Research Report

Research Project 05-112

ALTERNATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT REPORT

Prepared for the
Adequacy Study Oversight Subcommittee
of the
Senate Committee on Education
and the
Adequacy Study Oversight Subcommittee
of the
House Committee on Education

August 23, 2006

BUREAU OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH

315 State Capitol Little Rock, Arkansas 72201 (501) 682-1937 www.arkleg.state.ar.us

Table of Contents

Executive Summary 1-2
Introduction 3-4
Purpose of the Report 4-5
Brief Background 5-6
Definitions 6-10
Who Attends Alternative Learning Schools or Programs 10-13
Review of Relevant Research on Alternative Schools and Programs 13-15
Best Practices Cited in the Literature and Among Arkansas Practitioners 15-18
Survey of State Commissioners or Superintendents of Education 18-22
Survey of Alternative Education Programs in Arkansas 23-34
ALE Administrators' Recommendations 34-36
Professional Development 36-37
Standards 37-38
Funding Adequacy 38-39
Conclusions 40
References 41-44
Appendices 45-77
- **A - Definitions of ALE Among the Responding States** 45-51
- **B - Summary of ALE Among the Responding States** 52
- **C - Teacher Preparation Programs to Teach At-Risk Youth** 53-54
- **D - Questionnaire** 55-58
- **E - Guidelines for ALE Developed by the Pygmalion Commission** 59-62
- **F - Rules of Arkansas Department of Education** 63-76
- **G - Arkansas Code on ALE** 77

Acknowledgement

The Bureau of Legislative Research staff wish to express their deep appreciation to the Arkansas Department of Education, and, in particular, to Lori Lamb, ALE Coordinator, for their generous provision of information and assistance to this project. We also desire to acknowledge the various local ALE program administrators and members of the Arkansas Pygmalion Commission on Non-traditional Education for their willingness to share information with us.

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to summarize policies, practices, and issues regarding alternative learning programs, including definitions used, brief history, student clientele, research, existing programs in Arkansas and other states, and recommendations from Arkansas program administrators. It is prepared in response to a request from the Adequacy Study Oversight Subcommittees of the Senate and House Committees on Education for information concerning Alternative Learning Environment programs.

Research Methodology
The study included a survey of the professional literature, a survey of commissioners of education in other states, interviews with a sampling of Arkansas ALE practitioners, Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) personnel, and with selected members of the Arkansas Pygmalion Commission on Non-traditional Education (Pygmalion Commission). The findings of this report are summarized below.

Definitions
Alternative learning environment programs have emerged as one way to provide an adequate education to youth who do not succeed in traditional public school classrooms. The report reveals that there is no consensus on the definition of alternative education. This lack of consensus is a reflection of the significant programmatic differences in admission criteria, intervention components, staff, length of student involvement, parental and community collaboration, and expected outcomes among and within states. Therefore, definitions are discussed that differ in domain, program design, philosophy, student needs, academic focus, duration of program, diversity of students, and element of choice.

Students Placed in Alternative Learning Programs
After consideration of how alternative learning programs are defined, a discussion ensues concerning the groups of students most likely to be placed in alternative education classes. The most prevalent group in these programs are students referred to as "at risk" youth in the literature - that is, at risk of dropping out of school. Another group frequently found in alternative learning programs is students with learning and/or emotional disabilities. This grouping of students primarily serves as a pedagogical categorization rather than as a classification with mutually exclusive categories. Indeed, many students with disabilities also are "at risk" of dropping out of school. A third group is students who engage in "risky behaviors," such as drug abuse, violent acts, and other criminal offenses.

Alternative Learning Best Practices
Most research on alternative learning programs focuses on characteristics of students and programs, especially on what are referred to as "best practices." The study that forms the bases for this report revealed remarkable consensus among Arkansas administrators of ALE programs, selected members of the Pygmalion Commission, and the existing literature on the "best practices" for alternative learning. First, there is consensus that small, highly-structured classes, comprised of systematic behavioral management and individualized instruction, are the hallmark of alternative education environments. Second, parents and mentors also need to be actively involved in children's learning and discipline by assisting and supporting teachers in the classroom and at home. Finally, because of the diversity and multiplicity of problems presented by students

in alternative learning programs, the literature and Arkansas administrators indicate that teachers need concentrated specialized knowledge and skills that, unlike other states, are not presently offered as concentrations in Arkansas universities.

Survey of State Commissioners of Education

Responses to the survey of state superintendents and commissioners of education are presented in detail. Of the 49 states surveyed (excluding Arkansas) 10 failed to respond, and only 27 of 39 states that did respond could provide specific information about their alternative learning programs. The other 12 states could not provide information because their alternative learning programs are locally administered and they have no reporting mechanism from local to state officials. The majority of states that responded to most items in the survey indicated that there are a vast array of reasons (e.g., academic failure, delinquency) children enter alternative learning programs. They also responded that students are typically referred by regular school staff. Most of the responding states further reported that they offer a variety of services within the school district and through community agencies.

Interviews of Arkansas ALE Leaders

In-depth telephone interviews were conducted by a staff member of the Bureau of Legislative Research with selected Arkansas administrators of ALE programs, the Coordinator of these programs for the ADE, and a few members of the Pygmalion Commission. The Arkansas Department of Education provided a list of ALE programs that spanned the continuum from "exemplary" to "needs serious improvement". The strengths and weaknesses of ALE programs in Arkansas are discussed in detail, and recommendations for improvement made by these administrators are presented. These recommendations have empirical support in the literature. Arkansas administrators recommended that teachers need specialized education to teach students who have diverse problems, and ALE programs must be fully supported by district central administration. Tangible (e.g., facilities, supplies) and intangible (e.g., encouragement) support from central administration is essential to teacher morale and effective teaching. Consideration should be given to providing teacher stipends for ALE work, start-up grants for new programs, and additional state-level personnel support. Finally, new and existing ALE programs should submit for ADE approval a proposal for the program services and a strategy for providing those services. This report concludes with a discussion of professional development, ADE standards for ALE programs, and funding considerations.

State Challenges

In conclusion, Arkansas is ahead of many states in some aspects of its ALE programs. For example, reporting regarding the programs is required and the Arkansas Department of Education monitors the programs throughout the state. However, the state still faces many challenges which include: expanding services to districts where none exist; improving services in districts where the quality is below other state programs; continuing and expanding data collection to evaluate the programs in terms of student test scores and achievements; and improving teacher preparation for ALE programs at the post-secondary level. Standards should be established for equipping programs, assessing students, developing or updating student individualized education plans in the ALE programs, and developing organizational and curriculum structures for meeting the specific needs of different types of students in the programs.

Introduction

One of the challenging issues confronting the education profession is how to provide an adequate education for all children in the nation, especially since a contingent of the youthful student population does not appear to perform satisfactorily using standard teaching methods. Alterative learning programs have emerged as one way to educate certain types of students who have not succeeded historically in traditional public school classrooms (Lange & Sletten, 2002). A consensus has not been achieved, however, among legislators, administrators, practitioners, and researchers on how to define alternative education.

Differences in admissions criteria, program components, staff, lengths of student involvement, parental and community collaboration, and expected outcomes make defining alternative learning programs difficult.

An examination of the literature and existing programs discussed in this report indicates that this lack of consensus is understandable. The constantly evolving nature of alternative learning programs and the rules that govern them have made these programs something of a moving target and, therefore, difficult to define and describe. Indeed, there are significant differences in admission criteria, program components, staff, lengths of student involvement, parental and community collaboration, and expected outcomes among and within states. Hence, efforts to review and summarize alternative education are aptly depicted by the proverbial blind persons trying to describe an elephant based on the particular part of the body they touched. Definitions and descriptions are framed in the context to which the observer has been exposed, whether it is a particular state definition, practice model, theoretical framework, or research method (White & Kochhar-Bryant, 2006). Following a common practice in the professional literature, the terms alternative education "schools" and "programs" are used interchangeably, except where otherwise indicated.

Types of schools include those that provide innovative programs, behavior modification and remediation, and short-term therapeutic settings.

Despite the diversity in definitions and programmatic components, there are some commonalities among alternative learning programs, such as small size, emphasis on relationships between teachers and students, flexible learning activities designed for individual success, and supportive interactions to instill motivation for learning (Lange & Sletten, 2002). Raywid (1994) is credited with grouping alternative schools and programs into the following three types based on commonalities in an effort to bring conceptual clarity to a field struggling with definitions:

• Type I are schools of choice based on themes with an emphasis on innovative programs or strategies to attract students. The focus generally is on teacher/child relationships and learning experiences that generate individualized self-development.

• Type II alternatives are “last chance” schools where students are placed prior to or as a consequence of suspension, expulsion, or contact with the juvenile justice system. The primary emphasis tends to be on behavior modification and remediation.

• Type III programs provide short-term therapeutic settings for students with social and emotional problems that create academic or behavioral barriers to learning. These programs typically offer counseling, access to social services, and academic remediation to targeted populations. However, unlike most students in Type I or Type II programs, students can often choose not to participate.

This typology is widely cited in the literature as a useful conceptual framework (Lange & Sletten, 2002; Lehr & Lange, 2003). However, there appears to be a consensus that most contemporary alternative education programs represent a hybrid of all three types identified by Raywid (Lange & Sletten, 1995). Indeed, a telephone survey of selected alternative learning schools in Arkansas, from February to May 2006, indicated that existing programs have elements of each type formulated by Raywid. Results of this Arkansas Survey are discussed under the heading titled Survey of Alternative Education Programs in Arkansas.

The U. S. Department of Education (2002, p. 55) defines an alternative education school as "a public elementary/secondary school that addresses needs of students that typically cannot be met in a regular school, provides nontraditional education, serves as an adjunct to a regular school, or falls outside the categories of regular, special education or vocational education." This definition allows for the fact that alternative education can be a specific program for selected students and/or for students more generally, including dropouts, adjudicated and non-adjudicated delinquents, and children with learning and emotional disabilities. These programs are operated within regular schools, in separate facilities on and off school campuses within districts, as a point-of-service program, and as private schools within and outside the juvenile justice system. Based on this definition, it has been estimated that there are about 20,000 alternative education programs in the nation (Lange & Sletten, 2002). Research suggests that the number of alternative learning programs has increased substantially in the past decade (Lange & Sletten, 2002; White & Kochhar-Bryant, 2006).

Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is eightfold: 1) provide a brief historical background as a context for understanding alternative education in this country, 2) discuss definitions of alternative education used in the literature and by different states, 3) discuss groups of youth most likely to enter alternative learning programs, 4) offer a succinct review of

relevant research on alternative learning programs, 5) identify strengths and weaknesses of existing alternative learning programs, 6) report on a survey of other states' alternative learning policies and practices, 7) present summaries of interviews with selected administrators of ALE programs in Arkansas who represent a continuum of types and quality of programs, and 8) formulate actionable recommendations for change in present policies and practices made by administrators of alternative education programs in Arkansas.

Brief Background

The proliferation, if not the birth, of alternative education schools and programs is associated in the literature with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 in which President Johnson identified the public school system as the front line of attack in the War on Poverty (Lange & Sletten, 2002). The act responded to intense criticism of the public school system as a racist institution that focused primarily on high-achievers' performance at the expense of equity (Raywid, 1994; Young, 1990).

Alternative education programs were originally designed for students who hadn't performed well with traditional education approaches.

Federal funding during the 1960s and 1970s led to a burgeoning of alternative education schools and programs within and outside this country's public school systems, which were designed to encourage learning among segments of the student population that had not performed well with traditional educational approaches (Lange & Sletten, 2002). Most of these early programs did not survive for reasons that are only partially understood, including lack of clear purpose and goals, limited evidence of success, changes in educational philosophies, rising prevalence of low-performing students, and shifts in political climate (Lange & Sletten, 2002). In the 1980s, the shift in political milieu and increasing attention on the growing numbers of students who performed below the average led to less emphasis on self-exploration in favor of making sure that individual students learn the "basics" of reading, writing, and mathematics (Lange & Sletten, 2002; Raywid, 1994; Young, 1990).

The number of alternative education programs and schools has continued to increase over the past two decades due to zero-tolerance policies, changes in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)(1997), increases in youthful violence and school failure, and greater knowledge about developmental trajectories leading to antisocial behavior (Lange & Sletten, 2002; Tobin & Sprague, 2000). Many students have problems that disrupt their own and others' educational opportunities and performance (Tobin & Sprague, 2000). As one administrator of an Arkansas ALE program stated, "The 10 % with emotional and behavioral problems can disrupt the education for 100% of the students in a classroom."

In summary, a cogent argument has been made in the literature that in order to provide adequate and equitable education for all students, there have to be alternative educational approaches to address the needs of youth who have problems that impair their ability to successfully perform with traditional methods of instruction.

Defining Alternative Education

The No Child Left Behind Act states that alternative education programs should enable students to return to the regular classroom.

The purpose of a definition is to represent the essential elements of a concept with words that convey a complete mental image of the essence of the concept. In this section, some contrasting definitions from the literature are discussed in an effort to compare different conceptual approaches to alternative education. This discussion is exemplary rather than exhaustive due to the sheer number and redundancy of existing definitions. It is an attempt to capture the substantive differences in existing definitions using archetypical examples. With the advent of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, and increasing freedom to choose public schools and services, definitions of alternative education are particularly germane because of the potential number of students who might become eligible.

According to White and Kochhar-Bryant (2006), there are only seven times that the phrase "alternative education" occurs in the 670 pages of the NCLB Act. These authors observe:

> Insofar as NCLB is concerned, the lack of a prominent placement for and reference to alternative education in the statute can be a signal that alternative education is a legitimate customizing of regular school. The support for service learning and character education, the provision for transfer under the Unsafe School Choice Option, as well as Title I in NCLB imply policy support for alternative education. (p. 11)

The NCLB Act states:

> [A]lternative education models, either established within a school or separate and apart from an existing school… are designed to promote drug and violence prevention, reduce disruptive behavior, reduce the need for repeat suspensions and expulsions, enable students to meet challenging State academic standards, and enable students to return to the regular classroom as soon as possible …(NCLB, page 1,751).
>
> [Alternative education includes programs] for those students who have been expelled or suspended from their regular educational setting, including programs to assist students to

> reenter the regular educational setting upon return from treatment or alternative educational programs (NCLB, page 1,782).

White and Kochhar-Bryant (2006, p. 11) conclude that most alternative education professionals and policymakers have a common, even if not an exact, understanding of alternative education.

Education Week includes in its definition of alternative school students who are failing academically, have learning disabilities, or behavior problems.

The pedagogical practice that is understood as alternative education has been defined in the *Education Week* glossary as follows (*Education Week*, n.d.):

> Alternative school…broadly refers to public schools [that] are set up by states or school districts to serve populations of students who are not succeeding in the traditional public school environment. Alternative schools offer students who are failing academically or may have learning disabilities or behavioral problems an opportunity to achieve in a different setting. While there are many different kinds of alternative schools, they are often characterized by their flexible schedules, smaller teacher-student ratios and modified curricula.

Definitions provided by well-respected organizations, such as *Education Week*, often are revised by researchers who want to make nuanced distinctions. Illustratively, White and Kochhar-Bryant (2006) made four modifications to the *Education Week* definition. In the first modification, the "opportunity to achieve" through alternative education refers to both academic achievement and social development. The second specifies that the programs, schools, and districts can be either public or private. The third indicates that some youth may be in alternative learning programs because of the behavioral problems of others. Finally, alternative education can also be programmatic; that is, tailored for student or other school-age populations of the school or district without removing the students to a separate facility.

Using these modifications, White and Kochhar-Bryant's (2006) definition is:

> Alternative education refers to programs, schools, and districts that serve students and school-age youth who are not succeeding in the conventional public school environment. Alternative education offers to students and school-age youth who are underperforming academically, may have learning disabilities, emotional or behavioral problems, or may be direct or indirect objects of the behavioral problems of others, an opportunity to achieve academically and develop socially in a different setting.

Other alternative learning definitions found in the literature and among states differ in semantics as well as in domain, program design, philosophy, student needs, academic focus, duration of program, diversity of students, and element of choice.

The broad parameters (domain) of alternative education are illustrated by the Lexicon of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (n.d.), which states that alternative schools are:

> . . . [s]chools that differ in one or more ways from conventional public schools. Alternative schools may reflect a particular teaching philosophy, such as individualization, or a specific focus, such as science and technology. Alternative schools may also operate under different governing principles than conventional schools and be run by organizations other than local school boards.

In a national study of alternative schools, students were described as those at-risk of education failure.

The variation in alternative education programs is exemplified in the 2001 District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs (Kleiner, Porch, & Farris, 2002), which is the first national study of public alternative schools and programs for students at risk of education failure in the United States. The evaluation report includes the following definition and examples of alternative education:

> Alternative schools and programs are designed to address the needs of students that typically cannot be met in regular schools. The students who attend alternative schools and programs are typically *at risk* of education failure (as indicated by poor grades, truancy, disruptive behavior, pregnancy, or similar factors associated with temporary or permanent withdrawal from school). *Alternative schools* are usually housed in a separate facility where students are removed from regular schools. *Alternative programs* are usually housed within regular schools. (p. 1)

Kleiner et al. (2002) used the following qualifications to include programs and schools in their survey of alternative education:
1) programs or schools run by a district for "at risk" youth, 2) schools or programs where the majority of students attend for at least half of the instructional day, 3) charter schools for "at risk" students, 4) schools or programs administered by a school district that are located in a juvenile detention center, 5) schools or programs administered by a school district that are located in a community organization's facility (e.g., boys or girls club, community or recreational centers), and 6) schools or programs that are operated in the evenings or on weekends.

