A Study of the Relationships Between Indicators of Georgia Alternative School Effectiveness and Measures of Student Success as Perceived by Alternative School Administrators

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships between Georgia alternative school administrators' perceptions of student success factors and the three domains of essential elements of effective alternative schools. The success factors included: dropout rate, average grade point average (GPA), average absences per student, recidivism rate, and suspension rate. The essential elements of alternative schools included the domains of efficiency, learning environment, and academic performance.

Research questions were addressed through an instrument created from the work of Dr. Leon Swarts. The instrument was tested for validity and reliability and was found to be both valid and reliable. The instrument was e-mailed to all principals of Georgia alternative schools and sixty-nine participated in the study.

The statistical method used for this study was a series of one-way ANOVAs using the F-test statistic. The relationship of the five dependent variables (dropout rate, suspension rate, grade point average, student absentee rate, and recidivism rate) with the nine independent variables (planning, school leadership, organizational structure, culture, professional development, parent involvement, community involvement, school-linked services, and academics) were determined. Apparently, the student outcome measures of GPA and Suspension Rate garnered more statistical relationships to effective alternative school dimensions. Recidivism rate may be a student outcome measure for future use but absentee rate

and dropout rate may be measures that should not be used to garner relationships to alternative school effectiveness.

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To my immediate family, Carolynn, Keri, Brent, Ashley, and Gabriel, this is for you as an example that you too can finish the race. To my mother, Jenovis, and deceased father, John, I hope that you are proud.

Now to the author and finisher of my faith, you are indeed an awesome God.

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CHAPTER I. NATURE OF THE STUDY

Introduction

Most school systems in America seek to provide a quality education for all of their students. However, issues of equity and assuring that all children succeed in public schools has been an issue of debate for hundreds of years (Lange & Sletten, 2002). During the presidency of Lyndon B. Johnson, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 was passed to attempt to address this issue. This act attacked the lack of equity within the public school system and provided programs and funding to try to address them. The original act has generally been revised every five to six years but until 2001, changes were minimal (Kimmelman, 2006).

In 2001 a major revision of Public Law 107-110, commonly known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) began impacting students and schools throughout the nation in some very powerful ways. The NCLB targeted low performing schools and students and encouraged states to adopt the idea that all children can learn and that no children should be left behind (Aron, 2006; Barr & Parrett, 2003; Swarts, 2002). This law put public school systems on notice that educating all eligible students to reach high levels of achievement is not just a lofty idea, but it is a goal that must be met by the year 2017. NCLB mandated that states must use high quality academic student assessments to measure the success of all children. It also required that the assessment results must be disaggregated by sub-group populations which include: gender, major racial and ethnic groups, English proficiency status and students with disabilities (Aron, 2006; Kimmelman, 2006; Swarts, 2005; 20 U.S. C. 6301, 2002).

In addition, NCLB requires that all students, including those in special education categories, must pass all portions of the mandated high stakes tests that have been approved by the Federal Government (20 U.S. C. 6301, 2002). Starting in the 2004-2005 school year, the performance goals for schools to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) has risen every three years and will do so through the 2009-2010 school year. After 2010 the performance goal must rise annually through 2013-2014. In the school year 2013-2014 100% of all sub-groups (identifiable categories of students containing more than 40 students) will be expected to meet all performance goals. AYP means meeting a certain level of proficiency in three areas. The areas are: 1) 95% participation of students on assessments, 2) meet or exceed academic performance goals, and 3) meet or exceed proficiency in a second academic indicator or in some cases show progress (www.georgiaeducation.org/topics/handouts/Adequate-Yearly-Progress.pdf). Although these goals have been set, never in this nation's history have all of its students passed all high stakes tests, completed school, shown progress or graduated.

Throughout the nation, public school systems are attempting to develop strategies to help address the needs of underachieving students in order to meet the standards put forth in NCLB as described above. As schools have moved toward meeting the mandates of NCLB alternatives which are designed to keep students in school and help them achieve academically have taken on a much broader, healthier, more comprehensive definition. There are a variety of models including schools such as charter schools, magnet schools, vocational and career centers and punitive alternative schools (Lange & Slatten, 2002; Morley, 1991).

Over the decades various movements and policy decisions have helped shape the overall development of alternative schools for students in the United States. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s provided some of the impetus for varied forms of alternative schools.

Many of the alternative schools which developed out of the Civil Rights Movement addressed issues of unequal educational opportunities. Others were developed to reach students who had been unsuccessful in traditional school settings (Barr & Parrett, 1997; Leiding, 2007; Neumann, 2003). In 1973 there were 464 alternative schools in various states and as federal and state funding opportunities have increased so has the popularity of alternative school settings. The number has continued to rise from the 1970s as these school settings serve a wider range of students with varying needs (Kraft, 1998, Neumann, 2003). In 2001 it was estimated that there were over 20,000 various alternative schools settings in the United States. These include Type I alternative schools with popular options such as magnet and charter schools, Type II alternative schools which include punitive settings such as schools-within-schools or separate facility alternative schools and Type III alternative schools which include community-based or therapeutic school settings (Aron, 2006; Barr & Parrett, 2003; Kochhar-Bryant & Lacey, 2005; Lange & Sletten, 2002).

Punitive or Type II alternative schools are the focus of this study. These schools are defined as "last chance" opportunities to succeed in school (Barr & Parrett, 2003; Reimer & Cash, 2003). The Type II alternative school is designed to help alter a child's negative behavioral choices and some educators and policymakers have contended that if an alternative educational option is provided for students at-risk of school failure, they will be able to succeed, no matter what academic, social, or emotional needs or limitations might appear to be present. Advocates for these educational settings argue that alternatives to the traditional setting are imperative to meeting the needs of all students (Barr & Parrett. 2001; Natriello, McDill & Pallas, 1990; Raywid, 1989; Wehlage & Rutter, 1987; Whehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko & Fernadez, 1989; Young, 1990).

Raywid (1994), one of the leading authorities in alternative school research, viewed alternative school settings as "cutting edge" educational reform for at-risk youth.

> Amid all the current talk of school restructuring, alternatives are the clearest example we have of what a restructured school might look like. They represent our most definitive departure from the programmatic, organizational and behavioral regularities that inhibit school reform. Moreover, many of the reforms currently pursued in traditional schools—downsizing the high school, pursuing a focus or theme, students and teacher choice, making the school a community, empowering staff, active learner engagement, authentic assessment—are practices that alternative schools pioneered. (p 26)

The first national study of public alternative school was conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in 2001. The Fast Response Survey System (FRSS), which was established by the National Center for Education Statistics in 1975, was used to collect the data (see Appendix 1). The study grew out of a concern over the rise of violence, weapons, and drugs in our elementary and secondary schools. The focus was on the schools that served students at-risk for educational failure because of serious behavioral issues and would typically be described as Type II Alternative Schools. The (NCES) survey produced descriptive information. The primary findings of this study were that of the 10,900 public alternative schools, 88 to 92 percent were secondary; they were generally located in large urban districts with high minority and poverty concentrations in separate facilities; 89 percent of the districts hired teachers specifically for these schools; the schools accepted students who possessed or used illegal substances, physically attacked someone, were chronically truant, and possessed weapons. More than75 percent of the schools could lead students to a regular diploma; and a large percentage of the schools collaborated with outside agencies. Although this study brought to light the structure

and purposes of alternative schools in the United States but it did not address how effective the schools were in keeping students in school or fostering their academic success (Kleiner, Farris & Porch, 2002).

Research has identified some areas that appear to be essential in creating effective Type II punitive alternative schools. Among these elements are small size, customized and individual curriculum, shared vision and governance, high academic expectations and caring teachers (Aron, 2006; Lange & Sletten, 2003; Leiding, 2007). Leadership appears to be another critical element in effective alternative school settings and has a major impact on student success (Cash, 2004; Schargel & Smink, 2001; Smink & Schargel, 2004). Support systems for students also appear to be essential in transitioning to and from alternative settings. Whether the student is returning to a regular school, graduating and/or moving forward to college or vocational training support systems such as counseling and career development can help determine success or failure (Conchas & Clark, 2002; Cox, 2008; James & Jurich 1999; Katsiyannis & Williams, 1998; Kocchar-Bryant, 2004; Martin, Marshall & DePry, 2002).

As stewards of educational institutions administrators and teachers who work in alternative settings must take an active role in providing the leadership, organizational culture and academic performance which will support this population of students. Leadership from the administrative team as well as the classroom is critical because much of the research points to teachers as the single most important factor in student achievement and the building level administrator as the most important indirect factor. Together they can provide an important and powerful structure for student learning.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships between Georgia alternative school administrators' perceptions of student success factors and the three domains of essential elements of effective alternative schools. The student success factors included: dropout rate, average grade point average (GPA), average absences per student, recidivism rate and student suspension rate. The essential elements of alternative schools included the domains of efficiency, learning environment and academic performance.

