures to obtain assent, please indicate what dissent behaviors will lead you to decide a child is not providing or has withdrawn his/her assent to participate. Note: child assent can be solicited only after parental consent has been obtained.

No human participants will be included in this study.

- 18. If you are requesting a waiver of the documentation of informed consent please explain how you would meet the requirements of 45 CFR 46.117.**

No waiver of documentation is requested.

I have read the Austin Peay State University Policies and Procedure on Human Research (00:002) and Research Misconduct (99:013) and agree to abide by them. I also agree to report to the Austin Peay Institutional Review Board any unexpected events related to this study. I also agree to receive approval before implementing any changes in this study.

/s/ Patricia J Golden
Signature

October 29, 2010
Date

/s/ Larry Lowrance
Faculty Supervisor's Signature

October 29, 2010
Date



November 1, 2010

Dr. Larry Lowrance

College of Education

Austin Peay State University

Box 4545

Clarksville, TN 37044

Dr. Lowrance,

Stewart County Schools has reviewed your proposal for research with our Alternative School and approve your ideas. We need this research done and welcome the review of the results. Specifically you can have access to testing records (TCAP, Gateway, End of Course, and other tests that the district has on students who have been in the alternative school during the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 school years. You will also be able to access our records for two years prior to those school years and two years after so you can determine progress that might have happened in student achievement and adjustment.

We specifically grant you permission to access grades, attendance records, discipline records and interventions (bus and school) as well as any test data we have, and records our teachers or counselors may have on adjustment pre and post the alternative school as well as while in attendance there. All these files, test scores, discipline records and grade and attendance records, are in our files at this time and will not necessitate you doing any interventions with our students. We can see well the value for this archival study and grant you permission to do it. District employees will mask the identity of students from these records before your research team accesses them to protect confidentiality of our students.

The premise of your study, to see if our interventions using an alternative school program have helped our students academically and in their adjustment, is important for us. Thank you for your interest in working in Stewart County.

Most sincerely,

Dr. Phillip Wallace

Director of Schools

Stewart County School District

Appendix C

Dec. 9, 2010

Patricia Golden
357 Peabody Dr. #3
Clarksville, TN 37042

RE: Your application regarding study number 10-044 The relationship between alternative school placement and improved academic functioning.

Dear Ms. Golden

Thank you for your recent submission. We appreciate your cooperation with the human research review process. I have reviewed your request for expedited approval of the new study listed above. This type of study qualifies for expedited review under FDA and NIH (Office for Protection from Research Risks) regulations.

Congratulations! This is to confirm that I have approved your application through one calendar year. This approval is subject to APSU Policies and Procedures governing human subject research. The full IRB will still review this protocol and reserves the right to withdraw expedited approval if unresolved issues are raised during their review.

You are granted permission to conduct your study as described in your application effective immediately. The study is subject to continuing review on or before Dec. 9, 2011 unless closed before that date. Enclosed please find the forms to report when your study has been completed and the form to request an annual review of a continuing study. Please submit the appropriate form prior to Dec. 9, 2011

Please note that any changes to the study as approved must be promptly reported and approved. Some changes may be approved by expedited review; others require full board review. If you have any questions or require further information, you can contact me by phone (931-221-7231) or email (grahc@apsu.edu)

Again, thank you for your cooperation with the APSU IRB and the human research review process. Best wishes for a successful study!

Sincerely,

Charles R. Grah, Chair
Austin Peay Institutional Review Board

Cc: Larry Lowrance, School of Education.