Kleiner et al. (2002) excluded from their study schools and programs that: 1) are not for "at risk" students (e.g., gifted and talented, magnet schools), 2) are not administered by public schools, 3) do not have students for at least half of the instructional day, 4) exclusively serve special education students, 5) are vocational unless they are designed for alternative learning students, and 6) private alternative learning schools contracted by the school district.

By design and effect, however, many authors and states include the schools and programs excluded by Kleiner et al. (2002). It has been argued that philosophy defines alternative education more than design of programs and location or administration of schools (White and Kochhar-Bryant, 2006). Thus, for example, Iowa (Iowa Department of Education, 1998) does not distinguish between alternative schools and alternative programs:

> Alternative (Alt): A school or school program which meets the objectives of the school district but differs from the conventional program in instructional methods and environment. All programs addressing dropout or dropout prevention should be included in addition to special schools of choice where parents and students are given a choice of attending over the conventional program. *Programs such as special education only, talented and gifted only, and institutions with school programs should not be included*. (p. 1) (Italics included in the original.)

There are definitions of alternative education that focus exclusively on academic achievement. Typically, alternative education is presented as supplemental to, rather than commensurate with, academic achievement in the regular classroom. For instance, the Washington State Department of Education (Washington Office of Superintendent of Instruction, n.d.) defines an alternative education program as:

> The alternative education program assists school districts and other program sponsors in providing quality alternative education options for students that are consistent with the state's learning goals, and that promote student achievement in non-traditional learning environments.

Indiana's definition says there are many delivery models based on the programs' philosophy and the needs of the students they serve.

The Indiana Department of Education (n.d.) emphasizes the diversity as well as the similarities of alternative education programs in its description of these programs:

> Alternative Education is designed to meet the needs of at-risk students who are not succeeding in the traditional setting…. While each of Indiana's 270 alternative education programs is

> unique, they share characteristics identified in the research as common to successful alternative schools…. Alternative education types include but are not limited to: alternative classrooms, school-within-a-school programming, separate alternative schools, and second or last-chance schools for disruptive students. Just as there are many types and settings for alternative schools, there are many delivery models based on the programs' philosophy and the needs of the students they serve. Some follow a school community partnership model that features collaboration with the larger community. Others may combine academics with a vocational intervention that focuses on making school meaningful while preparing students for the workforce. Still others employ a behavioral intervention model. In Indiana, the programs and models designed to meet the needs of disaffected youth are as diverse as the students themselves. Despite this diversity, however, all alternative education programs are held accountable for helping students master the Indiana Academic Standards and must comply with educational laws and rules or seek appropriate waivers.

In conclusion, this brief discussion of definitions of alternative education has attempted to capture the primary issues presented in the literature and by states surveyed by the Arkansas Bureau of Legislative Research from January to May, 2006. Other state definitions received on the survey are presented in Appendix A, along with a summary of the characteristics of those definitions in Appendix B.

Who Attends Alternative Learning Schools or Programs

Students who attend alternative learning programs most often are potential dropouts, have disabilities, or engage in risky behavior.

Historically, alternative learning programs have served a range of students with varying personal characteristics, backgrounds, interests, and abilities (Lange & Sletten, 2002). At the same time, the concentration of "at-risk" and "marginalized" children in alternative learning programs has served to evoke continuing debate between persons concerned with social tracking, isolation, and stigmatization, and proponents who argue that these programs have functioned as an exciting laboratory where unique and often daring experiments are conducted and evaluated (Sagor, 1999). Three subpopulations of students have been identified in the literature as the primary referrals and beneficiaries of alternative learning programs. They are potential dropouts, students with disabilities, and students who engage in risky behavior. Assets of alternative learning programs such as small class sizes, closer relationships between teacher and student, and individually-tailored instruction are believed to be especially beneficial to these subpopulations.

Alternative Learning for Potential Dropouts

The most likely students to be referred to and studied in alternative education programs are those identified as "high risk" for "dropping out" of traditional schools. There has been growing interest in the predictors and educational trajectory of "dropouts" over the past two decades (Lange & Sletten, 2002; Lehr & Lange, 2003; Saunders & Saunders, 2002). For example, the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (1993) issued a call for research to identify educational practices and policies that might play a role in school dropout prevention. In particular, this office highlighted the need to understand more about school organizations and student-adult relationships that might be related to students' decisions to leave school without graduation.

The National Dropout Prevention Center (2001) identified the small class size, emphasis on caring relationships, and clear rules and expectations of alternative schools as key elements of effective strategies for reaching students at risk of dropping out of school (Duttweiler, 1995). Additionally, Barr and Parrett (2001) recommended that students who are "at risk" of dropping out of school be placed in multi-grade level classrooms that emphasize curriculum designed for individual needs and mastery.

Research also shows that high expectations and support from teachers have strong positive effects on the behavior and academic investment and success of "at-risk" students (Duttweiler, 1995; Sprague, Walker, Nishioka, & Steiber, 2000). Supportive relationships have been shown to bolster a student's sense of belonging and commitment to school. The pivotal importance of these ostensible "bonding factors" to school performance and desirable behavior is well established in the literature (e.g., Catalano et al., 2004; Galassi & Akos, 2004; Loeber & Farrington, 1998).

Alternative Learning for Students with Disabilities

Although alternative schools generally are not specifically designed to serve students with disabilities, many students who have been identified as requiring special education or related services attend alternative learning schools and programs. Research indicates that the reasons for dropping out of school are about the same, whether or not a student has a disability; however, the drop out rate is approximately 20% higher for pupils with disabilities than for the general student population. Among students with disabilities, those who are experiencing emotional problems are the most likely to drop out of school (Lange & Sletten, 2002; Lehr, 2004).

Researchers at the University of Minnesota conducted what appears to be the only in-depth study of students with disabilities in alternative programs and in regular schools. Their findings indicate that many aspects of alternative programs seem to meet the needs of students with disabilities, including emphasis on teacher-student relationships, high standards, collaboration with community agencies (e.g., mental health), and teaching living and vocational skills (Lange, 1998; Lehr, 2004).

Alternative Learning for Students Who Engage in Risky Behaviors

The evidence is clear that many students in alternative learning programs engage in risky behaviors, including but not limited to misuse of alcohol and other drugs, drunk driving, suicidal attempts, gang activities, and carrying weapons (Escobar-Chaves et al., 2002; Hurley et al., 2004; Lange & Lehr, 1999; Weller et al., 1999). In Texas, for example, the results from a study of risky behaviors among alternative education program students (Weller et al., 1999) show that a "substantial percentage of alternative school students …participated in behaviors that placed them at risk for violence-related injury, suicide, unintended pregnancy, and the chronic diseases that result from tobacco and substance use" (p.26).

Using data from a national study of approximately 90,000 students at 134 schools across the United States, Blum, Beuhring, and Rinehart (2000) conclude that "being at academic risk was nearly universally associated with every health risk behavior we studied. We need to understand that health and education are closely intertwined and that school failure needs to be viewed as a health as well as an education crisis" (p. 37).

Zero-tolerance policies, increases in youthful violence, and greater understanding of the development of antisocial patterns have led to the enhanced use of alternative education programs for adolescents who engage in risk-taking behaviors (Lange & Sletten, 2002; Tobin & Sprague, 2000). As Gottfredson and Gottfredson (1985) note, "Substantial evidence implies that it is youths who do not do well in school who most often drop out early and who engage in more delinquent behavior" (p. 191). Based on this evidence, Tobin and Sprague (2000) argue, "Alternative education programs that succeed in helping students at risk of dropping out to obtain educational credentials would be providing a service to society in terms of social, emotional, and financial outcomes" (p.178). They even cite Altenbaugh, Engel, and Martin's (1995) conclusion that the benefits of dropout prevention would exceed the costs by a ratio of 9:1 based on calculating the lifetime costs to individuals of not finishing high school.

Veale (2002) examined five cost factors associated with dropping out of school in Iowa: 1) reduction in personal income and loss in state revenue; 2) increase in the welfare burden; 3) increased risk of incarceration; 4) deceleration of human growth and potential; and 5) reduced sense of control over one's life. Veale concluded that the individual dropout loses $540,000 in personal income during his or her 45-year working life, the state loses $2,400,000 each year in reduced revenues, and the welfare burden is increased by $1,300,000 each year. Additionally, the high school dropout is 5.6 times more likely to be incarcerated than the graduate.

Review of Relevant Research on Alternative Schools and Programs

There is a lack of evaluative research on alternative learning schools or programs nationally.

Despite the natural interest of practitioners in the innovations of alternative programs, researchers lament the paucity of evaluative research on alternative learning schools or programs (Lange & Sletten, 2002; Lehr & Lange, 2003). Moreover, results from existing evaluations typically cannot be generalized beyond single programs, or categorized in any meaningful framework for comparisons with other programs because of the lack of methodological rigor (Lange & Sletten, 2002). Indeed, existing evaluations are characterized by biased sampling, no comparison or control groups, unverified measures, and short-ranged outcomes that may not persist over time (Carruthers & Baenen, 1997; Lange & Sletten, 2002). Most evaluations are conducted by agency evaluators who are more oriented to writing a descriptive report for local officials than to designing rigorous research and publishing results in the public domain (e.g., professional journals and internet venues) (Lange & Sletten, 2002).

There are few rigorous studies in the professional literature. A search using Eric and Academic Search Elite databases turned up only one meta-analysis of prior studies examining alternative education programs. In that meta-analysis, Cox, Davidson, and Bynum (1995) found that there were some minimal improvements in academic achievement, attitudes toward school, and self-esteem associated with alternative learning intervention. More improvement was observed in alternative programs that were specifically designed for particular groups of students (e.g., drop-outs), as opposed to programs that had open enrollment. Delinquency rates, however, were not significantly affected by alternative learning programs. Similar findings were reported by Dynarski & Gleason (2002). Another study, by Nichols and Steffy (1997), found that student motivation and self-esteem improved due to an alternative education program, but those effects were observed only for the students who completed the program.

Most research that is available focuses on program characteristics rather than effectiveness.

The vast majority of professional articles in the literature on alternative education are a narrative review of empirically-based policies and practices and studies of factors and outcomes that are relevant to alternative learning programs (Foley & Pang, 2006; Gregg, 1999; Lange & Sletten, 2002; Lehr & Lange, 2003; Tobin & Sprague, 2000). No program evaluations or outcome studies of alternative learning programs or schools were located in the electronic databases available through the Arkansas Library system (i. e., EBSCO). Most research on alternative education programs examines program characteristics such as admission criteria, student and staff attributes, class sizes, location, length of participation, and other descriptive features. This lack of research on the effectiveness of ALE programs may well be a reflection of the difficulty in operationally defining intervention strategies and outcomes for programs that enroll such a heterogeneous population of students. Presently, alternative learning programs tend to be populated with students who differ significantly in the kind, intensity, and range of problems they exhibit. Individualized educational strategies that have to be continually modified by teachers based on impromptu professional observations are exceedingly difficult to operationally define for measurement in research.

The question of the amounts and kinds of change sought with alternative learning programming goes to the heart of the purpose for alternative education.

Even if and when the complexities of personal characteristics and programmatic strategies are accounted for in evaluative research, there is still the issue of "successful outcomes" in alternative education. The question of amounts and kinds of change sought in alternative learning programming is multifaceted and goes to the very heart of the purpose for alternative education (White & Kochhar-Bryant, 2006). Is success measured by grades, diplomas, attendance, compliance, or enhanced personal capital (e.g., self-esteem, sense of efficacy, ego identity) or by some composition of these outcomes? Are successful outcomes the same for everyone? How much change defines success?

Instead of a comprehensive body of evaluation research, existing literature on alternative education is primarily focused on what is referred to as "best practices," which are based on professional experience and on empirical work regarding various policies and practices, such as small class sizes and support-oriented relationships (e. g., Lange & Sletten, 2002; Lehr, 2004). The ensuing discussion is an effort to succinctly capture the best practices presented by the oft-cited researchers in the literature; these also were recurring themes in the interviews with administrators of Arkansas alternative education programs, summarized under the heading titled Survey of Alternative Education Programs in Arkansas. Tobin and Sprague (1999) present a similar model of best practices that includes a low student-teacher ratio, a highly structured classroom with behavioral management, a positive rather than punitive emphasis in behavior management, adult mentors at

the school, individualized behavioral interventions based on functional behavioral assessment, social skills instruction, and high-quality academic instruction.

Best Practices Cited in the Literature and Among Arkansas Practitioners

The most frequently cited best practice for alternative education is a small number of students per teacher.

Almost universally, scholars and administrators in Arkansas embrace as a "best practice" a small number of students for each teacher in a classroom. Students who are unable to cope with the variety and complexity of multiple interactions characteristic of large groups of students need the individual attention and more limited interactions provided by a lower student-to-teacher ratio. Optimal numbers are not typically presented in the professional literature because appropriate teacher-to-student ratios are thought to be relative to student needs, available resources, and local general education practices (Foley & Pang, 2006; Tobin & Sprague, 2000). There is solid evidence, however, that lower student-to-teacher ratios are positively related to increased academic performance and diminished disruptive behavior (Lange & Sletten, 2002).

Other best practices include structured classrooms, behavioral intervention and assessment, teaching social skills, and individualized remediation.

Highly structured classrooms in which expectations, rules, and schedules are clearly defined, explained, and enforced also are positively related to improved academic performance and behavioral conformity. Although students may learn to handle choices, free time, and responsibilities over time, initially adults need to establish routines, provide directions, and monitor students' behavior closely (Lipsey and Wilson, 1998). Concomitantly, there is research showing that positive behavior management is more effective than emphasis on punitive methods (Tobin & Sprague, 2000). Mayer (1995) states that positive behavior management is achieved by increasing praise for constructive individual behavior and performance and group rewards for acceptable classroom behavior. Behavioral management and academic performance are enhanced further by having adult mentors in the classroom, who develop supportive advisory relationships with students (Catalano et al.,1998).

Individualized behavioral interventions based on functional behavioral assessments are used to reduce undesirable behavior and increase desired behavior (Kearney & Tillotson, 1998). Functional behavioral assessments are aimed at identifying antecedents to and maintaining consequences of problem behavior. Individually tailored interventions are used to try to regulate antecedents and consequences in order to modify behavior.

Teaching students social skills is another best practice used by Arkansas programs that is empirically well-grounded in the literature (Lange & Sletten, 2002). Social skills facilitate development of supportive

relationships that encourage and reinforce higher achievement and self-control. Lipsey and Wilson (1998) have concluded that social skills training is as important as structured management strategies in changing behavior and academic performance. Social skills augment the learning of many academic subjects (Lange & Sletten, 2002).

Evidence shows that in addition to small group lessons effective academic instruction should include individualized remediation, including tutoring by teachers, peers, parents, and volunteers (Tobin & Sprague, 2000). When it is prudent and viable, parental assistance with homework and with emotional and behavioral problems is highly recommended by researchers and educators because it encourages high academic performance, healthy familial relations, and strong commitment to the school (Lange & Sletten, 2002). Ideally, children, parents, and teachers benefit from having parental assistance in the classroom as well. In reality, however, many parents of children in alternative learning programs are too overwhelmed with personal issues to be able to offer viable assistance in the classroom. Other adults are often used as mentors in the classroom and other settings (Lange & Sletten, 2002).

Community agency professionals, such as social workers and psychologists, are essential to addressing problems that lie beyond the expertise and skill of school personnel. School personnel often lack the knowledge and skills to address the multiplicity of problems students present, and they do not have the time to address these specialized needs. Another aspect of these services that is too often missing, but vital to satisfactory changes in behavior and performance, is regular collaborative meetings involving parents, teachers, and community agency professionals (Tobin & Sprague, 2000). To have a coordinated and synchronous intervention plan, these adults must meet together to discuss their respective roles and efforts (Epstein et al., 1999; Loeber & Farrington, 1998).

The literature is clear that effective alternative education has to be supported by school administrators and local communities. Individual teachers and principals can implement the strategies just discussed, but the lack of support and resources from central administration and the community can virtually nullify their efforts (Tobin & Sprague, 2000). Adequate funding and support from central administration is critical to resources and the operation of effective alternative education programs (Foley & Pang, 2006; Lange & Sletten, 2002).

In contrast to best practice, the literature is replete with admonitions about the dangers of alternative learning programs becoming "dumping grounds" for disruptive students and recalcitrant teachers. Programs

over-populated with disruptive and antisocial youth exacerbate individual problems and create undesirable and even dangerous group dynamics (Lange & Sletten, 2002; Tobin & Sprague, 2000). Punishing teachers by transferring them to alternative learning programs encourages poor morale, ineffective teaching, and lack of behavioral management in the classroom (Lange & Sletten, 2002).

Careful monitoring and assessment are needed in alternative learning programs to maintain a positive learning environment because adolescence is a stage in the life span when peers have robust influence (Loeber & Farrington, 1998). Youths not only learn from and reinforce each other, but also inhibit and exploit or victimize one another. A concentration of antisocial youth can cause serious problems for adolescents who struggle with emotions and learning disabilities. The wrong mix of students can effectively stymie or impede learning through disruptive and intimidating behavior (Loeber & Farrington, 1998).

Educators should have specialized education for teaching in alternative learning programs.

The diversity and intensity of problems found in alternative learning programs (Kleiner, Porch, & Farris, 2002) suggest that teachers should have specialized education to identify and address the different mixes of multiple problems. A few examples of existing programs that educate alternative learning teachers in other states are provided in Appendix C. Currently, some teachers attend periodic workshops and conferences aimed at alternative education in Arkansas, but no universities in the state have been identified that offer courses or a concentration specifically aimed at teaching alternative learning students.