Significance of the Study

In general, the literature pertaining to alternative schools continues to grow but it is limited in the examination of the essential elements of effective alternative schools. There is significant knowledge concerning what causes a student to drop out but the prevention and successful interventions necessary to keep these children in school appears limited. Those who wish to advance this area need to explore how alternative settings can successfully keep students in school and on-track academically. This study provides an instrument which can be used nationally in a variety of ways to examine issues related to creating effective alternative schools.

Research concerning Georgia alternative schools and the at-risk youth they serve is almost nonexistent. This study provides the state with a research-based tool to evaluate Type II alternative schools and can possibly advance areas of future growth or attention needed to these institutions. In addition, Georgia has not gathered the student data used in this study in regards to students who are attending the Type II alternative school. Some of the demographic data may be useful in advancing what we know about the typical alternative school student in Georgia. It also provides the state with information about the perceptions of principals in these schools relative to factors related to school effectiveness.

Superintendents and Human Resource Officers as well as colleges and universities are prime candidates to use the data and results that are produced from this study. School systems will have research based data that they can use in hiring leaders for their alternative programs for disruptive students. Institutions of higher learning can also use this research in their leadership preparation programs to help future leaders understand factors that may foster success for potential dropouts. In addition, those school systems and higher education institutions may use the data from this study to garner "themes" needed for professional development in college/university programs or school systems, or state wide activities. Such topical areas for improvement might include how to involve stakeholders, change culture within the organization or provide social and cultural diversity education for teachers and administrators.

Background of the Study

In 2004 several states were identified as being in a dropout crisis. Georgia was identified as one of the fifteen states that produced eighty percent of all the nation's dropouts. Georgia was also identified as one of the five southern states that lead the country in high schools where freshmen do not graduate in four years. Five southern states—Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Florida, and Texas collectively lead the nation in both total number and level of concentration of high schools with weak promoting power. In fact, these data indicate that of the entering 2002 Atlanta, Georgia freshman class, only 40% will graduate in four years (Balfanz & Legters, 2004).

The state of Georgia's Alternative Education Program has adopted as its mission "to provide a learning environment that includes the objectives of the quality core curriculum and that the instruction in an alternative education program shall enable students to return to a general or career education program as quickly as possible" (p. 71). Four models of alternative

schools were created to meet this mission. The models are: Community-based Alternative Education Program, In-School Suspension, School-Community Guidance Center, and CrossRoads Alternative Education Program (160-4-8-.12, 2001). The focus of the present research revolves around the CrossRoads model i.e. Type II punitive alternative school. These Georgia alternative schools place emphasis on academic and social skills and are considered an intervention to help students become more successful in the traditional school settings. Most of these students are placed in the Type II schools for violating school rules and policies such as engaging in violent and disruptive behavior, involvement in inappropriate sexual behavior, using drugs or alcohol, and using or possessing weapons (Cox, 2008). Georgia has 154 Type II alternative schools which serve students in grades 6–12.

Students in Georgia's Type II punitive alternative schools are not given a choice of whether to attend that school. They are placed at CrossRoad type schools because of serious infractions of school rules. However, Georgia has chosen to follow best practices guidelines and has identified key elements of successful alternative school programs in an effort to keep these students in school and foster their success. Some of those guidelines include choosing teachers who wish to work with this population of children; creating a caring faculty with on-going professional development; a total commitment to assuring that each student succeeds, hiring a faculty and leadership who have high expectations for student achievement and having a clear mission and discipline code (Barr & Parrett, 2001, 2003, 2004; Cash, 2004; Cox, 2008). The Georgia Department of Education Alternative Education Subcommittee Report (2006) notes that when teachers choose to work with this at-risk population, classes are kept small, and the curriculum is individualized, student success rates increase. According to the report the

individualized attention and prescribed nature of the punitive alternative school should allow it to address the risk factors that the students possess (Cox, 2008).

There has been limited research concerning alternative schools in Georgia and in particular, Type II CrossRoads punitive alternative schools. Karlin and Harnish (1995) in investigating the first year of Type II CrossRoads alternative schools found two main themes: the importance of community and program administration. The theme of 'community of support' is described by the researchers as including three properties: 1) the program as community, 2) connections to the community outside of the school and 3) perceptions of the community. The program as community property fosters a team approach that includes teachers, administrators, and parents. The connections to the community outside of the school property provides needed resources from the outside agencies such as Health Departments, Department of Family and Children Services, Georgia Department of Labor, and other agencies that at-risk students might consider safe havens and helping agencies. The perception of the alternative school as community property brings to light the need for the outside communities, including the traditional schools to be educated on what the alternative program does for its students. Comments such as 'don't give the inmates sharp objects' referring to the students often portrays the students as criminals and undeserving of decent treatment. Karlin and Harnish (1995) also found that program administration including the properties of flexibility, how students are selected and placed, the transition services provided and attention to academics to be important elements of the Type II alternative school.

Limitations and Assumptions of the Study

This was a statewide survey of Type II punitive alternative school administrators in Georgia public schools. These alternative schools serve students in grades 6–12. Alternative

school administrators were surveyed on their perceptions of alternative school student success factors and essential elements of effective alternative schools. One hundred percent (100%) of Type II alternative school principals were surveyed and approximately 50% of administrators in Georgia were surveyed. Thus, while the results of the study are generalizable to the population of punitive Type II alternative school administrators in Georgia, but they are not generalizable to all alternative schools in Georgia.

The researcher assumes the principals responded with their honest individual perception of the student success factors and how they related to elements of effective alternative schools survey within their respective programs.

Definitions of Terms

Academic Performance Domain — includes the Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction dimension/standards.

Academic Press and Student Centered Support — describes factors related to a clear focus of high standards, student learning, and includes the relevancy and rigor of the curriculum.

Alternative School — public elementary or secondary school that addresses the needs of students that can not typically be met in a traditional school.

At-Risk Students — students who, due to one or multiple risk factors, face greater chances of becoming low achievers and/or dropouts.

Efficiency Domain — includes Leadership, Organizational Structure and Resources, and Comprehensive and Effective Planning.

Learning Environment Domain — includes Culture and Diversity, Student, Family and Community Support and Professional Development dimension/standards.

Punitive or Type II Alternative School — an alternative school that meets the needs of students who have exhibited at-risk behaviors in their traditional school or community. These students have violated serious school rules and policies such as: drug and alcohol possession and use, inappropriate and risky sexual behavior, weapon violations and violent and/or abusive behavior towards others.

Risk Factors — elements such as: poverty, substance abuse, limited language ability, single parent head-of-household, violence, Black or Hispanic that inhibit a student from performing to their potential.

Conclusion

The state of Georgia needs to determine how effective their Type II alternative schools are in improving student achievement, reducing the drop-out rate, increasing attendance rates and reducing the recidivism rate. Chapter II will provide the literature review that outlines the research that has been done in regards to alternative school development, effective elements of alternative schools, the at-risk student, and the leadership that is needed for successful alternative schools.

CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature focuses on four major areas: (1) definition of alternative schools and a historical development of alternative schools across the United States and in Georgia, (2) effective elements of alternative school settings, (3) leadership for successful alternative schools and (4) at-risk alternative school students.

Defining Alternative Schools

Alternative schools fall under the broad umbrella of non-conventional educational settings (Barr & Parrett, 2001, 2003). Typical examples of alternative schools are: charter schools, magnet schools, multicultural schools, schools without walls, continuation schools, learning centers school-within-a-school, residential schools, summer schools, second-chance and fundamental schools (Barr & Parrett, 2003; Morley, 1991; Schargel & Smink, 2001; Young, 1990). As Morley (1991) suggested, "they [alternative schools] are a perspective, not a procedure or program and are based upon the belief that there are many ways to become educated, as well as many types of environments and structures within which this may occur" (p. 8). In other words, the definitions and perspectives recognize a broad spectrum of opinions and views; some will be narrowly defined while others such as Barr and Parrett's (2003) may be broad and encompass a number of alternative school configurations.

While the definition of alternative schools began as a much broader concept in the 1950s and 1960s as a means of achieving educational equity, the current definitions by many have

become much narrower (Aron, 2006; Lehr, Moreau, Lange & Lanners, 2004; Raywid, 2001). The U.S. Department of Education (2002) defined alternative education schools as

> … public elementary or secondary schools that address the needs of students that cannot typically be met in a regular school or falls outside the categories of regular, special education or vocational education provides nontraditional education, serves as an adjunct to regular schools. (p. 55)

In fact, as part of the Executive Summary of the IES National Center for Education Statistics in the U. S Department of Education states that students are "referred to alternative schools and programs if they are at risk of education failure, as indicated by poor grades, truancy, disruptive behavior, suspension, pregnancy, or similar factors associated with early withdrawal from school" (NCES, 2002; Paglin & Fager, 1997).