There are training modules available on the internet for teachers and other staff (http://alternativeed.sjsu.edu/index.html). These avenues of education provide highly useful information about how to teach in alternative learning programs. Evidence from various fields suggests that the diversity and intensity of problems found in most alternative learning programs require in-depth knowledge and specialized skills that are taught in university programs (Lange & Sletten, 2002). According to ALE administrators in Arkansas, teachers need more specialized knowledge and skill to identify and address the variety of problems presented by students, a position supported in the literature (White & Kochhar-Bryant, 2006).

Process and outcome evaluations are needed to determine the effectiveness of these programs.

Finally, a recurring theme in the literature is the dire need for alternative education programs to be rigorously and continuously evaluated in regard to student progress, costs, and family and staff satisfaction. Process evaluations are needed to determine how well programs are implemented; and outcome evaluations are needed to determine what interventions are effective for which subgroups of students under specified conditions.

It is not realistic to assume that any single set of intervention strategies can effectively change an outcome (attitudes, cognitions, behavior) for all types of students being placed in alternative learning programs. Evidence in the more general literature on adolescents indicates that different sets of interventions are needed to effectively address different types of problems (Loeber & Farrington, 1998). Hence, different individualized intervention plans are needed in any alternative learning program. Larger districts may want to consider setting up specialized programs, since there is evidence that suggests specialized alternative learning programs may be more effective than more generic programs (Cox et al., 1995).

The whole thrust of rigorous program evaluation and empirically-based practice would need to be actively supported and institutionalized. Presently, many states cannot provide any information about their alternative learning programs because these programs are locally instituted and managed, and there is no reporting mechanism between the state and local school districts. A survey done by the Arkansas Bureau of Legislative Research in March 2006 indicates that 12 of the 39 states that responded could not answer questions about their alternative learning programs because they are administered locally with no system of accountability to the state. None of the states reported that they have any systematic evaluation of alternative learning programs. Moreover, the vast majority of states surveyed do not collect the information requested, including the number and characteristics of alternative learning students, prevalence of special education or free or reduced lunch students in alternative learning programs, types of facilities, reasons for referrals, staffing, and size of communities where programs are located.

Survey of State Commissioners or Superintendents of Education

Of the 39 out 49 states that responded, only 27 were able to provide data on their programs.

The survey questionnaire (Appendix D) was sent to 49 state (excluding Arkansas) commissioners or superintendents of education. Only 10 of the states failed to respond after the third contact (the first and second contacts included the questionnaire, while the third contact requested the definition of, and any formal statement regarding, alternative education). Of the 39 states that responded, only 27 states were able to provide data on their alternative learning programs while the other 12 states reported that they do not collect information on locally administered programs. Among the 27 states that provided information, there was considerable missing data, primarily due to lack of reporting mechanisms from alternative learning programs to the state. For example, of these 27 states, 14 states did report on the number of separate facilities for alternative learning programs.

Fourteen states reported that the percentage of students in alternative learning programs ranged from 1% to 4%.

The percentage of the total student population that were in alternative learning programs varied from 1% to 4% among the 15 states that reported both figures, with one exception that reported 12%. Ten states reported on the percentage of alternative learning students who are in special education with an Individualized Education Program (IEP), which ranged from 4% to 43%. The percentage of alternative learning students who received free or reduced price lunches varied from 23% to 90% among the seven states that had this information.

Table 1 shows what percentage of the 21 responding states indicated specific factors in the listing. The designations indicated are may be used or is used for factors determining the transfer students to alternative learning programs.

Table 1. Percent of States Indicating a Factor **May Be** and **Is** Used to Transfer to Alternative Learning Programs

Factor	May Be Used	Is Used
Possession of firearms	66%	59%
Possession or use of other weapon	71%	65%
Illegal drugs	81%	69%
Arrests	95%	75%
Physical attacks	95%	73%
Disruptive verbal	95%	80%
Chronic Truancy	91%	82%
Chronic academic failure	83%	67%
Pregnancy	71%	53%
Mental health needs	71%	50%
Academic failure	83%	64%

Note: This table differentiates between what can be done and what actually has been done.

Table 1 clearly indicates that the majority of states can and will use any of the factors shown as reasons for placing students in alternative learning programs. The least used factors include mental health needs and pregnancy as reasons for placement.

Table 2. Extent to Which Different Sources of Referral are Used for Placement in Alternative Learning Programs

Means	Not at all		Small Extent		Moderate Extent		Large Extent	
	Sp Ed	Other	Sp Ed	Other	Sp Ed	Other	Sp Ed	Other
Dir. of Special Ed	23.8%	47.4%	14.3%	36.8%	33.3%	0	28.6%	15.8%
IEP Team	4.5%	63.2%	9.1%	21.1%	18.2%	5.3%	68.2%	10.5%
School Staff	9.5%	0	19.0%	5.0%	42.9%	20.0%	28.6%	75.0%
Student Request	19.0%	4.8%	0	57.1%	61.9%	19.0%	19.1%	19.0%
Parent Request	14.3%	4.8%	61.9%	52.4%	19.0%	33.3%	4.8%	9.6%
FBA	25.0%	31.6%	35.0%	42.1%	20.0%	15.8%	20.0%	10.5%
Justice	23.8%	0	52.4%	65.0%	14.3%	20.0%	9.5%	15.0%

Note: Percentage of states that use the different sources of referral shown in the table for placement of special education students and of other students. IEP is Individualized Education Program, whereas FBA is Functional Behavior Assessment. Twenty-one states responded.

As expected, a much larger percentage (68.2% versus 10.5%) of states use an Individualized Education Program (IEP) team to a large extent for alternative learning placements of special education students than of other students. Accordingly, the percentage of states that report students are to a large extent placed in alternative learning programs by school staff is considerably smaller (28.6% versus 75%) for special education than for other students.

It is worth noting that 61.9% of the states report that special education students are placed in alternative learning programs at their own request to a moderate extent. Other students are placed in these programs at their own request to a small extent in 57.1% of the states.

Table 3. Importance of Factor in Determining Return to Regular Classroom

Factor	Not important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Improved grades	0	44.4%	55.6%
Improved behavior	0	26.3%	73.7%
Readiness/assessment	27.8%	44.4%	27.8%
Space	81.0%	19%	0
Approval of regular school	11.8%	35.3%	52.9%
Approval of ALE staff	0	16.7%	83.3%

Note: Percentages based on 21 states that reported data.

With the exception of physical space considerations the majority of states find the factors shown in Table 3 to be at least somewhat important in decisions about returning students to regular classrooms after being in alternative learning programs. Clearly the largest percentages show that the majority of states rate improved behavior and alternative learning staff approval (73.7% and 83.3% respectively) as very important in making this decision.

Table 4. Curriculum and Services Offered in Alternative Learning

Curriculum/Service	Offered	Not offered
Small Class	61.1%	38.9%
Remedial instruction	72.2%	27.8%
Academic counseling	77.8%	22.2%
Career counseling	72.2%	27.8%
Psychological counseling	72.2%	27.8%
Crisis/behavioral	61.1%	38.9%
Social work	61.1%	38.9%
Peer mediation	35.3%	64.7%
Extended school day/year	29.4%	70.6%
Evening/weekend classes	55.6%	44.4%
Classes for regular diploma	94.4%	5.6%
Preparation for GED exam	55.6%	44.4%
Vocational skills	72.2%	27.8%
Opportunity to take classes at other schools	52.8%	47.2%
Security personnel on site	35.3%	64.7%
Opportunity for self-paced instruction	66.7%	33.3%
Other	80%	20%

Note: Percentages based on 18 states that reported data.

Table 4 indicates that the majority of the 18 responding states offer the curriculum or services shown, with the exceptions of peer mediation, extended school day or year, and onsite security. A little over a half of the states offer evening or weekend classes, preparation for the General Education Development (GED) certificate exam, and opportunities to take classes at regular schools.

Table 5. Extent of Collaboration with Other Agencies to Provide Services

Service	None	A Little	Some	Often
Child protective	4.8%	9.5%	61.9%	23.8%
Mental health	0%	9.5%	38.1%	52.4%
Community organization	5%	5%	45%	45%
Job placement	5%	5%	50%	40%
Crisis intervention center	5%	0%	80%	15%
Drug/alcohol Treatment	9.5%	0%	61.9%	28.6%
Family Association	5%	10%	65%	20%
Family planning/child care/child placement	5%	25%	60%	10%
Health & human services	5%	5%	65%	25%
Juvenile Justice	0%	10%	30%	60%
Parks & Recreation	5%	40%	50%	5%
Police	10%	20%	45%	25%
Other	0%	0%	7.4%	0%

Note: Percentages shown of 21 states that responded to these items.

Among the 27 states that responded and provided information, 20 reported that alternative learning programs were designed for dropout prevention, 21 said they were for transition back to regular school, 12 indicated they were for preparation for GED testing, and 5 stated they were for completion of elementary school (administrators could check as many of these responses as applicable).

Concerning curriculum design, 19 of these 27 states reported the curriculum was designed for academic development, 13 indicated it was for GED certificate preparation, 19 reported it was for personal and social development, and 16 indicated it was for career development. The types of diplomas offered on completion of the programs vary widely. Seven of the 27 states indicated that they offer a separate alternative school diploma; 20 gave a regular diploma; seven offered a GED; five provided a certificate; three states checked "other"; and two states offered no diploma or certificate. Administrators could check as many of these responses as applicable on both of the above questions.

Finally, 20 of the 27 states that provided data indicated they have formal definitions of alternative education; three states reported that they do not have definitions; and four states failed to respond. Fifteen states indicated that they have formal statements regarding alternative learning programs; eight states reported that they do not have formal statements; and four states provided no response. The definitions are listed in Appendix A.

Survey of Alternative Education Programs in Arkansas

This section discusses responses to in-depth interviews conducted with administrators (primarily principals) and teachers by Bureau of Legislative Research staff to learn about policies and practices of existing ALE programs in Arkansas. Programs were selected in concert with the Arkansas Department of Education to be representative of the kinds and qualities of existing ALE programs in Arkansas. The names and specific locations of programs are withheld at the request of the Arkansas Department of Education and program administrators because efforts are in progress to make improvements in weaker programs.

Program A is housed in a separate building and has a high degree of community and parent involvement.

Program A

One of the exemplary alternative education programs identified by the ADE is located in a small rural town in the southern part of Arkansas, where the principal, who also teaches in the program, was interviewed. This program has 32 high school students, including four pupils in special education, who are taught by two special education teachers. In addition to the principal, there is a counselor, but there are no paraprofessionals. The program is housed in a renovated building, which was refurbished by the community. Referrals to this program come primarily from regular school staff, who must provide a thorough description of problems, remediation efforts, curriculum, and performance for each referral. Parents and students must agree to placement in the ALE program. Parents have a choice of either accepting the ALE program referral or finding another school. The program requires parents or a caregiver to actively assist in the ALE program. The principal reports that about 85% of the parents are willing and able to assist their child and the teachers in their child's education and social development. In the remaining cases, a caregiver, such as a grandparent, assumes responsibilities for assisting in the classroom. A 45-minute orientation to the program is provided by the principal before parents sign a contract that specifies the responsibilities they are expected to assume. To empower them to help their child, parents and caregivers are offered classes in skills like nutrition, health, and computing. To further promote parental assistance, supportive relationships between parents and children, and identification with the ALE program, students teach their parents about the subjects they are learning in school.

There is a resource officer affiliated with the school district that ensures attendance through working with parents or caregivers. The principal attributes most of her success in the program to a highly systematic curriculum, with clearly stated operational objectives, regular parental involvement, collaboration with social agencies, and support from the community. The program provides the standard curriculum used in the district where it is located, using the same textbooks, assignments, and

assessments of performance. According to the principal, teachers offer a highly structured, individualized curriculum and emphasize high expectations and supportive interactions with students. A premium is placed on one-to-one instruction and individualized performance goals. As an example of community support, she cited the auspicious beginning of the school when the community came together to refurbish the facility in which the ALE program is housed. She clearly embraces the model of collaborative relationships between school personnel and community agency professionals. She also is an avid proponent of involving ALE students in community projects. During the past year, for example, students hosted a banquet for the elderly in the community as part of their social studies class.

Program B serves primarily chronic delinquents for a minimum of one semester. Most stay a year.

Program B

Another program identified as successful by the ADE is located in a central Arkansas school district. It is designed primarily for chronic delinquents in grades 7 through 12, most of whom are gang members. Almost all program participants have been suspended or expelled from regular public schools, and many have been adjudicated in the juvenile court. Aside from gang membership, the majority of the students have been arrested for assault, drug offenses, carrying weapons, and various crimes of violence. The principal and a teacher identified the program as a "last chance" for offenders who, in most cases, are charged with adult (or felonious) crimes. The daily enrollment since opening the program in October 2005 has varied from 65 to 90 students. Students are assigned to the program for no less than one semester, and the plan is to have most students stay about one year. Students and parents have a choice of entering the ALE program or receiving the sanction, including incarceration, designated by the juvenile justice system. The principal stated that he wanted to involve parents and caregivers in his program incrementally over time because the program is still in its embryonic stage of development. Also, many students come from single-parent families that are already struggling with the adversities of poverty, such as inability to take time off from work, lack of transportation and child care, and dysfunctional familial patterns.

Presently, this program has eight certified teachers (four certified for middle childhood and four for secondary or high school) - one is a special education teacher and one is a health teacher. Other staff include a part-time counselor and a part-time bus driver, one media clerk, and four paraprofessionals. They provide an individualized standard curriculum based on the lesson plans, books, and assignments from the referring public schools. The principal labeled the lessons as "curriculum recovery," which means that most students are having to learn material that they should have learned in an earlier grade. Hence, he must have curriculum and materials for multiple grade-levels used

throughout the school district.

The principal believes that the success he has had so far is primarily due to very dedicated teachers, highly structured behavioral management and curriculum, and a good balance of caring relationships and emphasis on the consequences of unwanted behavior. The principal and teacher indicated that the program is based on military regimens, including but not limited to, addressing adults respectfully, obeying instructions, and immediate and certain sanctions for misbehavior.

The program is located in converted offices. Although the principal is very appreciative of the space that has been provided, he stated it is too small and not very suitable for classroom teaching. Presently, there is a shortage of equipment (e. g., computers) and supplies (e. g., textbooks), and he is writing a grant to try to hire a full-time counselor or social worker. Collaborative relationships with community agencies are still being established, which has resulted in established services being interrupted in some cases by the transfer of students to the ALE program.

Program C is located in a remote building and has served students from multiple districts with a highly varied mix of needs ranging from third graders to sex offenders.

Program C

In contrast, an ALE program located in a small rural town in the southern part of Arkansas was identified as needing considerable improvement by the ADE. This program is closing and being reconstituted for next year (2006-07); however, it is discussed because the programmatic weaknesses are typical of the limitations discussed throughout the literature (Lange & Sletten, 2002). The program was originally created for one school district, but through informal arrangements made at different points in time, students have entered this ALE program from four separate districts. At the time of the interview (April, 2006), there were 39 students from the four school districts.

The program is further handicapped by being located in a renovated building that is at least 15 miles from the nearest school. This distance, according to the principal, has contributed to the lack of community involvement in the program and to minimal involvement of parents or caregivers. At the same time, the interview discussion suggested that the principal had not spent much time trying to encourage greater involvement from parents or the community. Together with the lack of supplies, equipment, and books, these deficiencies have led the Department of Education to identify this program as in need of improvement.

The principal reported that 95% of his students graduate, 75% return to a regular class, and about 25% return to his program because of behavioral problems in the regular classroom.

The program has a heterogeneous population, comprised of students who have learning disabilities, mental health problems, aggression, and serious criminal histories. This heterogeneity was identified by the principal as a particularly challenging problem in trying to meet the standards of the ADE (he brought up the issue of meeting ADE standards and discussed it without any comment from the interviewer). He clearly characterized his program as a "last chance" opportunity for most students, and he vacillated between whether many of his students would be better off in his program or in the juvenile justice system.

The program is delivered by two regular teachers, a special education teacher, and a paraprofessional. Most placements have been mandatory. Parents receive an orientation from the principal, and are required to sign a contract that they will support educational efforts, including discipline. However, parents are not required, nor have they volunteered in most cases, to assist in the classroom. The program has some collaboration with social agencies; however, the interviewer's impression was that these contacts have been sporadic. Moreover, there did not seem to be any concerted attempt to have joint meetings between parents, teachers, and community professionals to coordinate intervention efforts.

One of the most salient departures from other alternative learning programs that came to light was the principal's belief that ALE students cannot be expected to succeed in the same curriculum as delivered in the regular classroom. This principal uses the PACE (Pace Learning Systems, Inc., n.d.) system of performance assessment, and believes it identifies deficiencies that need to be individually addressed. He believes that his teachers can decide on an individual basis what materials and assignments are most useful to particular students. As a result, his teachers do not use the same lesson plans, assignments, and materials as are used elsewhere in the four districts that refer students. This more improvised approach to educational practices seemed to characterize the whole ALE program. For example, there did not seem to be designated procedures for ensuring that students received community services, or that parents would be consulted about services provided. The whole program seemed to be more loosely organized and operated than other programs surveyed (in fairness, it should be emphasized that this observation is based on a telephone interview and not on a visit to the program site).

Finally, the principal volunteered information that there were three sex offenders in a program that spans grades 3 through 12. More generally, the diversity of ages and problems in this program appeared to be problematic to the interviewer.

Programs D and E also serve a wide variety of students' needs, but provide few services with limited staff and a shortage of supplies, equipment, and books.

Programs D and E

Two other ALE programs identified by the ADE as needing improvement are located in a larger city in the central part of Arkansas. One is a middle school, whereas the other is a high school in the same district. Since both schools have had very similar programmatic deficiencies as the one just discussed, they will be examined together and more succinctly. The middle school (grades 6 - 8) has 120 students that were referred to the ALE program because of suspensions for behavioral problems, including chronic truancy. These ALE students receive the same curriculum as their counterparts in this school district, and their individualized educational plans follow them into the ALE program (e. g., speech therapy, social work). When asked about collaboration with community agencies, the administrator hesitantly responded that they do have a contractual arrangement with mental health centers; but probing indicated that they do not have other ongoing collaborative relationships (e.g., DHS). The visits to both schools by mental health professionals seemed to be regular; however, there was no indication that there were joint meetings with parents, community professionals, and school staff. The district has hired a counselor, a social worker, and a nurse, who divide their time between the two schools.

Placements in these ALE programs are almost entirely mandatory, except parents can request placement in the high school (grades 9 - 12) where there is an "accelerated program." This accelerated program (labeled ACC program) is designed for adolescents who need courses and more individualized assistance to graduate. It is in essence a remedial program designed to advance adolescents to the level of performance that warrants graduation from high school. About 40 of the 250 students at this high school are in the accelerated program. The other students are in the ALE program because of suspensions for behavior problems and delinquency.

After receiving an hour orientation, parents must enter into a contract that they will support educational and disciplinary practices of the school. However, parents are not required to assist in the classroom because of the same type of problems enumerated for Program B.

Until very recently (past few months), the two old school buildings in which these programs are located needed considerable repair and painting, and both programs had a shortage of supplies, equipment (e. g., computers), and books. They also had a shortage of teachers, with a student-to-teacher ratio of about 20:1, which is above the state ALE requirements of 15:1. After being advised by the state Coordinator of

ALE programming, the district hired seven new teachers to bring the student-to-teacher ratio of 15:1, and the district is in the process of acquiring supplies, textbooks, and equipment, although a shortage of computers remains according to program administrators.

Presently, there are 24 certified teachers and 15 classified staff at the high school, and 15 certified teachers and 15 classified staff at the middle school. The ALE Coordinator reported that there are also some very dedicated and highly competent teachers in both programs. At the same time, there are indications from more than one source that these programs are, in many respects, "dumping grounds" for problem youths and teachers. According to the state ALE Coordinator, both programs have made significant progress in having adequate facilities, supplies, books, and teachers.

Programs F, G, H, and I are four programs located in one district broken out to meet different needs in the area.

Programs F, G, H, and I

Another program identified as needing improvement is located in a larger metropolitan area in the southern part of Arkansas. The school is actually comprised of four separate and distinct programs. For grades 9 - 12, there is a program (Program F) that is primarily designed for students who need academic assistance (courses and individualized attention), and a program (Program G) for students with behavior problems. The same two types of programs (Programs H and I) are also designed for grades 7 and 8 in this school district.

More specifically, Program F is designed for two basic types of students: 1) those who, for various reasons, are needing academic assistance to graduate, and 2) those who choose to be in a smaller school. There are approximately 120 students (grades 9 - 12) in this ALE program, with about 35 seniors. The majority of these students are juniors and seniors, who selected this ALE program to make-up or pick-up classes for graduation. The other two major contingents of students are adolescents who choose to be in the program for smaller classes, or are referred to the program because they are pregnant or have a problem that may require individual assistance (e. g., language).

There are nine certified teachers and three aides in Program F, who also comprise a committee that must approve all admissions. Many students are self- and parent-referred, whereas the norm in the state is students who are placed in ALE programs. The curriculum, including lesson plans, assignments, and books, is the same in Program F as offered in the district. According to the principal of the ALE program, the expectations are basically the same for all students in the district, except ALE students may need individual lesson plans to attain grade-level performance.

There also is a second ALE program (Program G) for grades 9 - 12, and it is referred to as the "second chance" program by the district. It has approximately 60 to 90 students at any given time, and most students are referred by regular classroom teachers and administrators because of serious behavioral problems. The principal, who administers all four ALE programs in this district, admitted that this program has policies and practices that need attention. For example, he noted that the number of students in Program G fluctuates by as much as 20 students during the school year. The majority of students in Program G have been given the option of entering the program or being expelled. Students typically remain in this program from one semester to a year.

Program G has four part-time (two teach in the morning and two in the afternoon) certified teachers, and two aides. The program is designed to deliver the same curriculum as used in the district; however, the principal was quite candid in admitting that with a 25% absenteeism rate each day and serious behavioral problems, the teachers are severely hampered in their ability to ensure performance. Programs F and G, according to the principal, are housed in different buildings on the campus. The tenor of the interview suggested that Program G receives relatively limited attention and supplies from the district. The principal, on the other hand, did seem quite concerned that the students needed a "different kind of education" than is typically offered in public schools. His description of what should be offered was very much like a vocational or technical school approach. Succinctly, he described how many of these students were interested in how to do electrical work, plumbing, or carpentry, but they would not be interested in studying electrical or architectural engineering at a university.

The third ALE program (Program H) in this district is for grades 7 and 8, and it was described as being very much like Program F, except there are 20 students. Also, there are three teachers, who deliver the same curriculum as found in the district, without aides. The principal reported that these students have the same performance expectations as students in traditional classrooms in the district. The purpose of the program and admission criteria are the same as for Program F, and no noteworthy dissimilarities between these programs were conveyed by the principal.

The final program (Program I), according to the principal, is an ALE program for "detention students." It has about 20 students in grades 7 and 8, with two teachers and four aides. It is designed for students who cannot control their behavior in the regular classroom and need academic assistance. This program seemed to have less absenteeism

and general behavioral problems than its counterpart for older adolescents (Program G), but there appeared to be some of the same problems with lack of supplies, clear program direction, and low expectation of performance from students.

In programs represented by Program J, teachers rotate for classes in an ALE room.

Program J

The primary purpose of this discussion of alternative programs is to present the different types of ALE programs found in Arkansas. Program J is actually a representation of several similar ALE programs found throughout Arkansas; a single prototypical description is presented for parsimony and to avoid redundancy. In Program J, teachers typically rotate overseeing the "ALE room" for an hour or so, where students are sent for varying periods of time because they were unruly or disruptive in their regular classroom. Teachers report that they attempt to assist individual students with their assignments, while managing behavioral problems that are inherent in concentrating several disobedient children in one room. Program J essentially is a "time out room," where there is potential for highly qualified tutoring when attempts to manage behavioral problems of several students are successful. Only children who are in ALE programs for at least 20 days can be counted as ALE students. A few schools seem to have a small number of children in ALE classrooms who are not counted as ALE students because of the brevity of their stays in the room. However, the lack of clearly specified purposes, duration, and continuity makes these programs much more managerial than educational. Also, too many recalcitrant students are simply being shuffled for brief durations between the ALE room and their regular classroom, making viable educational remediation virtually impossible, even for the most dedicated teacher.

Program K serves students with behavior problems and those who have engaged in criminal conduct.

Program K

In contrast, Program K is located in a larger town in the lower Delta, and is identified by ADE as a successful program. It is designed for adolescents, grades 7 - 12, who have behavioral problems and engage in criminal conduct. Over a period of one year, approximately 100 adolescents are in this ALE program, and they include truants, youths with poor social skills and low grades, drug users and dealers, and gang members. Presently, there are 60 students in the program, and the majority are delinquents who have several interrelated problems such as poor social skills and low academic performance. Typically, they come from single-parent families that suffer the adversities often associated with poverty, including unemployment, drug/alcohol problems, abuse, and despair. As a result, very few parents are actively involved in the ALE program, despite signing a contract encouraging parental support in the classroom and with homework. Students must be accepted by a committee of teachers who teach in the ALE program. Eight teachers

are affiliated with the programs, two of whom are on waiver certificates. Also, there is a nurse and a counselor who divide their time between the ALE program and other schools in the district, and there are counseling services from Arkansas Counseling Center.

Similar to other ALE programs, Program K has the same core curriculum as the other schools in the district, including lesson plans, assignments, books, and exams. However, the program offers training in specific skills directly needed in local businesses. For example, the program provides training that allows students to be licensed as nursing assistants, and some of their courses are counted toward meeting requirements of a LPN program at the local college. Other students choose to take courses in food production to learn how to work in and eventually manage a restaurant - the principal was quick to point out that many impoverished Delta students are from a culture where certain skills expected of restaurant employees are not the norm. College credit up to 15 hours can be attained while in this ALE program in an effort to motivate these Delta students, whose community role models too often are victims of poverty-related ills and despair. The principal, who teaches in the program, described a slow arduous process of developing community support for a program that was initially viewed with suspicion and labeled as special education, with all the negative connotations. This principal attributes her success to support from the district, and to dedicated teachers who are willing to work long hours with individual students to help them learn academic and interpersonal skills.

Program L is located in a large city and provides many services for the variety of students participating in the program.

Program L and More

A program similar to the one just discussed is found in a larger city in the northwest part of Arkansas, which has about 115 junior and senior high students who are referred for truancy, academic and behavioral problems, pregnancy, and serious and chronic delinquency, including drug offenses and gang activities. This program begins each school year with about 60 students because they send junior high students back to their regular classroom at the end of the year. This program has 13 certified teachers, a media specialist, a counselor, and an aide who works in day care with children of mothers who are in the ALE program. The ALE curriculum is the same in all respects as the one in the district, except it is more individualized in terms of grade levels. Students in the program receive regular counseling from the local mental health clinic, and support from corporate sponsors who are involved with students in extra-curricular activities, such as going fishing or to ball games.

To avoid redundancy, only a few more unique features of Program L are presented. Many of the teachers are former principals and

superintendents who decided to teach in this program rather than retire. Additionally, although this program has experienced the same problems with lack of parental involvement as other programs discussed, it has managed to increase participation by having chili parties and picnics for parents. Moreover, parents are required to meet with teachers at least twice a year to discuss report cards. A particularly salient aspect of the program is the exceptionally well-specified goals, objectives, and activities, which are regularly evaluated and modified as needed. Most programs surveyed have some degree of these elements, but systematic organization and evaluation seems to be a signature feature of Program L. Students who are chronically truant, or cause too many disruptions in this program, are given a family-in-need-of-services petition by the juvenile justice system, and counselors in that system work with families to resolve the problems identified. There are three tracks in the program: 1) one deals more with behavioral problems, 2) another is designed primarily for academic issues, and 3) the final track is oriented to students who are more interested in vocational training. Each track uses the standard curriculum for the district, which is taught by certified teachers, but the first track emphasizes Boys Town training to handle behavior problems, while the second track emphasizes individualized academic help. Students in the third track spend half a day in a vocational training program at a nearby university.

This district also has some unique ALE programs that will be more succinctly discussed for parsimony. There is an early intervention kindergarten where about 15 students are taught skills by four teachers and four aides that get them ready for schoolwork in regular classes. Typically, students have deficiencies in learning skills and behavior problems that are addressed for a year in this early intervention. The vast majority of these students come from "dysfunctional family" environments with a plethora of problems. Students and parents receive regular mental health services from community agencies, and there seems to be close collaboration between ALE programs and these agencies.

There are three programs, known as opportunity classes, located in different schools for children in elementary grades. There are 15 students and a certified teacher in each of the classes. The standard curriculum for the district is used in these classes, and students have academic and/or behavior problems. There are ongoing services from mental health and health agencies in the community.

There is a "credit recovery program" designed for high school students. Only students who, for various reasons, need classes to graduate are allowed in this program, e. g., no one can enter the program simply to accelerate their graduation. Instructors in this program, without

exception, are certified high school teachers, who teach the same classes in regular school during the day.

Program M is based with the juvenile justice system of this community.

Program M

The final program discussed represents a considerably different approach to alternative education because of its location in a juvenile justice system instead of the more traditional school setting. Indeed, this ALE program is run by the juvenile division of the chancery court in north-central Arkansas. This program has 85 students, 22 of whom are special education students. It is housed in two different facilities; one for grades 5 - 8, and the other for grades 9 - 12. The program actually serves six school districts, which are billed for ALE services. The director explained that this arrangement had worked very well over time, but she is having to orient two new superintendents to the services provided by her ALE program. This director, along with a juvenile court judge, started this ALE program as an alternative to expulsions from school. Approximately half of the students in the ALE program have had contact with the juvenile justice system; many of the others were referred to the program in lieu of involving the legal system. According to the director, there are no gang members because of the geographical location of the city; however, about 75% of the students in the ALE program have used and sold illegal drugs.

All students in this ALE program are referred by a school district (self- or parent-referrals are not permitted), and parents are required to sign a contract that they will attend an eight-week Parent Empowerment Group and all conferences with teachers. The director reported that she had a parent attendance rate of about 95% because of the emphasis put on how failure to attend could jeopardize their child's standing in the program. The director indicated that they have limited truancy and other behavioral problems because of the presence of probation officers in their building, who do get involved in truancy. Also, adolescents who have engaged in serious delinquency have been sent to the local detention center.

This program has five certified teachers for high school and four for middle school, three of whom have received certification through alternative routes. There is a counselor and several community agency professionals who provide regular health, mental health, and drug education services. Collaboration with community agencies seemed to be well-established and long-running. In addition, students receive eight weeks of Aggression Replacement Treatment in school, which is coordinated with the eight-week training received by parents (discussed above). Students and their parents learn how to better relate to each other to resolve familial difficulties. The director believes that

mandatory uniforms have eliminated many of the problems associated with "class distinctions" typically made during adolescence, and reduced behavioral problems more generally. Different colors designate the four levels that students can achieve during the program, which are earned by conformity to rules and performance in school.

The curriculum offered in this private ALE program is approved by the Arkansas Department of Education. While it has the same educational themes as standard curriculum in the schools served, it does not exactly mirror all curricula offered by the various districts. It does have clearly specified goals, objectives, and teaching and assessment strategies.

ALE Administrators' Recommendations

To protect anonymity and confidentiality, recommendations made by various directors and administrators of ALE programs in Arkansas for improving ALE programs in the state are compiled and summarized. It should be noted that there was a very high degree of agreement about these changes, despite separate telephone interviews with each administrator and no coaching from the interviewer.

1) Teachers should receive specialized education to teach ALE students. The Arkansas Department of Education offers excellent workshops and conferences, and there is internet training modules (http://alternativeed.sjsu.edu/index.html) available to teachers. However, almost every administrator interviewed stated that teachers need more prolonged and intense education in how to address the multiplicity of problems presented by ALE students. Teachers must understand students with emotional, behavioral, cognitive, and familial problems to be able to fully reach them in teaching. Examples of programs that offer a concentration of courses relevant to teaching ALE students are presented in Appendix C**.**

2) Many programs are not well-supported by district administrators and consequently are lacking money, adequate space, materials, and faculty. Accounting for how money allocated to the district for ALE students is spent is an issue.

3) Concomitantly, many programs are run by teachers instead of administrators, and the former often lack the experience and authority to fully administer the program and lobby for resources.

4) "Hazard duty pay" was recommended by most administrators. The reality is that teaching in ALE programs is more challenging and hazardous than regular classroom assignments, and to get highly qualified and dedicated teachers, there needs to be a financial incentive.

5) Buildings that are designed for instructional purposes are needed (several ALE programs are housed in renovated facilities that were designed for different purposes, such as office space and fire stations that are not suitable for classrooms). Also, programs can become isolated and stigmatized when they are located too far from regular schools.

6) Most administrators indicated a need for more funding for equipment and supplies. Almost all, if not all, administrators expressed strong gratitude for the funding available for ALE programs. However, the majority stated that more money is needed to fully implement an adequate education for these students. They indicated that they need more money for supplies and equipment, especially computers.

7) Many administrators indicated a need for a type of "start-up" grant or fund for programs that are just beginning and have immediate and unusual need for large quantities of supplies and equipment (e.g., computers).

8) It was recommended that existing and new programs should submit program proposals to the ADE for approval. The proposals should use a strategic approach to refine definitions of purpose, application, and success. Some advantages of a strategic approach include:
(a) stakeholders are involved in planning and decision making; (b) the scope of alternative education can be defined along with roles and responsibilities of contributing groups and individuals; (c) commitments are made to core values and the mission of alternative education; (d) best practices can be systematically benchmarked; (e) needs can be assessed along a range of methods (e.g., situation analysis, asset inventories);
(f) management tools can be developed, including schedules and milestones, goals and objectives, action plans, implementation plans, operating plans, monitoring

plans, and evaluation and improvement plans; and (g) administrators can monitor milestones and critical success factors, improve implementation plans and operations, evaluate outcomes, disseminate findings, and institutionalize the components of the program(s) that work.

9) Related to these items, several program administrators and members of the Pygmalion Commission noted that the current coordinator of alternative education programs for the Department of Education needs regional managers to help her oversee programs in the state. All agree that she has performed at a stellar level in accomplishing Herculean tasks, including but not limited to, creating standards, meeting with numerous constituencies, monitoring programs, and conducting training workshops and organizing conferences. However, no one person can oversee about 250 programs and assume all the responsibilities that are assigned to the current state ALE Coordinator position.

Professional Development

There is agreement that the Arkansas Department of Education has provided much needed training, but that training in the post-secondary education arena is also needed.

The Arkansas Department of Education, the Arkansas Association of Alternative Educators, and the Pygmalion Commission provide at least two alternative learning environment training sessions in Arkansas each year. This training provides information concerning the establishing and redeveloping of ALE programs. The emphasis of this interactive six-hour training session focuses on rules, standards, reporting, monitoring, forms, funding, and program development components for the enhancement of alternative learning environment programs. (http://arkedu.state.ar.us/commemos/custview.cgi?filename=2962&sortby=memotype)

Each year the Arkansas Association of Alternative Educators offers a statewide conference to educators and administrators featuring local and nationally-recognized speakers. The 7th Annual Alternative Education Conference, for example, is July 23-25, 2006, in Hot Springs (http://www.arkaltedu.org/Conference%20Registration%20Fax.pdf).