Lehr, Moreau, Lange and Lanners (2004) note today's definitions by school districts, states, and the national government define alternative schools more narrowly and suggest the students served by these schools are the ones who are not succeeding in the traditional public school environment. These students have many times been disruptive, suspended or expelled from other school settings (Lange & Sletten, 2002). Alternative schooling has taken many forms and has existed since the inception of public education and has served diverse student groups. Many of those settings are for students who primarily could not be successful in traditional school settings (NCES, 2002). Raywid (1994) observes two reoccurring themes: "They have been designed to respond to a group that appears not to be optimally served by the regular program, and consequently they have represented varying degrees of departure from standard school organization, programs, and environments" (p. 26). Lehr (2005) states alternative schools are an option which keeps students from dropping out or being suspended, provides

necessary disciplinary actions, and can provide counseling or a combination of strategies to help the child become successful academically, behaviorally, and socially. In any regard, "The term alternative is no longer generally regarded as applying to a variety of models but instead has become associated exclusively with nonconforming programs for 'at risk' or 'bad' students" (Glines, 1992, p. 10).

Others have argued that the definition of alternative schools need not narrow and that school systems and states should continue to design alternative schools to meet the needs of all students. Some have suggested less attention on the punitive nature of many programs and that modern alternative schools should be a combination of behavioral interventions, therapeutic settings and choice (Aron, 2006; Raywid, 1994).

Raywid (1994) was one of the first to develop or group alternative schools with a typology. Since then other models and typologies have evolved. For example, Roderick (2003) has identified another possible typology which focuses less on student demographics or problem groups and instead puts students' educational needs at the forefront. For example, there might be a program that targets pregnant teens. Some pregnant teens may include students who are at the appropriate age to graduate and only lack several credits, while other pregnant students may be wards of welfare agencies and still others may have multiple problems such as being over age or in and out of the juvenile justice system. However, too much diversity may cause the programs to set themselves up for failure.

There is no comprehensive data base of alternative schools but attempts in recent years to survey school districts throughout the states yields some interesting demographics. The District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs supported by the National Governor's Association Center for Best Practices (2001) is one of the first. The survey is the first national study of

public alternative schools and programs for students at risk of education failure. It was designed to provide data on topics related to the availability of alternative school education in the United States. Over 1, 534 public school districts participated in the study (U.S. Department of Education, 2002/2008). Thirty-nine percent of public school districts had at least one alternative school or program for at-risk students in grades 1 through 12 for a total of 10,900 programs (Kleiner, Porch & Farris, 2002). Of these districts surveyed 88 to 92 percent of the districts had alternative settings for high school students and 46 to 67 percent had middle school programs. Elementary settings were in 10 to 21 percent of the districts. Generally, the school districts in the NCES survey reported the students were in the alternative program because they were at risk of failing, had poor grades, were truant, were disruptive, had been suspended or were pregnant. Fifty-four percent of the school districts reported the demand for alternative school placement far exceeded the capacity available (Kleiner, Porch & Farris, 2002). While there is no complete or accurate list of alternative programs in the United States, some estimate there are over 20,000 alternative schools and programs in operation (Barr & Parrett, 2001). It is estimated that over 600, 000 students are served in some capacity by alternative schools or programs each year (Kochhar-Bryant & Lacey, 2005).

Historical Development of Alternative Schools

Young, (1990) argues there have been alternative schools and settings since the beginning of American education. Some researchers consider John Dewey to be the father of the alternative school movement because he recognized the importance of individual attention and experiential learning (Neumann, 2003; Reimer & Cash, 2003). Dewey encouraged others to move from the one size fits all type of school arrangements and consider learning in the context of the social and psychological needs of the child (Dewey, 1899). While this may be true, many

would agree that the modern alternative school movement began in the late 1950s and early 1960s as a reaction to racism and lack of equity in the public educational system (Lange & Sletten, 2002; Lehr et.al, 2004; Neumann, 2003; Raywid, 1981; Young, 1990).

Because of the political ferment of the 1960s a growing number of alternative educational settings began to emerge. Most of these early alternative schools served White middle and upper class children (Cash & Reimer, 2003). Koetke (1999) describes the types of present alternative schools as those that are "outside" the system and those that are "inside" the system. Those outside the system are usually private, very expensive and are reserved for elite groups. Those inside the system are for adjudicated youth, children with special needs, potential at-risk of dropping out youth, pregnant students and those with addiction or violence issues.

Freedom Schools were rooted in the 1960s struggle for civil rights and were established by African American groups in the South to develop literacy and organize for the civil rights movement. In the northern urban areas similar schools were created and operated privately in the Black community. These schools were about liberation and freedom through an educated populace. Parents joined together to establish a school that reflected their values and beliefs about what schools should do for children (Neumann, 2003). Graubard (1972) described the Freedom School movement as one where "groups of people sought control of the oppressive educational processes to which they and their children were being subjected" (p. 353).

During this same time period a second type of alternative school known as the Free School Movement was formed. This movement was based on individual achievement instead of emphasizing community. These schools were founded on the concept that mainstream public schools were restraining and alienating students from free thought and creativity. Several characteristics of Free Schools included: there was no set learning or curriculum, there was no

formalized teaching, the only moral taught was the right to self-fulfillment and evaluation was not of the students work but rather the experiences the student encountered and found rewarding (Lange & Sletten, 2002). One of the most widely known Free Schools was Summerhill, a private alternative school in England. Summerhill's philosophy was that children, given the freedom to learn without restrictions, would develop much further (Lange & Sletten, 2002; Neumann, 2003).

More recent decades have produced similar types of schools such as the Open Schools Movement of the 1970s (Miller, 1975; Principals' Partnership, 2008; Young, 1990). Open schools are characterized by parent, student and teacher choice; autonomy in learning and pace; non-competitive evaluation; and a child-centered approach. These schools are operated in several states in the United States (Lange & Sletten, 2002; Neumann, 2003; Young, 1990). Instruction in these schools is organized around learning centers within the classroom and students are allowed to engage in small group and individualized activities. Thematic units and opportunities to pursue the individual interest of students are allowed. Teachers are seen more as facilitators or guides rather than conveyers of knowledge. Some of these schools are non-graded (Neumann, 2003).

The Open School concept had a great influence on creating several alternative types of schools such as charter schools, magnet schools, multicultural schools, fundamental schools, continuation schools, schools within a school, and schools without walls (Young, 1990). Young (1990) reported that the Open School movement began to wane in its attractiveness during the 1980s and even the definition of alternative schools began to narrow in definition. The scope evolved into a more conservative and remedial emphasis. The 1980s brought about alternatives that addressed students who were disruptive or failing and also saw the pendulum swing from an

emphasis of collective decision-making to one of teaching the basics (Raywid, 1981; Giles in Boss, 1998).

Today's typical alternative schools are described as smaller, allowing for more intimate interaction between teacher and student and thus a lower teacher/pupil ratio (Aron, 2006; Lange & Sletten, 2002; Reimer & Cash, 2003; Tobin & Sprague, 1999; Young, 1990). Others focus their description of such schools as relating the cultural environment of the school. They suggest that an alternative school is one that is supportive, intimate, structured but flexible (Barr, 1981; Gold & Mann, 1984; Tobin & Sprague, 1981). Some studies have focused on outcomes such as students being successful and making progress in school so that they may attain career goals (Arnove & Strout, 1980; Barr, 1981).

Typology of Alternative Schools: Type I, Type II and Type III

Type I Alternative Schools

Raywid developed a typology recognizing three types of alternative schools and programs (Raywid, 1994). Type I emphasizes academic performance and would characteristically include charter schools, magnet schools, multicultural schools and schools without walls (Lange & Slatten, 2002; Lehr et al, 2004; Morley, 1991). Type I schools give students and their families an optional educational setting. The key to understanding Type I alternative schools is the idea of choice. Most of these schools are full time, multi-year educational settings for all kinds of students, especially those that need more individualization, are gifted, or are interested in a particular subject or thematic area. A performing arts or science and technology magnet school would be a typical example. Normally these Type I alternative schools are schools of choice and families and their children take responsibility for attendance and learning. Many are self-paced and provide a wide range of academic challenges which lead

the child to graduation. Flexibility in structure and time, autonomy for learning, teacher and student empowerment and deregulation are also characteristic of these Type I alternative schools (Barr & Parrett, 2003; Lange & Sletten, 2002; Neumann, 2003; Patton, 2005).

Typically the Type I charter schools, magnet schools and multicultural schools are designed as schools of choice that operate without traditional public school regulations and policies. The "charter" is basically a performance contract (U.S. Charter Schools, 2008). Magnet schools allow children and their parents to select from a number of specialized forms of curriculum and instruction and can appear at the elementary, middle and high school levels. Many magnet schools are based on themes or have an emphasis on a particular instructional strategy and have teachers who specialize in these areas (Cash, 2004; Lange, 1998). Magnet schools, regardless of the academic focus, have a common set of components. A caring faculty has high expectations. Learning environments are usually small. Magnet schools are based on a type of choice and shared vision, and the instruction is customized and individualized (Barr and Parrett, 2003; Patton, 2005).

Another example of Type I alternative schools are the multicultural schools which serve students from differing ethnic and racial backgrounds. True multicultural schools are comprised of a diverse student population and a curriculum which emphasizes diversity and social acceptance of cultures (Lange & Sletten, 2002; Morley, 1991; Neumann, 2003).

Schools without walls are also an example of a Type I community based learning experience that is typically very small and is tied to a particular industry or business. These schools are normally based in the community and therefore require flexible scheduling (Aron, 2006; Cash, 2004; Lange, 1998). Similar to schools without walls are learning centers. Learning centers have been in existence since the early 20th century but gained popularity during the 1970s

and 1980s when they expanded available specialization areas like health studies, journalism and media studies. Most centers are vocational or technical and offer career related curriculums and offer entry level training that can lead to career certifications (Morley, 1991; Neumann, 2003).

Other examples of Type I schools include school-within-a-school. This school is designed for students needing a separate location within a traditional school setting. These alternative schools were designed to make large schools into smaller communities where students could have more connection and a sense of belonging (Lange & Sletten, 2002; Neumann, 2003). The students in this setting are usually involved in academic or social behavior programs.

Fundamental schools, another Type I model, emphasize back to basics curriculum, teacher directed instruction and very strict discipline. Dress codes, homework, and ability grouping are almost always part of the program structure (Lenge & Sletten, 2002; Morley, 1991). Dropout-recovery programs and after-hours schools would be additional examples of the Type I model (Aron, 2006).

Type II Alternative Schools

Type II alternative schools usually do not involve choice and characteristically work with at-risk students (Aron, 2006; Gregg, 1999; Lange & Sletten, 2002; Lehr et al, 2004; Raywid, 1994). Type II alternative programs emphasize discipline. Many times Type II alternative schools represent a remedial emphasis where students are placed as a final step before they are expelled. The aim is to reform students who have not been successful in traditional settings and usually place them in a separate location. These schools include an involuntary placement for a specified period of time. The atmosphere is highly structured and punitive and the curriculum is limited and the assignments are provided by the home school (Aron, 2006; Lange & Sletten,

2002; Raywid, 1994). Violent or disruptive students are sentenced to these alternative schools (Kochhar-Bryant & Lacey, 2005). Other typical names or examples are last-chance schools or second-chance (Aron, 2006; Cash, 2004).

Continuation schools are one of the oldest and largest segments of Type II alternative schools (Lange & Sletten, 2002; Morley, 1991; Young, 1990). Beginning in the early 1900s these schools targeted dropouts, potential dropouts, truants, disruptive students, students that had been suspended, pregnant students and young parents. Common to continuation schools are basic skills, tutoring, and behavior modification (Neumann, 2003). Many of the social and community supports needed for these students are provided on site (Lange & Sletten, 2002).

Type III Alternative Schools

Type III alternative schools emphasize a therapeutic, student centered approach. Characteristics of Type III alternative schools include focusing on rehabilitating attitude and behavior and it is a voluntary placement. Type III alternative schools address emotional and social barriers to learning which the student encountered in traditional settings (Gregg, 1999). The climate in these schools is caring, nurturing and supportive. Instruction is individualized and is often remedial (Gregg, 1998; Raywid, 1994). Students can choose whether they wish to participate (Aron, 2006). Residential schools are an example of Type III alternative schools. They are designed for special case students and are usually placed in this setting by their families or the courts. The students in these Type III facilities are given special counseling and academics (Cash, 2004; Aron, 2006).

Type IV Alternative Schools

Lange and Sletten (1995) proposed a Type IV alternative school based on Raywid's three type typology. The Type IV combines the three types and would be considered a hybrid. This

Type IV hybrid includes a focus on education and/or remediation, discipline, and therapy. It uses a combination of measures to give students a second chance at school success (Lange & Sletten, 1995; Swarts, 2002). Lehr (2005) suggest that alternative schools be analyzed with an "extended framework" meaning certain commonalities should serve as descriptors of why they exist. Function, intended outcomes, the type and focus of the curriculum, target student group, duration, and governance or policy formations by state and local education agencies or stakeholders. Others have suggested similar models (Aron, 2006; Aron & Zweig, 2003; Raywid, 1994).

Private and Public Type II Alternative Programs

Private Type II Alternative Schools

Alternative schools have been conceptualized and created by the public as well as private domains. One of the best known private attempts was in 1975 by an organization known as Ombudsman Educational Services Limited. These are the only privately run alternative schools in this southern state. There are 21 Ombudsman partnerships with public school districts in this southern state (Ombudsman, 2008). When the organization began it partnered with school districts to assist in meeting alternative program needs. Their mission was to "provide an effective alternative to the traditional classroom environment that helped at-risk students develop their inherent talents and achieve their potential" (http://www.ombudsman.com/index.aspx, Ombudsman). This program allowed the school districts to maintain the students on their rolls, thereby allowing them to earn funding. Since the Ombudsman programs are accredited by agencies such as Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), credits earned in the program are transferable back to the home school. The teachers were specifically prepared with

skills and knowledge needed to work with and develop unique relationships with at-risk students. Today, there are over 80 sites throughout the United States.

Type II Alternative Schools in Georgia

The state of Georgia's public alternative school programs began with a state grant in 1994. The schools were known as CrossRoads Alternative School Program. CrossRoads primarily served students who had been removed from the regular classroom due to chronic disruption and provided these students with the services needed to succeed academically (Karlin & Harnish, 1995). State funding was expanded so that districts received comparable support for alternative sites as they did for regular/traditional school venues with the Georgia A+ Education Reform Act of 2000. The Georgia Legislature with House Bill 1187-O.C.G.A. 20-2-154.1, included funding, rules and guidelines for establishing alternative education programs within local school districts. Because of the passage of this 2000 Georgia House Bill, CrossRoads state grants were ended and Georgia School districts received Full-time Equivalency (FTE), i.e. Quality Basic Education (QBE) funds for alternative school students in grades 6–12 (Cox, 2006).

The present day Georgia Type II alternative school is defined as "a learning environment that includes the objectives of the quality core curriculum and that the instruction in an alternative education program shall enable students to return to a general or career education program as quickly as possible" (Advancing Education, 2006). Course credit shall be earned in an alternative education program in the same manner as in other education programs. Georgia policy prefers to "reassign disruptive students to an alternative education program rather than suspending or expelling such students from school" (Georgia Department of Education, 2008). All Georgia alternative programs must follow the Quality Core Curriculum (QCC), focus on academic areas such as English, math, science, and social studies and must award credits in the

same manner as traditional settings within the school district. All academic resources available to regular schools must also be available to the alternative school and the students they serve (Georgia DOE, 2008).

Currently, all Georgia school systems provide Type II alternative school programs for students who are disruptive and cannot remain in traditional classroom settings. The school and/or school district must have assessed the needs of the students and the options which are available to address individual issues. The state of Georgia does allow flexibility to school systems in choosing the models and approaches the local district deems most appropriate to their local requirements.

Currently, Georgia describes four models of alternative school education. They are:

1) *Community-based Alternative Education Program Model* — a work-based learning experience that partners with community agencies. It emphasizes social and academic skills that are necessary for success in the workplace and postsecondary education.
2) *Cross Roads Alternative Education Program Model* — a program that emphasizes the academic and social skills that are necessary to become successful in the traditional school program. Students who are leaving a Department of Juvenile Justice facility or who have been removed from the regular school due to disruptive behavior are served by this program.
3) *In-School Suspension Program* — short term, school-based program that isolates students who have exhibited inappropriate behaviors that do not warrant removal from the traditional school.

4) *School-Community Guidance Center Model* — a collaborative effort of community agencies and organizations that provide the necessary support for the students and their families in order to address their specific characteristics and learning needs.

The Georgia Alternative School philosophy is described by Karlin and Harnish (1995) as providing "students who need a different educational structure and environment with the critical knowledge and skills necessary for a productive life" and "to make the public schools more safe and secure by removing chronically disruptive students from the regular classroom" (p. 3). To successfully fulfill this philosophy Georgia's alternative school mission is to "enable students to perform at grade level academically. Behaviorally, the mission of alternative programs is to enable students to develop high character and make appropriate choices for their success in school and the larger community" (Cox, 2000, p. 1). Alternative school program effectiveness is to be measured on the degree of academic progress made by students while attending an alternative education program. Such progress can be measured by percentage of courses passed when compared to those attempted, degree of academic progress made towards grade level, and other entry and exit achievement data such as attendance, suspension rates and recidivism rates.

Although alternative school funding began with the 1994–1995 school year and has been dramatically expanded, there has been little research done to determine how successful these schools have been or the elements that should be considered as essential to student success in these alternative school settings. An initial focus group study was conducted by Karlin and Harnish in 1995 to evaluate the statewide initiative after the first year of implementation. Later, in 2001, a twenty-one member Alternative Education Program Advisory Panel was formed by the Georgia Department of Education. It was formed to establish Alternative Education Program Standards and Indicators for measuring the success of individual alternative education programs.