There also is a 17-module training sequence available on the internet for teachers who are preparing to teach, or currently teach, in ALE programs: (http://alternativeed.sjsu.edu/index.html).

There is a national professional development website where teachers can receive virtual instruction in math and science, and learn about national conferences that present more knowledge and skills regarding

these topics: (http://education.ti.com/educationportal/sites/US/sectionHome/pd.html)

Finally, the ALE Coordinator in the Department of Education does ongoing training as she makes site visits to monitor programs and also provides training upon request. These professional development efforts receive high accolades from and are greatly appreciated by ALE administrators, teachers, and other district officials.

However, repeatedly administrators volunteered that teachers need a more concentrated and prolonged training to fully deal with the multitudinous problems presented by students referred to ALE programs. Workshops and internet courses cannot convey the knowledge and skills necessary to teach students who have some combination of emotional, behavioral, learning, and familial problems. Administrators believe that there needs to be a supervised clinical internship, for example, in an alternative learning setting, where prospective teachers can apply knowledge and practice skills before being confronted with a group of students who have multiple problems. Examples of existing programs for ALE teachers in the country are presented in Appendix C**.**

Standards

Arkansas Department of Education rules require that every district establish an alternative learning environment that provides an environment conducive to learning.

Alternative education programs in Arkansas must be approved by the Arkansas Department of Education according to the "Rules Governing the Distribution of Student Special Needs Funding and the Determination of Allowable Expenditure of These Funds." (Appendix F) (http://arkedu.state.ar.us/rules/rules_pending_pg2.html). These rules state that an alternative learning environment is a student intervention program in compliance with Arkansas Code Ann. §§ 6-18-508 and 6-18-509 (these code sections are provided in Appendix G). The ALE program and its environment must be approved by the ADE, according to these code sections, which read in part:

> "Every school district shall establish an alternative learning environment that shall afford students an environment conducive to learning. The Department of Education shall establish criteria for teacher preparation for alternative learning environments, which shall include in-service training.
>
> A student assigned to an alternative class or school for behavioral reasons must receive intervention services designed to address the student's behavioral problems. Such intervention services shall not be punitive in nature but must be designed for long-term improvement of the student's ability to control his or her behavior."

Generally, teachers in the ALE program must be certified to teach by the Department of Education, and programs must have paraprofessionals to assist teachers with students. The ADE is mandated to provide training and assistance to ALE programs, and must periodically (not less than every three years) monitor these programs "to ensure that alternative learning environments have been established, are conducive to learning, and are providing intervention services designed to address individual needs of students." School districts must submit an annual assurance statement that they are in compliance with the establishment of an alternative learning environment.

Other standards are being developed by the ADE, the Arkansas Association of Alternative Educators, and the Pygmalion Commission. Programs must be approved by the ADE and guidelines for approval are being developed by the same organizations. The complete rules and proposed changes under review are in Appendix F and the Pygmalion Commission guidelines are in Appendix E.

Funding Adequacy

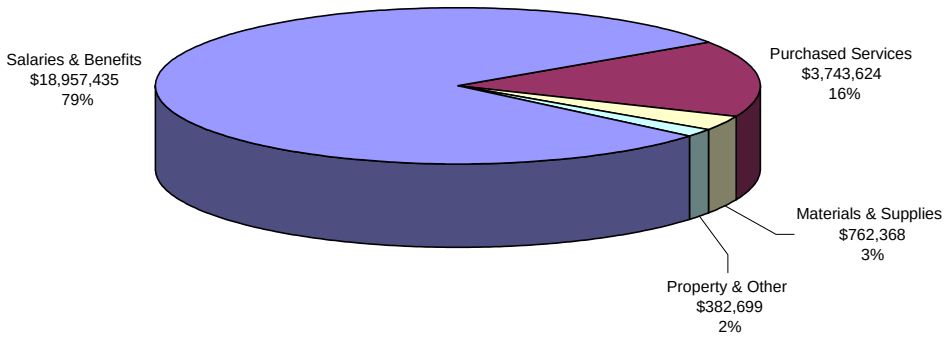
Current funding is based on the number of FTEs in alternative learning programs for at least 20 days.

According to the Department of Education, the number of full-time equivalency (FTE) students in alternative education programs has remained fairly constant since fiscal year 2001 (FY01). The numbers vary from 5,739 in FY01 to 5,840 in FY05. With the change in the method of calculation for FY06, the number of students in ALE programs is 4,299. The amount of dollars per FTE made available for funding of the programs has varied widely, ranging from $289.61 to the current $3,250.

Arkansas Department of Education rules state that the ALE funding amount is $3,250 times the ALE student's FTE in the previous school year. An eligible ALE student FTE is determined by the number of hours taught in an eligible ALE class each day divided by six hours, times the number of days an eligible student attends the program, plus the number of days absent, divided by the number of school days in a school year. To be an eligible ALE student for these calculations, a student must have attended an eligible ALE for a minimum of 20 days per school year. For example if a student spends three hours each day in an ALE for 60 days, the student will count as .1666 FTE in a 180-day school year. It should be noted that many school districts reported no FTE for alternative education to the state for fiscal years 2005-06. Expenditures for ALE programs are used primarily for salaries and benefits - in FY05, for example, the salary and benefit level was at 79% of all expenditures.

Figure 1.

FY05 Expenditure Report for Alternative Learning Environment



The administrators surveyed indicated that for the most part districts allocate the $3,250 per FTE student to the ALE program. However, there were instances in which some ALE staff believed that this amount is not dedicated exclusively to ALE programs. At the same time, there also were administrators who reported that the superintendent of their district spent more than the $3,250 per FTE student. What was not clear is whether any ALE administrators are receiving any of the $5,400 foundation funding per student, generated by the state funding formula, for students in ALE programs. Consideration, therefore, should be given to how the approximately $8,650 generated by each ALE is being used by districts, i. e., whether the amount designated for each ALE student is being used for that student.

Recognizing that the survey of Arkansas administrators is small and targeted, there seems to be mixed reaction to the question of whether $3,250 per student additional funding is sufficient to run an ALE program (these responses obviously are clouded by the issue just discussed concerning total per child funding). The difference in opinion seems to revolve around how much overall support the program is getting from central administration in different school districts, and how much the program is trying to accomplish. The program administrators who indicated that their ALE programs were not adequately funded seemed to fit into two (not mutually exclusive) categories: 1) those who are in the embryonic stage of development, and 2) those who have a strong vocational technology emphasis.

Conclusions

The monitoring of the Arkansas Department of Education is ahead of that being done in many states.

In conclusion, Arkansas is ahead of many states in terms of its ALE programs. Reporting regarding the programs is required and the Department of Education monitors the programs throughout the state. The state still faces many challenges which include: expanding services to districts where none exist; improving services in districts where the quality is below other state programs; continuing and expanding data collection to evaluate the programs in terms of student test scores and achievements; and, improving teacher preparation for ALE programs at the post-secondary level. Standards should be established for equipping programs, student assessment, developing or updating student individualized education plans in the ALE programs, and organizational and curriculum structures for meeting the specific needs of different types of students that may be in the programs.

References

Altenbaugh, R. J., Engel, D. E., & Martin, D. T. (1995). *Caring for kids: A critical study of urban school leavers*. Washington, DC: The Falmer Press.

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. (n.d.). Retrieved May 10, 2006, from http://www.ascd.org/cms/index.cfm?TheViewID=1113, at

Barr, R. D., & Parrett, W. H. (2001). *Hope fulfilled for at-risk and violent youth: K-12 programs that work* (2nd ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Blum, R., Beuhring, T., & Rinehart, P. (2000). *Protecting teens: Beyond race, income and family structure*. Minneapolis, MN: Center for Adolescent Health, University of Minnesota.

Carruthers, W., & Baenen, N. (1997, September). *Did the alternative educational program for students with long-term suspensions make a difference? Eye on evaluation,* Evaluation and Research Report No. 98. Raleigh, NC: Wake County Public School System.

Catalano, R. F., Arthur, M. W., Hawkins, J. D., Berglund, L., & Olson, J. J. (1998). In R. Loeber & D. P. Farrington (Eds.), *Serious and violent juvenile offenders: Risk factors and successful interventions (pp. 248-283)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Catalano, R. F., Haggerty, K. P., Oesterle, S., Fleming, C. B., & Hawkins, J. D. (2004). The importance of bonding to school for healthy development: Findings from the Social Development Research Group. *Journal of School Health, 74*, 252-261.

Cox, S. M., Davidson, W. S., & Bynum, T. S. (1995). A meta-analytic assessment of delinquency-related outcomes of alternative education programs. *Crime & Delinquency, 41* , 219-234.

Duttweiler, P. C. (1995). *Effective strategies for educating students in at-risk situations.* Clemson, SC: National Dropout Prevention Center.

Dynarski, M., & Gleason, P. (2002). How can we help? What we have learned from recent federal dropout prevention evaluations. *Journal of Education for Students Placed At-Risk, 7*, 43-69.

Education Week (n.d.). Retrieved May 10, 2006, from http://www.edweek.org/rc/glossary/alternative-schools.html.

Epstein, M. H., Munk, D. D., Bursuck, W. D., Polloway, E. A., & Jayanthi, M. (1999). Strategies for improving home-school communication about homework for students with disabilities. *The Journal of Special Education, 33*, 166-177.

Escobar-Chaves, S. L., Tortolero, S. R., Kelder, S. H., & Kapadia, A. (2002). Violent behavior among urban youth attending alternative schools. *Journal of School Health, 72*, 357-363.

Foley, R. M., & Pang, L. (2006). Alternative education programs: Program and student characteristics. *High School Journal, 89*, 10-21.

Galassi, J. P., & Akos, P. (2004). Developmental advocacy: Twenty-first century school counseling. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 82*, 146-157.

Gottfredson, G. D., & Gottfredson, D. C. (1985). *Victimization in schools*. New York: Plenum.

Gregg, S. (1999). Creating effective alternatives for disruptive students. *The Clearing House, 73*, 107-114.

Hurley, J. C., Proffit, Al. C., Vihnanek, E. M., & Moller, G. (2004). Exposing the reality gap: Public expectations and Boston public schools. *High School Journal, 87*, 7-15.

Indiana Department of Education. (n.d.). Retrieved May 10, 2006, from http://www.doe.state.in.us/alted/altedlinkpg.html.

Individuals With Disabilities Education Act Amendments. *(1997). Pub. L. No. 105-17.* Available from *http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/Policy/* IDEA/

Iowa Department of Education. (1998, April). Retrieved May 10, 2006, from http://www.state.ia.us/educate/ecese/is/alted/alted.pdf at page 2, paragraph 1.

Kearney, C. A., & Tillotson, C. A. (1998). School attendance. In T. S. Watson & F. M. Gresham (Eds.), *Handbook of child behavior therapy (pp. 143-161).* New York: Plenum.

Kleiner, B., Porch, R., and Farris, E. (2002). *Public alternative schools and programs for students at risk of education failure: 2000-01* (NCES 2002-004). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Also available as of May 10, 2006 from http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/2002004.pdf

Lange, C. M. (1998). Characteristics of alternative schools and programs. *High School Journal 81*, 183-199.

Lange, C. M., & Lehr, C. A. (1999). At-risk students attending second chance programs: Measuring performance in desired outcome domains. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, 4*, 173-192.

Lange, C. M. and Sletten, S. J. (1995). *Characteristics of alternative schools and programs serving at-risk students* (Research Report 16). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Enrollment Options for Students with Disabilities Project.

Lange, C. M. and Sletten, S. J. (2002, February). *Alternative education: A brief history and research synthesis* (Project FORUM). Alexandria, VA: National Association of State Directors of Special Education.

Lehr, C. A. (2004). Alternative schools and students with disabilities: Identifying and understanding the issues. Information brief. Vol 3, Issue 6, Minneapolis, MN: National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, University of Minnesota.

Lehr, C. A., & Lange, C. M. (2003). Alternative schools serving students with and without disabilities: What are the current issues and challenges? *Preventing School Failure, 47,* 59-66.

Lipsey, M. W., & Wilson, D. B. (1998). Effective intervention for serious juvenile offenders: A synthesis of research. In R. Loeber & D. P. Farrington (Eds.), *Serious and violent juvenile offenders: Risk factors and successful interventions (pp. 313-345).* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Loeber, R. & Farrington, D. P. (Eds.) (1998). *Serious and violent juvenile offenders: Risk factors and successful interventions.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mayer, G. (1995). Preventing antisocial behavior in the schools. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 28,* 467-478.

National Dropout Prevention Center (2001). *Effective Strategies: Alternative Schooling.* Available:http://www.dropoutprevention.org/2levelpages/effective_strategies/AlternateSchooling/4lvlAltSchooling/4lvlEffStratAltSchoolingOverview.htm.

Nichols, J. D., & Steffy, B.E. (1997, March). An evaluation of success in an alternative learning program: Motivational impact vs. completion rate. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association 1997 Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL.

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 U.S.C.§ 6301 (2002). Public Law 107-110, January 8, 2002.

Office of Educational Research and Improvement. (1993). Reaching the goals. Goal 2: High School Completion (ISBN-O-16-042930-7; PIP-93-1018). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Pace Learning Systems, Inc. (n.d.) *Nothing teaches like success.* Retrieved July 25, 2006 from www.pacelearning.com

Raywid, M.A. (1994). Alternative schools: The state of the art. *Educational Leadership, 52,* 26-31.

Sagor, R. (1999). Equity and excellence in public schools: The role of the alternative school. *The Clearing House, 73,* 72-75.

Saunders, J. A., & Saunders, E. J.. (2002). Alternative school students' perceptions of past and current school environment. *High School Journal, 85,* 12-24.

Sprague, J., Walker, H., Nishioka, V., & Stieber, S. (2000). *Skills for success: An empirical evaluation of alternative education interventions for pre-delinquent and delinquent middle school students.* Eugene, OR: University of Oregon.

Tobin, T. J., and Sprague, J. R. (1999). Alternative educational programs for at-risk youth: Issues, best practices, and recommendations. *Oregon School Study Council Bulletin* 42, 1-19.

Tobin, T. J., & Sprague, J. R. (2000). Alternative education strategies: Reducing violence in school and community. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 8,* 177-186.

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2002). Characteristics of the 100 largest public elementary and secondary school districts in the United States: 2000-01, NCES 2002351. Washington, DC: Author. Available from *http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/2002351.pdf*

Veale, J. R. (2002). *The costs of dropping out of school in Iowa*. Des Moines: Iowa Association of Alternative Education. Retrieved May 11, 2006, from http://www.learningalternatives.net/Costs_of_Dropping_Out.pdf

Washington Office of Superintendent of Instruction. (n.d.). Retrieved May 10, 2006, from http://www.k12.wa.us/programs/default.aspx#alted.

Weller, N., Tortolero, S., Kelder, S., Grunbaum, J., Carvajal, S., & Gingiss, P. (1999). Health risk behaviors of Texas students attending dropout prevention/recovery schools in 1997. *Journal of School Health, 69,* 22-27.

White, D. L., & Kochhar-Bryant, C. A. (2006). *Foundation for alternative education.* Washington, D. C.: Graduate School of Education and Human Development, George Washington University.

Young, T. (1990). *Public Alternative Education.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Definitions of Alternative Education Among Responding States

California:
EDUCATION CODE - SECTION 58500-58512

58500. The governing board of any school district may establish and maintain one or more alternative schools within the district.

For the purposes of this article, an alternative school is defined as a school or separate class group within a school which is operated in a manner designed to:

(a) Maximize the opportunity for students to develop the positive values of self-reliance, initiative, kindness, spontaneity, resourcefulness, courage, creativity, responsibility, and joy.

(b) Recognize that the best learning takes place when the student learns because of his desire to learn.

(c) Maintain a learning situation maximizing student self-motivation and encouraging the student in his own time to follow his own interests. These interests may be conceived by him totally and independently or may result in whole or in part from a presentation by his teachers of choices of learning projects.

(d) Maximize the opportunity for teachers, parents and students to cooperatively develop the learning process and its subject matter. This opportunity shall be a continuous, permanent process. (e) Maximize the opportunity for the students, teachers, and parents to continuously react to the changing world, including but not limited to the community in which the school is located.

Delaware:

8.0 Consortium Discipline Alternative Program Setting

8.1 The Consortium Discipline Alternative Program setting shall be apart from the regular school setting, however, a part of a school building may be used for these programs if the students do not interact with the regular school population or use any school facility at the same time as the regular school population.

8.1.1 Use of other agency facilities (Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, YWCA, etc.) is encouraged. Consortium Discipline Alternative Program settings shall meet all applicable health and safety laws and regulations for student occupancy.

9.0 Consortium Discipline Alternative Program Design

9.1 The Consortium Discipline Alternative Program shall include an educational program designed to maintain and improve skills aligned to the Delaware State Content Standards that will allow students to reenter the regular school program with a reasonable chance and expectation for success. Opportunities for academic acceleration shall also be provided.

9.1.1 The academic program shall include applied learning activities that encourage students' active participation in the learning process as opposed to work sheets and other "seat oriented" drill exercises. Study skills, test taking strategies for academic confidence building, and Character Education shall be integrated with the Delaware State Content Standards.

9.1.1.1 Credit for work accomplished in the Consortium Discipline Alternative Program setting shall be automatically transferred to the sending school.

9.1.2 All students enrolled in Consortium Discipline Alternative Programs shall participate in the Delaware Student Testing Program (DSTP).