Their basis for forming the standards and indicators was as follows: 1) national standards for alternative education programs, 2) common alternative education program standards from other states throughout our country, 3) scientifically researched effective programs and practices for educating alternative education students, 4) input from alternative education leaders during regional alternative education program meetings throughout Georgia, 5) feedback and input from participants in the Georgia Leadership Institute, and 6) discussions with students, parents, school staff and leaders, and other stakeholder representatives at community forums throughout the state.

Three different Georgia Department of Education Self Assessment instruments were created that reflect the identified standards and indicators of success. One instrument is for the individual alternative site, one is for the traditional school that refers students to the alternative site, and one instrument is for the central office administration to complete. The results from the analysis of these three assessments would determine effectiveness and implications for improvement (www.doe.k12.ga.us/curriculum/instruction/aep.asp). The evaluation is voluntary and to this day data are incomplete and sparse (J. Randolph, personal communication, September 14, 2008).

Elements of Effective Alternative Schools

It is paramount for this study to describe what an effective alternative school looks and feels like. Meyers (2001) described effective alternative schools as those that include: the development of basic skills which are not offered in the traditional school setting, identifying and fostering various student talents, improving student self-concept, faculty and staff appreciation, understanding, and encouragement of cultural diversity, preparation of students to fulfill productive societal roles, provide an alternative to traditional schooling, more humane

treatment of students and teachers because classes are much smaller, provide curriculum which is more relevant to student needs, and provide education for students who cannot survive in regular school environments.

Aron (2006) of The Urban Institute synthesized noteworthy attributes of high quality alternative education programs. He acknowledges, however, that there are very few scientifically based evaluation instruments that establish which components lead to positive outcomes for alternative school students. Nevertheless, there is a list of characteristics that are beginning to converge and suggest some components of alternative programs which should be measured and monitored. Aron's (2006) list is as follows:

1) Academic Instruction: high standards and expectations with a mixture of instructional strategies that stress practical application of the knowledge gained.
2) Instructional Staff: volunteers, who believe in the students' ability to perform, are certified in their content area, creative, and participants in school governance.
3) Professional Development: ongoing staff development that address the needs of the teachers and students.
4) Size: low teacher/pupil ratios that lend themselves to healthy relationships.
5) Facility: accessible, attractive, clean buildings that can provide a source of pride.
6) Relationship Building/Sense of Community: the connections and interactions with community organizations foster opportunities for students to experience real life insights into a world they might wish to enter.
7) Leadership, Governance, Administration and Oversight: all stakeholders are involved in some aspect of the school. A strong leader who is engaged and competent should administer the program.

8) Student Support: individualized programming with clear expectations that are consistent and the opportunity for students to have input are present. Supports are also available to transition students back into the regular school setting and into post-secondary institutions. (p. 11–13)

While the lists of essential elements such as the ones described above will change with the focus of the research study, there do appear to be some commonalities amongst successful alternative schools (Lange & Sletten, 2002). A review of the literature suggests alternative schools that are doing well appear to have essential elements or common fundamentals in areas of: 1) organizational structures and processes, 2) leadership and governance, 3) academic press and student support, 4) ongoing and continuous staff development, and 5) program assessment and evaluation. The review of literature which follows is similar to the frameworks described by Aron (2006) and Lange and Sletten (2002).

Organizational Structures and Processes

Organizational variables and structures are those items which build and maintain the organization as a learning community (Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Hord, 1997; Raywid, 2006). In effective alternative schools this would include more humane treatment of students and teachers because classes and teacher/student class ratios are much smaller (Aron, 2006; Koetke, 1999; Meyers, 2001; Raywid, 1994). Using small school frameworks allows for a "sense of community and personal caring" (Morley, 1991, p. 5). Furthermore, the use of unconventional approaches and organizational structures, individualized instruction and consistency in organizational rules and personnel interactions with students helps establish important elements of the alternative schools (DeBlois, 2000; Koetke, 1999; Morley, 1991; Schorr, 1997; Wehlage, 1983). However, even with such flexibility alternative school classrooms which are highly

structured, where expectations are clear and rules and routines are clearly defined and reinforced, have the benefits of teaching self-management skills and have high rates of academic gains for students (Tobin & Sprague, 2000).

Small schools are places where students get more attention, perform better, and are happier. Students of all talents and personalities have greater opportunities to fit in there environment. Alternative schools which are kept small have an opportunity to reach these youth (DeBlois, 2000; Morley, 1991; Gregory & Smith, 1990; Raywid, 2006). Katsiyannis and Williams (1998) found that the small school concept was an essential element of effective alternative schools. Tobin and Sprague (2000) found that a low ratio of students to teachers and reduced class sizes as compared to traditional schools allowed for more personal time for each student, higher quality instruction and better behavioral gains. Concurring with this pattern of small teacher/student ratios and overall small enrollment in the alternative school are the research of Aron (2006), Franklin (1992), Lange and Sletten (2002), and Paglin and Fager (1997).

Other studies have demonstrated the impact of small learning communities on achievement and youth development (Castellano et al., 2001; Raywid 2001; Secada 1999; Zweig, 2003). Alternative school students who are members of these small organizational settings report that the size and focus of a learning community helped them succeed in their second chance program because they felt a sense of belonging (Grobe et al., 2001, p. 35). Schargel and Smink (2001) recommend a maximum of a 1:10 teacher/student ratio and a maximum student population of 250. Schools organized as learning communities which focus on career development or have strong ties to community services appear to be successful

intervention models for these type students (Conchas & Clark, 2002; Elliott et al., 2002; Kemple, 2001; Lewis, 2003; Pines, 1999).

Another organizational element that has assisted students in alternative schools to return students to regular school environments are behavior management plans. Henley, Fuston, Peters and Wall (2000) found that there was a general pattern of improvement in student social skills in an alternative program which emphasized behavior-management. Fifty percent of the students showed improvement in all measured areas. Students who returned to regular school environments had fewer disciplinary referrals or suspensions and improved academically upon their return to the regular school. In another study conducted in Florida, improvement was shown to be rare in alternative school settings with punitive orientations (Raywid, 1999). Further, punitive rationales may actually undermine efforts to improve learning or behavior and compromise system equity (Gregg, 1999). A more realistic and positive approach was suggested by Tobin and Sprague's research (2000) where Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) Plans were used to identify antecedent and problem behaviors. The negative behavior is identified, causes of the behavior are recorded, and interventions are put in place to negate the behavior.

Alternative schools that are organized as student-centered environments, have instructional programs stressing a specific philosophy, and operate a noncompetitive learning environment show positive results with the youth they serve (Koetke 1999). Alternative schools that provide flexible school schedules and offer multiple scheduling formats are also shown to have positive results with the students served (Paglin & Fager, 1997; Schargel & Smink, 2001). However, even with such flexibility alternative school classrooms which are highly structured, where expectations are clear and rules and routines are clearly defined and reinforced have the

benefits of teaching self-management skills and have high rates of academic gains for students (Tobin & Sprague, 2000).

Leadership and Governance

Leadership and governance refers to how engaged and involved the faculty, administrators, students, parents and other community stakeholders are in the program. Also included is how supportive the Local Educational Agency (LEA) is of the alternative school efforts. Those alternative schools which are given autonomy by the central office as opposed to those that are highly controlled appear to be more successful in meeting student academic, social and behavioral outcomes than those that are highly controlled (Gregg, 1991; Schorr, 1997). Morley (1991) suggested that freedom and autonomous control over alternative school structures and practices as well as school operations and staffing must be critical components of successful alternative school organizations.

In Minnesota's alternative school programs, Lange (1998) found a significant difference across all organizational and decision making indicators between successful and unsuccessful schools. The study asked alternative school programs to indicate the level of autonomy district level, school level administrators, and teachers had in making decisions. While district level decisions included bus transportation and physical plant improvements, school level administrative decisions included the number of students enrolled in classes and removing disruptive students from classes, and the school and teachers primarily made decisions about curriculum and instructional methods. Raywid (1994) and Aron's (2006) research suggests a type of site-based management which provides flexibility and in which the central office and superintendent sustain the autonomy of the alternative school. Cash (2004) proposes that the principal or administrator of the alternative school should have sufficient autonomy to adjust the

school's schedule, change the curriculum and make other decisions which impact student success.

Providing a school organization and atmosphere of high academic and behavioral expectations is an important element to successful alternative schools (Schargel & Smink, 2001; Smink & Schargel, 2004). Paglin and Fager (1997) would concur that a clear set of rules that are enforced fairly and consistently as well as high standards for attendance and behavior are important elements of successful alternative schools. Schargel and Smink (2001) found a clear mission focused on academic success of every student and a clearly defined discipline code which was fair and just were important elements for alternative school student success. In addition, students, faculty and staff must have a voice that is heard in the operation of the school (Aron, 2006; Kochar-Bryant, 2005; Paglin & Fager, 1997).