Idaho:
110. Alternative Secondary Programs (Sections 33-1002; 33-1002C; 33-1002F, Idaho Code)

Alternative secondary programs are those that provide special instructional courses and offer special services to eligible at-risk youth to enable them to earn a high school diploma. Some designated differences must be established between the alternative school programs and the regular secondary school programs. Alternative secondary school programs will include course offerings, teacher/pupil ratios and evidence of teaching strategies that are clearly designed to serve at-risk youth as defined in this section. Alternative high school programs conducted during the regular school year will be located on a separate site from the regular high school facility or be scheduled at a time different from the regular school hours.

Illinois:
Public Act 89-383, enacted in 1995: Safe Schools Law: "Disruptive students typically derive little benefit from traditional school programs and may benefit substantially by being transferred from their current school into an alternative public school program, where their particular needs may be more appropriately and individually addressed and where they may benefit from the opportunity for a fresh start in a new educational environment" (Section 13A-le, PA 89-383)

The Truants' Alternative and Optional Education Program (105 ILCS 5/2-3.41): requiring the offering of "modified instructional programs or other services designed to prevent students from dropping out of school."

Indiana:
IC 20-30-8-1 "Alternative education program"

Sec. 1. As used in this chapter, "alternative education program" refers to an alternative school or educational program that is described in section 6 of this chapter. The term includes:

(1) an alternative education program described in section 5(a)(1) of this chapter; or

(2) an area alternative education program described in section 5(a)(2) of this chapter.

As added by P.L.1-2005, SEC.14.

IC 20-30-8-6 Qualification as alternative education program

Sec. 6. To qualify as an alternative education program, the program must:

(1) be an educational program for eligible students that instructs the eligible students in a different manner than the manner of instruction available in a traditional school setting; and

(2) comply with the rules that are adopted under IC 4-22-2 by the state board to govern:

(A) alternative education programs; and

(B) admission of eligible students to alternative education programs.

As added by P.L.1-2005, SEC.14.

Maryland:

Code of Maryland Regulation (COMAR) 13A.08.01.12-1 defines an alternative educational setting as "Any alternative educational program that allows a student to continue his or her education within the public school system and, if in a secondary school, the opportunity to earn credit."

Proposed legislation to the Maryland General Assembly defines an alternative school as "an alternative school is one that may vary from other schools in such areas as teaching methods, hours, curriculum, an locations. An alternative school may also provide another option for earning credits or completing school. An alternative school should be structured to meet the particular learning styles and needs of the students it is designed to serve."

Massachusetts:

Working Draft: Alternative education is defined as "an initiative within a public school district, charter school, or educational collaborative established to serve at-risk students whose needs are not being met in the traditional school setting." For the purposes of this definition, alternative education does not include private schools, home schooling, General Educational Development (GED) services, or gifted and talented programs.

Michigan:

Alternative Schools definition: This term broadly refers to public schools which are set up by school districts to serve populations of students who are not succeeding in the traditional public school environment. Alternative schools offer students who are failing academically or may have learning disabilities or behavioral problems an opportunity to achieve in a different setting. While there are different kinds of alternative schools, they are often characterized by their flexible schedules, smaller teacher-student ratios and modified curricula.

Missouri:

Citation of law--area vocational learning center defined.

167.320. 1. Sections 167.320 to 167.332 shall be known and may be cited as the "Alternative Education Act".

2. As used in sections 167.320 to 167.332, "area vocational learning center" means a location or locations within a district that has state board of education designation as an area vocational school district.

(L. 1990 S.B. 740 § 23)

Area vocational learning centers to provide services--responsibility for academic and vocational assessment--basic skills instruction.

167.324. 1. Area vocational learning centers shall, in addition to any services currently being provided, provide extended day services for three hours during the evening or other times convenient to the qualifying student for the purpose of furnishing alternative education to those who qualify under sections 167.320 to 167.332 and enroll in such services.

2. Area vocational learning centers shall be responsible for providing academic and vocational assessment, which may include, but is not limited to, use of the Lindamood Auditory Conceptualization Test and Auditory Discrimination in Depth Program, of those persons who are eligible for alternative education services under sections 167.320 to 167.332. Area vocational centers shall also provide career awareness programs and individual and small group counseling.

3. Basic skills instruction, which may include, but is not limited to, the use of the Lindamood Auditory Conceptualization Test and Auditory Discrimination in Depth Program, may be provided by the area vocational learning centers for students on an individual or small group basis to ensure success in the student's chosen educational or vocational program.

4. Area vocational learning centers may provide extended services to students enrolled in the alternative education program, including assistance in securing employment or continuing education.

(L. 1990 S.B. 740 § 25)

Classes--number of students--offered, when.

167.330. An alternative education program class shall be composed as nearly as practicable of twenty students during regular school hours and twenty students during evening or extended hours. Classes shall be offered during the regular school hours and classes for evening or extended hours may be for three hours.

(L. 1990 S.B. 740 § 28)

Nebraska:

Rule 17:

002 Definitions. As used in this Chapter.

002.01 Board means the State Board of Education.

002.02 Commissioner means the State Commissioner of Education.

002.03 Department means the State Department of Education, which is comprised of the Board and the Commissioner of Education.

002.04 Alternative Schools, Classes, or Programs means that special category of schools, classes, or programs required by law to be provided for expelled students.

Rule 18:

002.15 Interim-program School means those schools located in or operated by county detention homes (as defined in Subsection 002.05), institutions (as defined in Subsection 002.13), or juvenile emergency shelters (as defined in Subsection 002.16).

New Hampshire:

ED 306 Standards for School Approval

Ed. 306.21 Off Site Programs

1) definition of alternative learning (schools, programs) or environments, and

Ed 306.21 Off-Site Programs.

(a) "Off-site program" means the regular delivery of the majority of a student's instruction at a facility not located in the school building(s).

(b) An off-site program shall be:

(1) Designed to address the personalized needs to students, including, but not limited to, dropout prevention; and

(2) Approved by the local school board in a plan that:

a. States the goals of the program;

b. Specifies the procedures for assessing and implementing its program plan consistent with RSA 193-C:3, III; and

c. Specifies when the program would be offered, which may be at a time other than during the regular school day.

(c) Off-site programs for students with disabilities shall meet the requirements of Ed 1119.

(d) Prior to implementing an off-site program, a school administrative unit shall submit to the department the following:

(1) A copy of the local school board's approval, including the plan submitted; and

(2) The location of the off-site program.

(e) Each student participating in an off-site program shall participate in the state assessment exam, when applicable.

New Jersey:

6A:16-1.3 Definitions

The following words and terms, when used in this chapter, shall have the following meanings unless the context clearly indicates otherwise.

"Alternative education program" means a non-traditional learning environment that addresses the individual learning styles and needs of disruptive or disaffected students at risk of school failure or mandated for removal from general education, that is based upon an Individualized Program Plan and New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards and has been approved by the Commissioner of Education, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:16-9.

Oklahoma:
Oklahoma State Board of Education Rules
210-35-29-2. Definitions
"Alternative education" means an educational process incorporating appropriate structure, curriculum, interaction, and reinforcement strategies to stimulate learning with students who have not utilized their capacity to do so within traditional educational settings.
"Abbreviated school day" means, for purposes of an alternative education program approved by the State Board of Education, a school day which consists of not less than 4 hours and 12 minutes per day devoted to school activities for the locally approved 180-day school calendar.

Oregon:
ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS
336.615 Definition for ORS 336.615 to 336.665. As used in ORS 336.615 to 336.665, “alternative education program” means a school or separate class group designed to best serve students’ educational needs and interests and assist students in achieving the academic standards of the school district and the state. [Formerly 339.605; 2001 c.490 §1]

Pennsylvania:
Section 1901-C. Definitions. For purposes of this article, the following terms shall have the following meanings:
(1) "Alternative education program" or "program." Any applicant's program applying for funds under this article, which program is implemented by a school district, an area vocational-technical school, a group of school districts or an intermediate unit, which removes disruptive students from regular school programs in order to provide those students with a sound educational course of study and counseling designed to modify disruptive behavior and return the students to a regular school curriculum. Notwithstanding section 1502, alternative education programs may operate outside the normal school day of the applicant district, including Saturdays. School districts shall adopt a policy for periodic review of students placed in the alternative education program for disruptive students. This review shall occur, at a minimum, at the end of every semester the student is in the program or more frequently at the district's discretion. The purpose of this review is to determine whether or not the student is ready to return to the regular school curriculum. Programs may include services for students returning from placements or who are on probation resulting from being adjudicated delinquent in a proceeding under 42 Pa.C.S. Ch. 63 (relating to juvenile matters) or who have been judged to have committed a crime under an adult criminal proceeding.

South Carolina:
ARTICLE 13. ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS
SECTION 59-63-1300. Alternative school programs established. [SC ST SEC 59-63-1300]
The General Assembly finds that a child who does not complete his education is greatly limited in obtaining employment, achieving his full potential, and becoming a productive member of society. It is, therefore, the intent of this article to encourage district school boards throughout the State to establish alternative school programs. These programs shall be designed to provide appropriate services to students who for behavioral or academic reasons are not benefiting from the regular school program or may be interfering with the learning of others. It is further the intent of this article that cooperative agreements may be developed among school districts in order to implement innovative exemplary programs.

SECTION 59-63-1310. Alternative school programs; individual or cooperative programs; funding; sites. [SC ST SEC 59-63-1310]
School districts which choose to establish, maintain, and operate, either individually or as a cooperative agreement among districts, alternative school programs shall be eligible for funding provided by the General Assembly for this purpose. The program must be operated at a site separate from other

schools unless operated at a time when those schools are not in session or in another building on campus which would provide complete separation from other students. However, an existing alternative school program located in a defined area within a building which provides complete separation from other students and which otherwise meets the criteria established herein may continue at this site if the location is approved by the Department of Education. Provided, that a school district or consortium may apply for a waiver to the site requirement for a new program if it demonstrates to the satisfaction of the State Department of Education that no separate site is available and the cost of temporary classroom space cannot be justified, then the alternative school program may be established in a defined area within a building which provides complete separation from other students if the location is approved by the Department of Education. This waiver may be granted for a period of two years. In order for the district or consortium to reapply for a waiver, they must outline efforts made to acquire a separate facility.

Tennessee:
Tennessee Code Annotated § 49-6-3402 and State Board of Education Rule 0520-1-2-.09:
0520-1-2-.09 ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS.

(1) Definition: An alternative school is a short term intervention program designed to develop academic and behavioral skills for students who have been suspended or expelled from the regular school program.

Utah:
53A-11-106. Truancy support centers.

(1) A school district may establish one or more truancy support centers for:
  (a) truant students taken into custody under Section 53A-11-105; or
  (b) students suspended or expelled from school.

(2) A truancy support center shall provide a wide spectrum of services to the truant student and the student's family, including:
  (a) assessments of the student's needs and abilities;
  (b) support for the parents and student through counseling and community programs; and
  (c) tutoring for the student during the time spent at the center.

(3) For the suspended or expelled student, the truancy support center shall provide an educational setting, staffed with certified teachers and aides, to provide the student with ongoing educational programming appropriate to their grade level.

(4) In a district with a truancy support center, all students suspended or expelled from school shall be referred to the center. A parent or guardian shall appear with the student at the center within 48 hours of the suspension or expulsion, not including weekends or holidays. The student shall register and attend classes at the truancy support center for the duration of the suspension or expulsion unless the parent or guardian demonstrates that alternative arrangements have been made for the education or supervision of the student during the time of suspension or expulsion.

(5) The truancy support center may provide counseling and other support programming for students suspended or expelled from school and their parents or guardian.

Virginia:
Defined in the broadest sense, alternative education involves learning experiences that offer educational choices that meet the needs of students with varying interest and abilities. Alternative education offers choices in terms of time, location, staffing, and programs. These programs must be designed to acquire the knowledge and develop the skills and attitudes reflected in the goals of education for Virginia's public schools. Among the types of programs identified as alternative education are (but are not limited to) programs for the handicapped, gifted and talented students, those enrolled in vocational education classes, and those identified for placement who are long-term suspended or expelled.

H. Douglas Cox, Assistant Superintendent, Division of Special Education & Student Services
(804) 225-3252, doug.cox@doe.virginia.gov

West Virginia
(k) "Alternative education" means an authorized departure from the regular school program designed to provide educational and social development for students whose disruptive behavior places them at risk of not succeeding in the traditional school structures and in adult life without positive interventions.

Wisconsin:
Wisconsin Statute § 1115.24 (7)(e): An alternative education program is defined as "an instructional program, approved by the school board, that utilizes successful alternative or adaptive school structures and teaching techniques and that is incorporated into existing, traditional classrooms or regularly scheduled curricular programs or that is offered in place of regularly scheduled curricular programs. Alternative education program does not include a private school or a home-based private educational program." Wisconsin Statute § 118.153 (5)(a)1: For children at risk of not graduating from high school, an alternative school is defined as "a public school that has at least 30 pupils and no more than 250 pupils, has a separate administrator or teacher in charge of the school and offers a nontraditional curriculum."

SUMMARY
Definitions of Alternative Education
Among the Responding States

Definitions Provided

Twenty-one states provided a definition of alternative education and are: California, Delaware, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

Definition Location

Fourteen states established the definition by statute (California, Delaware, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, New Jersey, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, and Wisconsin). In the states of Maryland, Nebraska, New Hampshire, and Oklahoma, the definition is found in the rules or regulations promulgated by the state education division. The State of Massachusetts provided a "working draft" of the definition that is being developed.

Alternative Education Program Goal

Among all of the definitions, the goal of the alternative education program was to provide students who are at-risk of failing or who are not succeeding in a traditional school program with either an alternative learning environment or alternative methods of instruction that are designed to motivate the student to take an interest in continuing his education and earning credits toward graduation.

Teacher Preparation Programs to Teach At-Risk Youth

Examples of colleges and universities that offer a course concentration or degree for teachers and other professional staff to work with youth who are considered at risk.

California State University at San Bernardino
Certificate program for teachers and ancillary staff who work with adjudicated and at-risk students in institutions and alternative instructional settings.
http://soe.csusb.edu/csce/educ.html

College of Santa Fe, Santa Fe, NM
Five-year baccalaureate/master of arts with a focus on at-risk youth.
http://www.csf.edu/pr/viewbook/edu_degree_programs.htm

Concordia University, Mequon, WI
This additional certificate in Alternative Education, which can be earned by taking and completing two courses concurrently, is available to any teacher who holds a valid Department of Public Instruction (DPI) license.
http://www2.cuw.edu/gtc/certifications/grad_cert_alternative.htm

George Mason University, Fairfax, VA
Advanced Studies in Teaching and Learning Program is an 18- to 21-credit emphasis-area component in the Master's degree (M.Ed.) program that allows teachers to specialize in alternative education.
http://gse.gmu.edu/forms/programs/astl/altedEmpForm.

Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA
Master of Arts in Teaching, Teaching At-Risk Students Program. This prepares candidates to manage multi-problematic issues in the classroom and community professionals to work with at-risk youth.
http://www.gonzaga.edu/Academics/Colleges+and+Schools/School+of+Education/Teacher+Education/M.A.+Teaching+At-Risk+Students/default.htm

Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania, Lock Haven, PA
Masters of Education in Alternative Education degree. This is the first online M.Ed. in Alternative Education to be offered in the nation. Lock Haven also offers an undergraduate minor in alternative education. See http://www.alted.lhup.edu

Marian College, Fond du Lac, WI
Alternative Education License for individuals with an initial teaching license who do not wish to complete a master's degree.
http://www.mariancollege.edu/Academics/SOE/Grad/CI/alternative_education_license.ht

Northland College, Ashland, WI
Alternative Education Certification Program. This is a post-baccalaureate program that leads to the Wisconsin Department of Instruction Alternative Education certificate.
http://www.northland.edu/outreach/teacher_cert.asp#alted

Park University, Parkville, MO
Master of Education At-Risk. Park University is the largest provider of education to the military, and it serves the nonmilitary as well at 36 campuses located in 20 states in the U.S.
http://www.park.edu/ME/atrisk.asp

San Jose State University, San Jose, CA
Alternative Education Project in the College of Education. This project focuses on teaching students who are outside the mainstream of education: those who are in shelters, continuation high schools, court-supervised community schools, ranches and juvenile halls, state detention facilities, and other difficult settings.
http://alternativeed.sjsu.edu/project.html

University of West Florida, Pensacola, FL
This Alternative Education program offers a doctorate, without a dissertation requirement; a Master's degree in alternative education; and in-service training with points for certificate renewal.
http://cops.uwf.edu/copsweb/teached/alted.cfm

University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI
This is a post-baccalaureate certificate program in which students receive a teaching certificate upon completion of the program requirements.
http://www.soe.uwm.edu/pages/welcome/Certification_and_Degrees/Academic_Programs/Alt_Ed_Cert

This questionnaire is intended for the person or persons most knowledgeable about the alternative schools and programs in your State and the relevant state policies. Please feel free to collaborate with others who are able to help provide the required information. ***Instructions for completing form: Click in first form field and type in your answer. Press the "Tab" key to proceed to the text field. Click in check box to mark it.***

I. Basic Information About Alternative Schools and Programs in Your State

1. State State K-12 population (best estimate, if unknown)

2. Used only for verification and not for publication purposes: Contact Person:

Area Code & Phone No. E-mail address

3a. How many alternative schools and programs do you currently have at each level in your state?

elementary school middle school junior high school senior high school

3b. If none, check here and please return the survey ☐

4. Of those schools and programs in question 3, how many are…

a. Housed within a separate facility, i.e., not within a regular school?.....
b. Charter schools?.....
c. Schools in juvenile detention centers.....
d. Community-based programs?.....
e. Other (specify) _____

II. Enrollment

5. As of Fall, 2005, how many students in your state districts were enrolled in alternative schools and programs? students (best estimate, if unknown)

6. What percentage of the students **in alternative schools or programs**: 1) are in special education with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and 2) receive free or reduced lunches (best estimates, if unknown)

The remaining questions pertain to your state policies and general operating practices in the school districts.