Serving alienated kids or those needing something different should not be considered an optional responsibility of schools or school districts (DeBlois 2000). Some research indicates there is little support for the alternative school. There is evidence of students being stuck with old textbooks, boring workbooks, humdrum tasks, and limited expectations from teachers. The alternative school is considered a soft jail which continues not to reach unsuccessful, alienated youth (Koetke 1999). According to Koetke (1999), alternative schools are viewed as dumping grounds or underfunded warehouses for difficult students, teachers, and even principals.

Gregory (2001) notes that many times alternative schools and the student population served are treated as second class citizens by the school district central office and other schools within the district. According to Raywid (2001), standardized schooling has severe limitations and tends to establish only one "straightening-out center" (p. 582) and defines this as useless. The research-verified formula for good education—"small, personalized schools offering

authentic learning and producing student engagement—is essential if we are serious about enabling unsuccessful youngster to become successful" (Raywid, p. 583).

In essence, all stakeholders must be committed to providing the needed leadership and autonomous governance structures that will insure these alternative schools are successful. The achievement of each student as well as the alternative program is dependent upon these best practices (Cash, 2004; Schargel & Smink, 2001; Smink & Schargel, 2004). An unambiguous vision and mission with defined goals and expected outcomes needs to be outlined and followed by the entire alternative school community (Paglin & Fager, 1997). Leadership from all members of the school community (i.e. school administrators, faculty members, families, students and other community stakeholders) is necessary to drive the school in positive directions for student success (Aron, 2006; Leone & Drakeford, 1999; Raywid, 1994).

Stakeholders who forge strong relationships with alternative school students provide the type of leadership needed to increase success rates for individual students and the program (Aron, 2006; Kochhar-Bryant, 2005). For example, teachers who build positive, long-lasting relationships with pupils and are committed to the organization and the type of youth at alternative schools are important elements of successful programs. Teachers and administrators who mentor students in alternative schools and offer opportunities for parental education tend to be involved in more successful alternative programs (Katsiyannis & Williams, 1998).

Others have suggested adult mentors at school, or adults who advise, guide, and monitor student progress adds positive reinforcement to student success (Kochhar-Bryant & Lacey, 2005; Tobin & Sprague, 2000). Additional stakeholders, such as parents and community members, have also been found to be critical to the success of alternative schools and their organizational structures and processes (Aronson, 1995). Encouraging parents to be involved and to actively

participate in their child's education provides reinforcement to alternative school interventions and promotes open communication. It also encourages the child to be proactive about his or her own education and life (Tobin & Sprague, 2000).

Academic Press and Student-Centered Support

Academic press and student centered support is used to describe factors related to a clear focus of high academic standards, student learning and includes the relevancy and rigor of the curriculum. Academic press includes features related to high expectations and clear rules for student behavior and conduct. It would also include measures of teacher efficacy and a commitment from all administration, faculty and other stakeholders to engage the students in learning (Barr & Parrett, 2001; Hair, Ling & Cochran, 2003; Morley, 1991; Schorr, 1997; Tobin & Sprague, 2000). Lastly, this category would include essential elements of alternative schools which attach the child to societal environments and can help them become productive community members. This would involve addressing health needs, assisting in transition plans to other educational facilities or work, juvenile justice needs and social services (Aron, 2006; Gregg, 1998; James & Jurich, 1999; Kochhar-Bryant & Lacey, 2005).

A student centered approach includes a number of options focusing on the students' education and addressing student needs, interests, and learning styles (Pines, 1999). Student academic press and support also includes providing students with opportunities to be successful in the classroom as well as in other settings (Elliott et al., 2002). One method of fostering student success is allowing for individual and self-paced instruction based on mastery (Dugger & Dugger, 1998; Gregg, 1998; Kochhar-Bryant & Lacey, 2005; Paglin & Fager, 1997). Providing individualized instruction and creating opportunities for student success in areas of basic skills as well as advanced curriculums is an essential element of alternative schools (Dugger & Dugger,

1998; Tobin & Sprague, 2000). Lange (1998) found alternative programs in Minnesota to use individualized curriculum, computer based curriculum, and standardized curriculum other than that of the area school district. Hair et al. (2003) found similar characteristics of successful alternative schools and included such items as computer related skills, language and basic skills, good study habit development, higher order thinking skills, and oral and interpersonal communication skills. Offering personalized attention, support services which create environments where marginalized youth can be more comfortable and encouraging students may mean that youth pursue their education further and even complete high school (Hair et al., 2003; Katsiyannis & Williams, 1998; Lehr & Lange, 2003; Zweig, 2003).

Others have found that focusing on academic, social, and vocational development adds resilience for the child when faced with future difficult choices (Grobe et al., 2001; Lewis 2003). In fact, according to Guerin and Denti (1999), essential to alternative schools is a curriculum that is responsive to the needs of students, teaches social skills and social responsibility and has core academic subjects. Tobin and Sprague (2000) would concur, stating that their research concerning social skill instruction allowed alternative school students to improve problem-solving skills and reduce conflicts with peers, teachers, and family members as well as a reduction in conflicts within their communities. Often alternative school students have been marginalized and isolated by peers, teachers, the curriculum and their families and this lack of "connectivity" adds to their pessimism about learning and their future in the world of work (Conchas & Clark, 2002). Alternative programs that provide authentic, engaging learning that connects school and work can instill hope in these youth.

Alternative schools that integrate academic and vocational curriculums and offer career development and/or work based learning contributed to the successes of these types of students

(Conchas & Clark, 2002; James & Jurich, 1999; Katsiyannis & Williams, 1998). As Conchas and Clark (2002) found, career development and connecting the academic program to vocational interests allowed students to remain optimistic and connected even when faced with adversity. This student centered approach gives students "a solid foundation to pursue their college and career goals" (p. 305). A curriculum that connects school to work is an important element of alternative schools (Paglin & Fager, 1997). The successful alternative school will work closely with other community agencies to remove barriers to student success after high school. The successful alternative school will have transition elements to allow students to transition from school to work or post-secondary educational setting (Duggar & Duggar, 1998; Kocchar-Bryant, 2004). Aligning transition support with general education and providing intervention services in the areas of social emotional, environmental and employment have a strong tradition of being important elements of successful alternative schools (Leone & Drakeford, 1999; Martin, Marshall & DePry, 2002).

Another essential element of alternative schools is to collaborate with outside community agencies on behalf of their students (Katsiyannis & Williams, 1998). Alternative school programs which provide services and follow-up for long periods of time, possibly years, foster trust in students because there is relationship building between the alternative student and adults. The student does not feel abandoned in relationship to academics or other areas where support had been provided to the student while attending the alternative school (James & Jurich, 1999). Making connections with the students and keeping them linked with varied agencies that can assist with their specific needs is of paramount importance (Leon & Drakeford, 1991).

Aronson (1995) found that access to health and social service agencies to be contributing factors to successful alternative school programs. Kleiner, Porch and Farris (2002), in the NCES

Survey of Public Alternative School Programs, reported 84% of the alternative schools across the nation collaborate with juvenile justice, 75% collaborate with mental health agencies, and 40% collaborate with community job placement agencies. In addition, the NCES study suggested that nationally 72% of public alternative schools collaborated with five or more community agencies in providing services to their students. Similar to these statistics are the ones suggested by Foley and Pang (2006) in their Illinois study where alternative schools appear to collaborate with a number of community services to support the educational needs of their students. Unfortunately, the most frequent collaboration (82%) occurred with juvenile justice. On a more positive note they also found that 70% of the alternative programs used social learning programs and community social services, and 60% used community work-study programs.

Ongoing Staff Development

Unfortunately some research has revealed that school districts will use alternative schools for throw away children as well as throw away teachers and other school personnel (Koetke, 1999). Foley and Pang (2006) found teachers in Illinois alternative schools have general secondary education teaching certificates, suggesting that teachers within these schools are mostly qualified. Others have reported shortages of adequately prepared personnel to work with alternative school students and therefore ongoing professional development becomes an essential element (Gregg, 1998).

A particular area of need is in special education, especially in the areas of Emotional Behavior Disorders (EBD) and Learning Disabilities (LD) (Foley & Pang, 2006; Kochhar-Bryant & Lacey, 2005). Some have reported that there is a direct correlation between increased student success and achievement and being taught by highly qualified teachers (Darling-Hammond,

Holtzman, Gatlin & Heilig, 2005). The number of certified special education teachers per school was much less and there are some that are not certified or hold temporary certification.

Since some teachers may not be qualified to teach what they are teaching, professional development is essential to their success. In addition, ongoing staff development is a critical area of successful alternative schools because it helps all faculty maintain an academic focus, enhances their teaching strategies and helps develop and implement alternative instructional methods (Aron, 2006; Schorr, 1997). Teacher leadership is fostered more thoroughly through extensive staff development and is evident in school cultures where student achievement is important (Barth, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 1999; IEL, 2001).