III. Entry and Exit Procedures

7a. ***Can*** students in your state be transferred to alternative schools and programs mostly on the basis of any of the following reasons?

7b. ***Are*** students in your state be transferred to alternative schools and programs mostly on the basis of any of the following reasons?

*(Circle one on each line **for both questions**.)*	Students Can		Students Are	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
a. Possession or use of a firearm	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Possession or use of weapon other than a firearm	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Possession, distribution, or use of alcohol or drugs (excluding tobacco)	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Arrest or involvement with juvenile justice system	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Physical attacks or fights	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Disruptive verbal behavior	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Chronic truancy	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. Continual academic failure	☐	☐	☐	☐
i. Pregnancy/teen parenthood	☐	☐	☐	☐
j. Mental health needs	☐	☐	☐	☐
k. Academic failure	☐	☐	☐	☐
l. Other (specify) _____	☐	☐	☐	☐

8. To what extent are **special education students with IEPs** in your state placed in alternative schools or programs through each of the following means? *(Circle one on each line.)* ***If you have no special education students, check here*** ☐.

Means of placement	Not at all	Small extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
a. Support of Director of Special Education (district level).....	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. IEP team decision.....	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Regular school staff recommendation (e.g., teacher, administrator, or counselor)	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Student request.....	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Parent request.....	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. As a result of Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA)	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Referral by the juvenile justice system	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. Other*(specify)*_____	☐	☐	☐	☐

9. To what extent are **other (i.e., non-special education) students** in your state placed in alternative schools or programs through each of the following means?

Means of placement	Not at all	Small extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
a. Support of Director of Special Education (district level).....	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. IEP team decision.....	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Regular school staff recommendation (e.g., teacher, administrator, or counselor)	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Student request.....	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Parent request.....	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. As a result of Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA)	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Referral by the juvenile justice system	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. Disciplinary action	☐	☐	☐	☐
i. Learning disability.....	☐	☐	☐	☐
j. Other (specify) _____	☐	☐	☐	☐

10a. How important are each of the following in determining whether a student in alternative programs is able to return to a regular school or class? *(Circle one on each line.)* ***Check here*** ☐ ***if students are not able to return.***

Factor	Not important	Somewhat important	Very important
a. Improved grades	☐	☐	☐
b. Improved attitude/behavior.....	☐	☐	☐
c. Student motivation to return.....	☐	☐	☐
d. Student readiness as measured by a standardized assessment	☐	☐	☐
e. Availability of space in regular school	☐	☐	☐
f. Approval of the regular school administrator or counselor ...	☐	☐	☐
g. Approval of alternative school/program staff (e.g., teacher, administrator, or counselor).....	☐	☐	☐
h. Other*(specify)* _____	☐	☐	☐

10b. What percentage of students in alternative schools and programs return to regular classrooms?

IV. Curriculum and Services Offered

11. According to your state policy, are any of the following services or practices required to be made routinely available in alternative schools and programs? *(Circle one on each line.)*

	Yes	No
a. Smaller class size than regular schools	☐	☐
b. Remedial instruction for students performing below grade level	☐	☐
c. Academic counseling	☐	☐
d. Career counseling	☐	☐
e. Psychological counseling	☐	☐
f. Crisis/behavioral intervention	☐	☐
g. Social work services	☐	☐
h. Peer mediation	☐	☐
i. Extended school day or school year	☐	☐
j. Evening or weekend classes	☐	☐
k. Curricula leading toward a regular high school diploma	☐	☐
l. Preparation for the GED exam	☐	☐
m. Vocational or skills training	☐	☐
n. Opportunity to take classes at other schools, colleges, or local institutions	☐	☐
o. Security personnel on site	☐	☐
p. Opportunity for self-paced instruction	☐	☐
q. Other *(specify)* _____	☐	☐

12. To what extent do most of your school districts collaborate with any of the following agencies to provide services to students in alternative schools and programs? *(Circle one on each line.)*

	None	Little	Some	Often
a. Child protective services	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Community mental health agency	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Community organization	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Job placement center	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Crisis intervention center	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Drug and/or alcohol clinic	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Family organizations or associations	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. Family planning/child care/child placement agency	☐	☐	☐	☐
i. Health and human services agency or hospital	☐	☐	☐	☐
j. Juvenile justice system	☐	☐	☐	☐
k. Parks and recreation department	☐	☐	☐	☐
l. Police or sheriff's department	☐	☐	☐	☐
m. Other*(specify)* _____	☐	☐	☐	☐

13. Purpose of Alternative School or Program in your state (check all that apply):

- ☐ Dropout Prevention
- ☐ Transition back into regular school program (some classes taken in the regular program)
- ☐ High school completion through GED testing program
- ☐ Elementary school completion
- ☐ Other

14. Curriculum offered in Alternative Programs in your state (check all that apply):

- ☐ Academic development
- ☐ GED preparatory
- ☐ Personal and social development
- ☐ Career and vocational education
- ☐ Other

15. Diploma offered through Alternative Programs in your state (check all that apply):

- ☐ Separate alternative school diploma offered
- ☐ Diploma from traditional high school offered
- ☐ High school equivalency diploma (GED)
- ☐ Certificate of attendance offered (no diploma)
- ☐ No certificate or diploma offered
- ☐ Other

16. Curriculum techniques and/or activities typically found in your state (check all descriptors that apply):

- ☐ Competency-based learning (School or program strives for mastery of predetermined objectives via written testing, observation of performance, or interviews. Student progress is documented by what they can do, i.e., objectives/competencies.)
- ☐ Individually guided education (instruction-based learner's level and guided by learner's performance; individual approach)
- ☐ Block scheduling (instruction or guidance is provided for groups of students together)
- ☐ Individual scheduling (students are instructed or counseled one-on-one)
- ☐ Independent study/contracting (student earns credit for studying on his or her own initiative; contracts are established between teacher and learner, which outline content, timelines, and evaluation method)
- ☐ Interdisciplinary instruction (two or more subjects are combined into one class for students to appreciate relationships and intercommunications among subject areas)
- ☐ Community studies (students participate in community to supplement academic learning or for career orientation, exploration of preparation)
- ☐ GED preparatory curriculum (basic skills for students who plan on taking the GED examination)
- ☐ Child care training (provided in conjunction with child care center serving teen parents on program)
- ☐ Health Education
- ☐ Drug use and abuse
- ☐ Nutrition
- ☐ Sexuality
- ☐ Other

17. Does your state have a legal (formal) definition of alternative education schools or programs?
No Yes (if yes, please attach a copy, or identify an internet address)

18. Does your state have a formal statement (legal or regulatory) defining or limiting participation in alternative schools or programs in your state.
No Yes (if yes, please attach a copy, or identity an internet address)

19. What percentage of your alternative schools or programs is located in each sized community (school or program location, not district office)?

0 - 5,000 5,001 - 20,000 20,001 - 100,000 100,001 or above

GUIDELINES FOR ALTERNATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS DEVELOPED BY THE PYGMALION COMMISSION ON NONTRADITIONAL EDUCATION

For more information about the Pygmalion Commission or the Guidelines, contact Ann Smith at 870-932-3396, FAX 870-972-8838, E-Mail annsmith@inet-direct.com.

These guidelines have been developed to assist school districts and educational cooperatives in the creation and management of Alternative Learning Environments (ALEs) in keeping with Arkansas Code Annotated 6-18-508, 509 (1993 Repl). As amended by Act 597 of 1995. The following guidelines should be read and applied with flexibility in order to enhance the development of the student.

DEFINITIONS

Alternative Learning Environment as used in these guidelines is an educational setting which offers nontraditional/flexible instructional methods that enable all students to participate in the educational process.

Nontraditional flexible instructional methods as used in these guidelines are innovative methods of instructional delivery such as flexible time frames, variable credit delivery systems, applied learning, integrated curriculum, and work-based learning.

Dropping out is viewed as leaving school without graduating or completing a state or district approved secondary program.

At-risk students are those in the public school whose educational and social progress deviates from the standard expected for a successful transition to a productive adult life. At-risk students may manifest one or more of the following characteristics: recurring absenteeism, disruptive behavior, drop out from school, personal or family problems or situations, transition to or from residential programs, standardized test scores or assessment portfolios which indicate that a student is nine months or more behind grade level, one or more years behind grade level peers in the accumulation of credits for graduation, or retained one or more times.

Disruptive behavior is behavior which interferes with the student's own learning or the educational process of others and requires attention and assistance beyond what the traditional program provides; behavior that severely threatens the general welfare of others; and/or frequent conflicts of a disruptive nature while the student is under the jurisdiction of the school, either in or out of the classroom.

Personal and family problems or situations are conditions that negatively affect the student's academic and social progress. These may include, but are not limited to:

- pregnancy
- single parenting
- mental/physical health problems
- frequent relocation of residency
- homelessness
- violence
- criminal activity/involvement
- abuse: physical, mental, sexual
- inadequate emotional support
- gang involvement

Students in transition are those moving to or from residential programs such as detention, psychiatric treatment, legal commitment, and substance abuse rehabilitation.

STAFFING

The operation and proper management of an ALE make extraordinary demands on the staff and administrators of the program, and in recognition of those demands, the school district should make a concerted effort to hire ALE staff and personnel suitable to those needs based on training, education, desire to participate, and experience.

The ALE should be supervised or directed by a certified teacher or administrator.

Core curricula should be taught by a teacher certified in any one of the core areas: in elementary education, in special education, or in adult education. Non-core curricula should be directed by a certified teacher.

Classified ALE staff should work under the direct supervision of the ALE administrator or certified teacher in the ALE.

Each ALE should provide one certified employee for every 20 full-time equivalent students.

Each ALE should include sufficient staff, including noncertified and support staff (e.g., custodial or secretarial) to maintain an adult/student ratio of no more than 1 to 10.

TRAINING

All regular, certified, or classified staff or an ALE should undergo comprehensive staff development appropriate to the particular ALE. The training may include such topics as conflict management, interpersonal skills and human development, counseling and group process skills, positive approaches to behavior management and discipline, stress management, and building self-confidence.

STUDENT ADMISSION

Students within the jurisdictional responsibility of the district or districts who exhibit one or more of the characteristics of students listed under "DEFINITIONS" may have access to the ALE.

Student should be assigned to an ALE for not less than 20 consecutive school days. A parent or guardian, a school counselor, and at least one of the student's teachers and other persons knowledgeable about the student should confer with the ALE administrator or the lead teacher and the student to determine the student's needs and to document how the ALE can meet those needs.

A structured system of assessment conducted by the ALE staff that will enhance the work of a teacher or school personnel is necessary. Students assigned to an ALE should be assessed within 20 school days. The student assessment profile should include information on behavioral assessment, attendance records, and problems both in and out of school. Screening instruments need to be used to help diagnose learning difficulties and achievement deficiencies.

Eligible students with disabilities defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Public Law 94-142, as amended, may be placed in an ALE. ALEs shall provide access to appropriate education services consistent with federal laws and regulations.

Each ALE should have a plan to involve parents, guardians, or other parties responsible for the student.

The district or districts operating the ALE shall not discriminate against any student or group of students on the basis or race, gender, handicap, or religious belief in the criteria for admission or in operating the ALE.

RESOURCES

Students assigned to an ALE should have access to resources and services of the appropriate school district. These resources and services may include, but not be limited to, transportation, health services, free or reduced lunch, and counseling services.

RECORD KEEPING

Districts must submit an annual, year-end report to the Arkansas Department of Education, General Education division, using a format developed by the Department. Each operating ALE should maintain information which will include, but not be limited to, the following information:

1. Number of students
2. Length of enrollments
3. Age of students
4. Race and gender of the students
5. Grade levels at the time of entry and exit from the program
6. Reasons for admissions
7. Current status of students on date of the report

COLLABORATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES

Each operating ALE should collaborate with community programs to better serve its students. The ALE may create a coalition or utilize an existing one. These may include business or leadership council, social services (e.g., local Department of Human Services), health services (e.g., Department of Health, community health centers, private physicians), law enforcement and juvenile justice, mental health services (e.g., community mental health centers, private providers), volunteer groups/civic clubs and other charitable organizations (e.g., PTA, PTO, United Way, literacy councils), employment services (e.g., JTPA, Employment Security Department), and youth services (e.g., SCAN, contract providers).

EXIT CRITERIA

A positive program exit should be the goal of all ALEs. Each ALE student should be evaluated at least once a semester for a possible exit. The parent or guardian should be involved in the exit decision. Some examples of program exits are reentry into the regular school setting, graduation, program completion, assignment to other agencies/programs, or age of majority.

Agency # 005.01

Arkansas Department of Education
Emergency Rules Governing the Distribution of Student Special Needs Funding and the Determination of Allowable Expenditure of ~~These~~ Those Funds
March 13, 2006

1.00 Authority

1.01 The Arkansas State Board of Education's authority for promulgating these Rules is pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-11-105 and ~~Act 2283 of the 85th General Assembly~~ 6-20-2304.

1.02 These Rules shall be known as the Arkansas Department of Education Rules Governing the Distribution of Student Special Needs Funding and the Determination of Allowable Expenditures of ~~These~~ Those Funds.

2.00 Purpose

2.01 The purpose of these Rules is to distribute student special needs funding and define the allowable expenditures of ~~these~~ those funds.

3.00 Definitions – For purposes of these Rules, the following terms mean:

3.01 "Alternative Learning Environment (ALE)" is a student intervention program in compliance with Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-18-508 and 6-18-509 and these Rules that seeks to eliminate traditional barriers to student learning.

3.02 "Average Daily Membership (ADM)" is the total number of days of school attended plus the total number of days absent by students in grades kindergarten through twelve (K-12) during the first three (3) quarters of each school year divided by the number of school days actually taught in the school district during that period of time rounded up to the nearest hundredth.

3.02.1 In those instances in which the ADM for less than three (3) quarters is specified, the number of days used in the calculation shall be the days in the specified period of time.

3.02.2 As applied to these Rules, students who may be counted for ADM are:

3.02.2.1 Students who reside within the boundaries of the school district and who are enrolled in a public school operated by the school district.

1

3.02.2.2 Legally transferred students living outside the school district but attending a public school in the school district under a provision of the Arkansas Code or Rules.

3.02.2.3 Students who are eligible to attend and reside within the boundaries of a school district and who are enrolled in the Arkansas National Guard Youth Challenge Program, so long as the students are participants in the program.

3.03 "Classroom Teacher" is an individual who is required to hold a teaching license from the Arkansas Department of Education (Department) and who is working directly in instruction with students in a classroom setting for more than seventy percent (70%) of the individual's contracted time; a guidance counselor; or a librarian.

3.04 "English Language Learners (ELL)" are students identified by the State Board of Education (State Board) as not proficient in the English language based upon approved English proficiency assessment instruments administered annually in the fall of the current school year, which assessments measure oral, reading, and writing proficiency.

3.05 "Eligible Alternative Learning Student" is a student who meets the qualifications of 4.01, is in a program that meets the qualifications of 4.02, has attended an eligible ALE for a minimum of twenty (20) days per school year and meets the requirements outlined in Section 4.

3.06 "NSLA" - National School Lunch Act.

3.07 "National School Lunch Students" are those students from low socio-economic backgrounds as indicated by eligibility for free or reduced-priced meals under the National School Lunch Act as determined on October 1 of the previous school year, unless the district participates in the NSLA Provision 2 Program.

3.08 "Previous Year" is the school year immediately preceding the school year in which funds are allocated.

3.09 "Professional Development" is a coordinated set of planned learning activities for school teachers and administrators that are based on research, are standards-based and continuous.

3.09.1 Professional development shall result in individual, school-wide, and district-wide improvement designed to ensure that all students demonstrate proficiency in the state academic standards.

3.10 "Provision Two (2) School District" is a school district participating in the National School Lunch Program under 42 U.S.C. § 1759a, as interpreted in 7 C.F.R. § 245.9.

3.11 "School District" is a geographic area with an elected board of directors that qualifies as a taxing unit for purposes of *ad valorem* property taxes under Ark. Code. Ann. § 26-1-101 et seq. and which board conducts the daily affairs of public schools pursuant to the supervisory authority vested in it by the General Assembly ~~and~~ via Title 6 of the Arkansas Code.

3.12 "School Year" is the year beginning July 1 of one calendar year and ending June 30 of the next calendar year.

3.13 "Technology" is any equipment for instructional purposes that is electronic in nature, including, but not limited to, computer hardware, computer software, internet connectivity, and distance learning.

4.00 Special Needs - Alternative Learning Environment (ALE)

4.01 Eligible ALE Students

4.01.1 An eligible ALE student shall exhibit two (2) or more of the characteristics identified in 4.01.1.1 and 4.01.1.2. Students will not be placed in the ALE based on academic problems alone.

4.01.1.1 Students placed at risk, though intelligent and capable, typically manifest one or more of the following characteristics:

- Disruptive behavior
- Drop out from school
- Personal or family problems or situations
- Recurring absenteeism
- Transition to or from residential programs

4.01.1.2 Situations that negatively affect the student's academic and social progress may include, but are not limited to:

- Ongoing, persistent lack of attaining proficiency levels in literacy and mathematics
- Abuse: physical, mental, or sexual
- Frequent relocation of residency
- Homelessness
- Inadequate emotional support
- Mental/physical health problems
- Pregnancy
- Single parenting

Agency # 005.01

4.02 Eligible ALE Programs

4.02.1 An eligible ALE program shall meet the following guidelines:

4.02.1.2 Have students taught by a currently licensed teacher. If course credit is granted, the teacher must be highly qualified by the 2005-2006 school year or in districts recognized in the Rural Education Achievement Program's (REAP) Small, Rural School Achievement Program (SRSA) by the end of the 2006-2007 school year. Newly hired teachers in these designated districts will have three years from the date of hire to become highly qualified as required by the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

4.02.1.3 Have a student/teacher ratio in grades Kindergarten through six (K-6) of no more than ten (10) to one (1). If a paraprofessional is employed in addition to a licensed supervisor, the student/teacher ratio shall be no more than twelve (12) to one (1).

4.02.1.4 Have a student/teacher ratio in grades seven through twelve (7-12) of no more than fifteen (15) to one (1). If a paraprofessional is employed in addition to a licensed supervisor, the student/teacher ratio~~n~~ shall be no more than eighteen (18) to one (1).

4.02.1.5 Provide each alternative learning student with access to the services of a school counselor or a mental health professional, a nurse, and support services provided to other students.

4.02.1.6 Coordinate the ALE with state and federal student assistance programs.

4.02.1.7 Submit a description of the ALE on a form developed by the Department. This description shall be included in the districts' Arkansas Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (ACSIP).

4.02.1.8 Have an Alternative Education Placement Team in place in order to determine student placement in the ALE. This team should include the school counselor, the ALE director or principal, a parent or legal guardian and a regular classroom teacher.

4

4.02.1.9 Maintain documentation of the presence of these characteristics listed in 4.01.1.

4.02.1.10 Provide that the ALE shall not be punitive but should provide the guidance, counseling, and academic support to enable students who are experiencing emotional, social or academic problems to continue to make progress toward educational goals either in the traditional educational system or the General Educational Development (GED) Program.

4.02.1.11 Provide that computer programs when used in the ALE setting will supplement teacher instruction.

4.02.1.12 Develop an agreement with the parent or guardian, teacher or ALE director, and student outlining the responsibilities of the school, parent, and the student to provide assurance that the plan for each student is successful.

4.02.1.13 Provide a curriculum including mathematics, science, social studies, and language arts aligned with the regular classroom instruction or with the standards for the tests of the GED.

4.02.1.14 Develop exit criteria on which to base a student's return to the regular program.

4.02.1.15 Require ALE staff to meet the same professional development requirements as other certified staff.

4.02.1.16 The Department shall monitor ALEs as required in compliance with Ark. Code Ann. § 6-18-509.

4.03 ALE Funding

4.03.1 The ALE funding amount shall be ~~three thousand two hundred fifty dollars ($3,250)~~ the amount required by law times the district's eligible ALE student's full time equivalent (FTE) in the previous school year as defined in this Rule.

4.03.2 An ALE student shall be counted as no more than one student for ALE funding purposes.

4.03.3 An eligible ALE student's FTEs shall be determined by the number of hours taught in an eligible ALE each day divided by 6 hours, times the number of days an eligible student attends the ALE, plus the number of days absent, divided by the number of school days actually taught in the school year.

4.03.3.1 Alternative Learning Student~~. A~~ is a student who has attended an eligible ALE for a minimum of twenty (20) days per school year.

4.03.3.2 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Alternative Learning Student ~~Is~~ is an alternative learning student who has at least six (6) hours per day of student/teacher interaction time in the ALE, and attends the ALE for the entire school year.

4.03.4 ALE funding is restricted state aid.

4.03.5 ALE funding shall be spent on eligible activities identified in this Rule except as otherwise allowed by law or rule.

4.03.6 ALE funding may be carried over from one fiscal year to the next but these funds shall remain restricted to the priority areas as defined in this Rule.

5.00 Special Needs English Language Learners (ELL)

5.01 The ELL funding amount shall be ~~one-hundred ninety-five dollars ($195)~~ the amount required by law times the district's identified English Language Learners in the current school year.

5.01.1 The number of identified ELL students shall be a total of all students identified by the State Board as not proficient in the English language based upon approved English proficiency assessment instruments.

5.01.2 Documentation to be used for the calculation of the number of identified ELL students must be submitted to the Department no later than November 30 of each school year.

5.01.3 An ELL student shall be counted as no more than one student for ELL funding purposes.

5.02 School ~~D~~districts shall maintain documentation of each student identified as an ELL.

5.03 For ELL funding purposes, State-approved English proficiency assessment instruments include:

5.03.1 LAS (Language Assessment Scales)

5.03.2 IDEA (IPT-Idea Proficiency Test)

5.03.3 Woodcock-Munoz

5.03.4 Maculaitis Assessment of Competencies

5.03.5 Language Assessment Battery

5.04 ELL funding shall be expended for the following eligible activities:

5.04.1 Salaries for ELL-skilled instructional services (not supplanting district financial obligations for providing teachers for ELL students).

5.04.2 Funds for teacher training, consultants, workshops, ELL course work, including Department sponsored training programs.

5.04.3 Released-time for planning program selection, and ELL program development.

5.04.4 Selection and purchase of language-appropriate instructional and supplemental (enrichment) materials for ELL students (including computer-assisted technology and library materials).

5.04.5 Counseling services, community liaison staff with language and cultural skills appropriate to the ELL population.

5.04.6 Assessment activities, which address identification, placement, and review of ELL student academic progress, as well as evaluation activities to determine the effectiveness of the district's ELL program.

5.05 ELL funding may be carried over from one fiscal year to the next, but these funds shall remain restricted to those priority areas ~~as~~ defined in this Rule.

Agency # 005.01

6.00 Special Needs National School Lunch Act (NSLA)

6.01 The NSLA funding amount shall be determined by the district's total students identified as eligible to participate in the NSLA Program divided by the district's total enrolled students. The product shall be calculated to one tenth of one percent, and rounded up to the nearest whole number from five tenths or down to the nearest whole number from four tenths. NSLA funding for Provision 2 districts shall be determined as defined in ~~Act 2283 of 2005, Section 1,~~ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-2303 (12)(B)(i) and (ii).

6.01.1 Districts with ninety percent (90%) or greater of the previous school year's enrolled students eligible for the NSLA Program shall receive ~~one thousand four hundred forty dollars ($1,440)~~ the amount required by law for each student eligible for the NSLA Program.

6.01.2 Districts with less than ninety percent (90%) and at least seventy percent (70%) of the previous school year's enrolled students eligible for the NSLA Program shall receive ~~nine hundred sixty dollars ($960)~~ the amount required by law for each student eligible for the NSLA Program.

6.01.3 Districts with less than seventy percent (70%) of the previous school year's enrolled students eligible for the NSLA Program shall receive ~~four hundred eighty dollars ($480)~~ the amount required by law for each student eligible for the NSLA Program.

6.01.4 Districts must participate in the federal National School Lunch Program to receive NSLA Funding.

6.02 The district percentage of NSLA eligible students shall be determined from the Arkansas Public School Computer Network's Cycle 2 report for the previous school year.

6.02.1 The Child Nutrition Unit of the Department shall verify the Cycle 2 report for accuracy.

6.02.2 Adjustments to the Cycle 2 report shall be made by the Department based on documentation provided by the school district.

6.03 NSLA Growth Funding

6.03.1 The Department shall use the Cycle 2 enrollment data for the previous four years to calculate a three year trend in district enrollment.

6.03.2 If a district has grown at least one percent for each of the three previous years, they shall qualify for NSLA Growth Funding.

6.03.3 Districts that qualify for funding shall receive NSLA Growth Funding.

6.03.4 The funding shall be calculated as the three year average growth in enrollment multiplied by the district's previous year's percentage of students eligible for the NSLA Program multiplied by the per student funding determined in 6.01.

6.04 Each school district with NSLA students shall provide a research based program(s) or purpose(s) for students eligible for NSLA funding ~~for improving~~ in order to improve instruction and ~~increasing~~ increase academic achievement of those students.

6.05 NSLA funding shall not be used to meet or satisfy the Arkansas Standards for Accreditation required by Ark Code Ann. § 6-15-201 et seq. and the Arkansas Minimum Teacher Salaries required by Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-2403 except as otherwise allowed herein this section.

6.05.1 NSLA f~~F~~unding ~~may~~ shall not be used to augment, replace, or supplement the mandatory requirements of the Arkansas Standards for Accreditation required by Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-201 et seq. unless the expenditure is for the purposes outlined under Section 6.06 of this Rule. ~~and the Arkansas Minimum Teacher Salaries required by Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-2403.~~

6.05.2 The salary of an employee in an eligible program under Section 6.00 of this Rule that would exceed the Standards for Accreditation may be paid with NSLA funding.

6.05.3 District shall not use NSLA funds to increase salaries above the minimum salary schedule required by Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-2403 unless those classroom teachers are exclusively employed for the purposes established under this Rule to increase the academic achievement of NSLA students.

6.05.4 NSLA funds may be used to pay salaries of teachers to reduce the pupil to teacher ratio below the mandates specified in the Arkansas Standards of Accreditation.

6.06 NSLA funding shall be expended for eligible program(s) or purpose(s) that are research-based and aligned to the Arkansas Content Standards for improving instruction and increasing achievement of NSLA identified students at risk of not meeting challenging academic standards either existing or new. These programs or purposes include:

6.06.1 Employing Literacy and/or Mathematics and/or Science Specialists/Coaches (K-12) that meet the following requirements:

6.06.1.1 The Specialists/Coaches are educators who assist in curriculum alignment with state curriculum documents; alignment of classroom assessment with statewide exams; instructional strategies; professional development and implementation of training; choosing standards-based instructional materials; understanding of current research; advantageous arrangement of the instructional day; and integrating technology into instruction.

6.06.1.2 Qualifications for Specialists/Coaches (K-12):

- At least three years of recent teaching experience in appropriate content areas within grades K-12
- Knowledge of Arkansas Curriculum Framework
- Knowledge of current research and effective practices in standards-based curriculum, instruction, and assessment
- Experience in adult learning situations and in team problem solving
- A bachelor's degree (a master's degree would be preferred).

6.06.2 Providing research based professional development in the areas of literacy and/or mathematics and/or science in grades Kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12) as defined in the Arkansas Department of Education Regulations Governing Attendance at Certified Instructional Professional Development Sessions (Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-702).

6.06.3 Employing highly qualified classroom teachers in grades Kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12) pursuant to the restrictions set forth in Section 6.05 of this Rule.

~~6.06.3.1 The salary of an employee in an eligible program under Section 6.00 of this Rule that would exceeding the Standards for Accreditation may be paid with NSLA funding.~~

~~6.06.3.2 Districts may shall not use NSLA funds to increase salaries above the minimum salary schedule required by Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-2403.~~

~~6.06.3.3 NSLA funds may be used to pay salaries of teachers to reduce the pupil to teacher ratio below the mandates specified in the Arkansas Standards of Accreditation.~~

6.06.4 Providing research-based before and after-school academic programs, including transportation to and from the programs.

6.06.5 Providing research-based pre-kindergarten programs that meet the program standards as outlined in the Rules Governing the Arkansas Better Chance program.

6.06.6 Employing Tutors:

6.06.6.1 Tutors must be able to demonstrate competency (as determined locally) in each area where instruction is provided.

6.06.6.2 Tutors must work under the supervision of highly qualified classroom teachers.

6.06.7 Employing Teacher's Aides:

6.06.7.1 Teacher's aides must be highly qualified.

6.06.7.2 Teacher's aides must work under the direct supervision of highly qualified teachers.

6.06.8 Employing certified counselors, licensed social workers and/or nurses.

6.06.9 Employing Curriculum Specialists:

6.06.9.1 The Curriculum Specialists shall meet current licensure requirements~~. As~~ that are outlined in the Rules Governing Initial and Standard Administrator Licensure.

6.06.10 Providing parent education.

6.06.11 Providing summer programs that employ research-based methods and strategies.

6.06.12 Providing early intervention programs:

6.06.12.1 Early intervention means short-term, intensive, focused, individualized instruction developed from ongoing, daily, systematic diagnosis that occurs while a child is in the initial, kindergarten through grade one (K-1), stages of learning early reading, writing, and mathematical strategies to ensure acquisition of the basic skills and to prevent the child from developing poor problem-solving habits which become difficult to change.

6.06.13 Obtaining materials, supplies, and equipment, including technology, used in approved instructional programs or for approved purposes. The approved programs and or purposes support the local educational agency's ACSIP.

6.06.14 Other activities approved by the Department ~~of Education~~ that will further the purposes of this Section.

6.07 Use of these funds shall be included within the school and/or school district's ACSIP. The ACSIP will include how the funds will be spent, the person(s) responsible, a timeline, and budget.

6.07.1 The district shall evaluate programs supported by NSLA funds annually to ensure that the programs are providing intervention/prevention services designed to increase student achievement.

6.07.2 The district shall maintain documentation that supports gains in student achievement as measured by the state assessment system.

6.08 NSLA funding may be carried over from one fiscal year to the next, but these funds shall remain restricted to priority areas as defined in this Rule.

6.09 NSLA funding is restricted state aid, except as otherwise allowed by law or Rule.

Agency # 005.01

7.00 Special Needs Professional Development

7.01 The Professional Development funding amount shall be an amount up to ~~fifty dollars ($50)~~ the amount required by law times the district's ADM of the previous school year.

7.02 Professional Development funding shall be expended for approved programs and purposes identified in the Rules Governing Professional Development and employing literacy, mathematics, or science coaches as described in this Rule.

7.03 Districts may expend state Professional Development funding to provide the requisite hours of professional development required by Rule or law.

7.04 Professional Development funding is restricted state aid. Professional Development funding shall be spent on activities identified in this Rule, except as otherwise allowed by law or Rule.

7.05 Professional Development funding may be carried over from one fiscal year to the next, but these funds shall remain restricted to priority areas as defined in this Rule.

8.00 Financial Accounting for Special Needs Funding for ALE, ELL, NSLA, and Professional Development

8.01 After having provided programs designed to meet the needs of students in the respective categorical funding areas, a school district may transfer and expend funds on any of the special needs categories allowed for in this Rule.

8.02 Special needs funding of ALE, ELL, NSLA, and Professional Development may be used for any of the expenditures identified in this Rule.

8.03 Districts shall report the funds received under each special needs funding category.

8.04 Districts shall report the expenditures of all special needs funds as required by law, including, but not limited to, fund balances remaining on June 30 of each year.

8.05 The funds received, transferred, expended, and/or carried over shall balance.

13

8.06 If the Department determines that a district would lose any federal funding due to these explicated expenditure requirements, the special needs funds may be expended for other academic programs or salaries, as permitted by the Department.

9.00 Emergency Clause

Whereas, due to the recent decision of the Arkansas Supreme Court in the matter of *Lake View School District No. 25, et al v. Mike Huckabee, et al*, that determined that the Arkansas General Assembly failed to provide sufficient stringent control over the proper allocation and expenditure of certain educational categorical funding; therefore, it is hereby determined that the aforementioned amendments to these Rules are immediately necessary, and the Arkansas State Board of Education finds that imminent peril to the schools and school districts of this state, as articulated above, will exist if these Rules are not promulgated on an emergency basis pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. § 25-15-204.

10.00 Effective Date

These emergency Rules shall become effective immediately upon approval by the Arkansas State Board of Education.

Arkansas Code on Alternative Learning Environment

6-18-508. Alternative learning environment.

(a) Every school district shall establish an alternative learning environment that shall afford students an environment conducive to learning.

(b) The alternative learning environment required by this section may be established by more than one (1) school district or may be operated by a public school educational cooperative established under § 6-13-901 et seq.

(c) The Department of Education shall establish criteria for teacher preparation for alternative learning environments, which shall include in-service training.

(d)(1)(A) Each school district shall report on a yearly basis to the department the race, gender, and other pertinent information regarding alternative learning environment attendees.

(B) This information shall be reported by the department to the Joint Interim Oversight Subcommittee on Educational Reform by September 15 of each year.

(2) The Arkansas Pygmalion Commission on Nontraditional Education will also report its findings by the same time each year to the same legislative body.

History. Acts 1991, No. 830, § 2; 1995, No. 597, § 1; 1995, No. 1296, § 24; 1997, No. 112, § 11; 1999, No. 391, § 12; 1999, No. 1299, § 1; 2005, No. 2121, § 9.

6-18-509. Assessment and intervention in alternative learning environments.

(a) As used in this section, unless the context otherwise requires, "intervention services" means activities within or outside a school that will eliminate traditional barriers to learning.

(b) An Arkansas school district electing to operate an alternative class or school should provide for:

(1) Student assessment either before or upon entry into the class or school; and

(2) Intervention services designed to address the specific educational needs of individual students.

(c) A student assigned to an alternative class or school for behavioral reasons must receive intervention services designed to address the student's behavioral problems. Such intervention services shall not be punitive in nature but must be designed for long-term improvement of the student's ability to control his or her behavior.

(d) Along with its annual report to the Department of Education, a school district shall submit an assurance statement that it is in compliance with the establishment of an alternative learning environment.

(e) The department shall work with alternate classes and schools in assisting them in complying with the provisions of this section.

(f) The department shall periodically, but not less often than every three (3) years, monitor each school district or cooperative to ensure that alternative learning environments have been established, are conducive to learning, and are providing intervention services designed to address individual needs of students.

(g) A school district that does not comply with these provisions shall be identified each year in the department's annual school district report card.

(h) [Repealed.]

History. Acts 1993, No. 1287, § 1; 1995, No. 597, § 2; 1999, No. 1299, § 2; 2005, No.2121,§10.