Ambitious professional development and other support for teachers and staff where members are provided with stimulating, ongoing activities is important to successful alternative schools (Aron, 2006; Dugger & Dugger, 1998; Leon & Drakeford. 1991). A faculty that truly cares and is provided with a professional learning program that targets work with at-risk youth in alternative settings is critical to student and program success (Kochhar-Bryant & Lacey, 2005; Schargel & Smink, 2001). Engaging instruction promotes mastery of subject areas, creativity, and academic success in alternative school students and therefore, staff development centered on techniques and instructional pedagogy becomes critical for these teachers (Raywid, 1994; Wehlage, 1983). In addition to pedagogical interests, staff development of successful alternative schools also attends to comprehensive team building (Dugger & Dugger, 1998).

Program Assessment and Evaluation

Program assessment and evaluation is critical for successful alternative school programs. The need for continuous assessment of school data helps to demonstrate areas of strength and weakness and allows for immediate attention (Cash, 2004; NAEA, 2009). Self-evaluation and

continuous improvement are noticeable components of successful alternative programs. Faculty and administration feel accountable to the students, families and the community and therefore take evaluation seriously (Kochhar-Bryant & Lacey, 2005).

Researchers have indicated this area needs attention and that it is increasingly important to develop better accountability and data collection systems (Aron & Zweig, 2003; Duggar & Duggar, 1998; Raywid, 1998; Settles & Orwick, 2003; Tobin & Sprague, 2000). The NGA Center for Best Practices (2001) recommends certain elements be included in evaluation so as to bring high standards to alternative education. Those elements include collecting data, improve early warning signs to identify lower-performing youth, and developing data-driven accountability measures for alternative programs. Raywid (1998) suggested the use of some basic questions to establish a strong evaluative framework. Those questions include:

> "For whom is the alternative school intended? Has the alternative school the autonomy to design its own program? Are the teachers—as well as students—assigned to the alternative school or do they consist of those who have chosen to be there?" (p. 10)

As attention to alternative schools has grown, it is important to note that program assessment and evaluation has become more specific and sophisticated. Reimer and Cash (2003) found assessment and evaluation of the major components of the program should be ongoing and based on best practices. They identify ten categories identified from research-based initiatives for at-risk program development which includes student accountability measures, administrative structure, curriculum and instruction, faculty and staff, school leadership, student support services, learning community, program funding and school climate. Using Illinois as the focus of their alternative school study, Foley and Pang (2006) note that despite the history of alternative

education, there are little data available to describe governance, leadership, student populations and demographics or educational programming and evaluation.

In January, 2009 the National Alternative Education Association (NAEA) led an effort to develop a common core of exemplary practices for effective alternative schools (NAEA, 2009). From this work the NAEA hopes alternative schools realize the following: 1) promotion of high quality educational services, 2) develop a common core of principles and technical language for alternative schools to utilize, 3) build alternative schools upon exemplary practices, 4) evaluate the effectiveness of new and existing programs, and 5) inform policy relative to alternative education (NAEA, 2009). Until these recent efforts outlined above, little has been done to systematically assess and evaluate alternative schools. Alternative school stakeholders have few measures or consistent efforts to adequately document what the school programs do (Cash, 2004). Tobin and Sprague (2000) would agree and called for indicators to measurable, support achievement and learning and that this information should be reported annually to school, district, state, and national entities.

Earlier research, while sporadic, yielded some results in the area of program evaluation (Settles & Orwick, 2003). Gregg (1991) found that students are more successful in alternative school settings where goals are clear, in part, because the goals lend themselves to evaluation. A review of the literature reveals efforts to assess and evaluate alternative school programs are very limited at the state level. Alternative programs which critically reflect on all aspects of their program tend to show more positive results with the academic achievement and overall success of their students who return to regular school environments or enter the work place (Geurin & Denti, 1991). Lange (1998) found Minnesota alternative schools used several different methods of evaluation. These included outcomes-based education standards (72%), faculty designed tests

(71%), and curriculum-based measures (63%). Almost all of the Minnesota based programs assessed progress towards graduation.

Swarts (2004) agrees with others that clear indicators of school effectiveness must be documented and therefore program evaluation is critical to the success and improvement of alternative schools. As others have suggested, NCLB is a major force driving the accountability efforts but increasingly educators and other stakeholders have begun to realize the advantages of providing alternative education programs in the United States. Program assessment and evaluation allows educators to have a research-based guide to improve schools and impact student academic outcomes (Swarts, 2004, 2005).

Findings from Swarts's (2004) work in Kentucky found that academic and non-academic outcomes for alternative schools was nearly 30% lower than traditional schools. Attendance was 20% lower, the rate of dropout was 23% higher, the number of students retained was 9% higher, and transition to adult life was 4% lower than those who followed the traditional school route of elementary, middle and high school. To combat these outcomes, Kentucky research efforts began to systematically develop assessment and evaluation tools which could assist alternative programs throughout the state (Swarts, 2004). Swarts (2004, 2005) as well as the Kentucky Center for School Safety (2009) suggest there are specific common threads to successful alternative education. These include structured and supportive classrooms, appropriate curriculum, quality and engaging curriculum, multiple and continuous assessment, district support, clearly defined student outcomes, community and family involvement, and quality professional development.

Swarts' Alternative School Effectiveness and Accountability Model

The survey instrument being used in the current study is modeled after the work of Swarts (2002, 2004, 2005). Swarts (2002) operationalizes his definition of alternative school effectiveness through the Alternative Education Accountability Model and the Alternative School Performance Standard Indicators. Swarts (2003; 2004) developed three domains of alternative school effectiveness. Those domains are academic performance, learning environment, and efficiency. In the domain of academic performance are the dimensions/standards of curriculum, assessment, and instruction. In the learning environment domain are the dimensions/standards of organizational culture and diversity, student, family and community support and professional development. In the Efficiency Domain are the dimensions/standards of leadership, organizational structure and resources, and comprehensive and effective planning. A visual outline of the domains and dimensions are as follows:

1) Academic Performance Domain
    - Dimension/Standard—Curriculum
    - Dimension/Standard—Assessment
    - Dimension/Standard—Instruction
2) Learning Environment Domain
    - Dimension/Standard—Culture and diversity
    - Dimension/Standard—Student, Family and Community Support
    - Dimension/Standard—Professional Development
3) Efficiency Domain
    - Dimension/Standard—Leadership
    - Dimension/Standard—Organizational Structure and Resources

Dimension/Standard—Comprehensive and Effective Planning

A description of the above three domains and their subcategories or dimensions follows (Swarts, 2002).

The Academic Performance Domain includes the dimensions/standards of curriculum, assessment, and instruction. Alternative schools should provide high quality instruction which includes small, interactive groups and is aligned with state and local standards to provide students with a rigorous and relevant curriculum. Assessment should include multiple evaluation strategies to continuously monitor and modify instruction to meet student needs. Assessment would also include behavioral interventions which are based on functional behavioral assessments and identify causes of behavior and appropriate interventions to correct and reinforce student behaviors. Students are instructed using researched best practices to include high quality diagnostic instruction.

The Learning Environment Domain includes the dimensions of culture, student, family and community support, and professional development. Alternative school culture should be a climate conducive to performance excellence and should offer small classes, and low student/teacher ratios as well as high quality instruction. A healthy school culture openly supports issues of diversity and models and practices tolerance of cultures and groups different from our own. Support for family, student and community suggests that alternative schools should work with these stakeholders to remove barriers to learning so as to meet the cognitive, social and vocational development of the students. Counseling, social services and health assistance should be available consistently and on many levels to students and their families. Professional development, professional growth and evaluation in alternative schools means providing professional development experiences and opportunities that are relevant to teaching

assignments and working with alternative school youth which are typically at-risk of failure. At-risk children have their own special set of circumstances and needs. Professional development must be attached to these needs. For example, faculty and staff may need intensive experience and training in behavior management strategies and assessment or mentoring at-risk children.

The Efficiency Domain includes the dimensions of leadership, organizational structure and resources and comprehensive and effective planning. Alternative school leadership should be focused on support for teaching and learning, providing organizational direction and vision, having high performance expectations for all members of the school community and creating a learning community. Leadership from the school community i.e. faculty and administrators should reinforce the program mission, beliefs, goals, rules, and routines. Organizational structure and resources in alternative school settings should be maximized to support high student and staff performance. There should be an emphasis on high-quality instruction to measure student academic gains, behavioral gains and student outcomes such as attendance, grades and graduation rates. The dimension of comprehensive and effective planning includes the development, implementation, and evaluation of a clear purpose, direction and focus on teaching and learning. In particular, the planning dimension should include safety and crisis management plans whereby particular procedures and protocols have been established.

Swarts (2002; 2005) as well as the National Drop Out Prevention Center Network (2009) research at Clemson University have suggested that essential elements such as those described above can create alternative schools which promote student success and achievement. Alternative schools are designed to help students stay in school and complete their high school education but without using research based practices garnered from the literature students will

likely continue to be non-completers (McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter & McWhirter, 2006; Myers, 2001; Swarts, 2005).

Georgia Alternative School Research

Little research has been done in Georgia's Type II Alternative Schools. Karlin and Harnish (1995) completed one of the few comprehensive investigations of the CrossRoads Alternative Schools, the alternative programs for chronically disruptive students in grades 6–12. Their investigation included focus groups at six selected sites across the state. Included were rural, suburban and urban facilities and separate focus groups were conducted for each of the following stakeholder groups: faculty, administration and students. The focus group data revealed two important themes that should be present in alternative settings such as CrossRoads. First, is the importance of community within the program, program connections to the outside community, and perceptions the outside community has of the alternative program. Second, is program administration which included commitment from faculty and staff to the students, flexibility in schedules and operations of the Crossroads schools, transition of students to other educational venues and changes in the affective and academic domains.

Karlin and Harnish (1995) recommended that criteria for defining and evaluating program effectiveness be developed, that programs clearly define the mission and goals of the CrossRoads alternative schools, that staff development be a high priority for faculty at CrossRoads facilities and that issues of transition and integration be considered. In addition to these recommendations, the focus groups revealed a "prolific" (p. 35) number of success stories related by administrators, teachers, counselors, and students about the social, academic, and personal growth of CrossRoads students (Karlin & Harnish, 1995).

Alternative School Leadership

The direct relationship of socioeconomic status and race as strong predictors of student achievement led some to believe there was not much school leadership could do to help student achievement and especially those at-risk of dropping out of school because of family and societal factors (Coleman et al., 1966; Jencks, Smith, Acland & Bane, 1972). From early reports such as these, the influence of school factors related to student achievement has been questioned. Even recent research has recommended that school leadership and the strong instructional support that it can bring to a school organization may not benefit student academic success as much as some would like to say (Witziers, Bosker & Kruger, 2003).

Fallon (2004) refuted evidence suggesting school leadership does not make a significant difference but also warns we should be careful not to dismiss the *Coleman Report* and the Jencks et al. study.

> The evidence requires that we acknowledge the influence of socioeconomic factors on student learning, as these pioneers proposed. These factors can now be placed in context, however. What the recent value-added research provides is convincing evidence to support a robust assertion that, even allowing for the effects of non-school variables, the dominant factor in determining student achievement growth is the quality of the teacher. (p. 8)

Throughout the decades these arguments have been rebutted by promising research which generally concluded school administrative and teacher leaders can and do make a difference (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; Edmonds, 1979; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005; Schargel, Thacker & Bell, 2007).

Effective school leaders can have a powerful direct or indirect effect on improving the level of student achievement. Teaching quality is strongly related to student success in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 1997a; 1997b; Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001), but leadership helps determine the overall quality of that teaching and what goes on within the organization (Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004; Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005; Schargel, Thacker & Bell, 2007). Leadership is related to how engaged a student is with their school (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000) and leadership is especially important to schools of poverty and those students who are at-risk of academic failure (Payne, 1996; Schargel, Thacker & Bell; Scheerens & Bosker, 1997) or have been placed in alternative school settings (Barr & Parrett, 2003). No doubt there is substantial research suggestive of the fact that high-achieving schools are lead by leadership that provides focus on the most important activity of the school: teaching and learning (Brighouse & Woods, 1999; Clark & Clark, 1994; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Schargel, Thacker & Bell; Valentine, Clark, Hackman & Petzko, 2004).

Research on school leadership in Type II alternative school settings is tenuous at best. While the research on Type II alternative school leadership is limited, there appears to be three themes: leadership dispositions, a focus on student achievement and a willingness to be a systemic leader (NAEA, 2009; Swarts, 2002; 2005).

General leadership theory has found defining dispositions to be somewhat illusive but Fullan (2002), Perkins, (1995) and the earlier version of the ISLLC Standards (1996) have generally described these as values, beliefs, and behaviors. Some of these leadership dispositions can be found in the alternative school literature (Aron, 2006; NAEA, 2009; Swarts, 2002; 2005). The second theme, focusing on student achievement involves clearly defining the

vision, mission and goals around teaching and learning and basing decisions on data and the recruitment and retention of qualified personnel (Karlin & Harnish, 1995; NAEA; Swarts). The third theme, the systemic leader, understands the need for autonomy to fulfill their school mission but also understand the need to be tied to other schools, the school system and the broader community (McGee, 2001; NAEA; Raywid, 1994; Swarts).

In Type II alternative schools specific leadership dispositions include building trust with faculty, students and other stakeholders (Aron, 2006; Raywid, 1994), competent (Aron, 2006; NAEA, 2009), engaged and committed to all aspects of the program (Aron; NAEA; Karlin & Harnish, 1995). Other dispositions include providing continuity in program decisions (Raywid, 1994), being collaborative in the decision making process (Lange, 1998; Morley, 1991; NAEA, 2009; Swarts, 2002; 2005) and providing a type of structure which allowed for routines to be established and maintained. One final disposition which was recognized repeatedly through the literature was that the alternative school leadership needed to seek autonomy and flexibility from the central district offices. The rationale being that alternative schools could not be operated under the same paradigms as regular elementary, middle and high schools (Aron; Karlin & Harnish; Lange; Raywid).

A second theme of Type II alternative school leadership involved focusing on student achievement. This part of leadership involved a clearly defined vision, mission and goals (NAEA, 2009; Swarts, 2002; 2005). That mission is clearly defined as student achievement and positive student outcomes. The heart of the alternative school is to provide an atmosphere which is squarely set on teaching and learning (Barr & Parrett, 2001; 2003; Karlin & Harnish, 1995; NAEA; Swarts). In addition, leaders of these schools use distributive or shared leadership and base decisions on data (Barr & Parrett; Lange, 1998; NAEA; Swarts). Recruitment, hiring and

retaining qualified personnel is paramount to the mission of student achievement. Leaders in alternative school settings realize the importance of staffing their schools with teachers and support personnel who understand the special student population they will work with (Aron, 2006; Barr & Parrett; NAEA).

The third theme, the systemic leader, understands the need to be tied to other schools, the school system and the broader community (Barr & Parrett, 2001; 2003; McGee, 2001; Raywid, 1994; NAEA, 2009; Swarts, 2002; 2005). They believe in rituals and routines and have clearly defined roles and responsibilities for their faculty and staff and themselves. Thus, they create a strong system within the organization. These systemic leaders also create and maintain strong partnerships and relationships with the public (McGee, 2001) and align alternative school practices with policy outlined by the school system, the state and national organizations (McGee; NAEA; Swarts).

Research on the leadership provided by Type II alternative school administrators does not appear to be well developed. No specific studies related to leadership could be found in the literature. What became apparent were elements of effective alternative schools. Apparently, much more could be done to determine theoretical constructs of alternative school leadership. While leadership may have general constructs, certainly there should be some which are specific to the alternative school setting.

Alternative School Mission: At-Risk Students and Dropout Prevention

Alternative schools have been created to reach the student at-risk of dropping out of school and are considered to be one of the more effective approaches to address the social, behavioral and academic needs of these students (Barr & Parrett, 2003; Wehlage, 1991). Earlier studies of at-risk youth and alternative school settings described the important caring of school

communities. Students' behavior often changed when they felt like a part of the school community (Wehlage, 1991; Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko & Fernandez, 1989; Wehlage, Rutter & Turnbaugh, 1986). Alternative schools can be found in many public school districts in the United States. In fact, 39 percent of these public school districts administered at least one alternative school for at-risk students during the 2000–2001 school year (NCES, 2002).

Urban districts, large districts (those with more than 10,000 students), Southeastern United States districts, districts with high minority student enrollments, and district with high poverty concentrations were more likely to have alternative schools for at-risk students during the 2000–2001 school year (NCES, 2002). Although they have existed in their present form since the 1970s, only recently have alternative schools provided standards based data on the students they serve. Much of this data collection has become more sophisticated with the implementation of No Child Left Behind (2002). These data points include dropout rates, discipline statistics, attendance, recidivism rates, and academic performance (Smink & Schargel, 2004).

Defining At-Risk Students

> Section 1432 of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 defines at-risk as follows:
>
> The term at-risk, when used with respect to a child, youth, or student, means a school aged individual who is at-risk of academic failure, has a drug or alcohol problem, is pregnant or is a parent, has come in contact with the juvenile justice system in the past, is at least one year behind the expected grade level for the age of the individual, has limited English proficiency, is a gang member, has dropped out of school in the past, or has a high absenteeism rate at school. (No Child Left Behind, 2002)

Although the exact origin of the term 'at-risk' can not be identified, according to Schonert-Reichl (2000) about two hundred years ago the New York Free School Society requested that the state legislature create a school for students who were impoverished. Since that time others involved in identifying the at-risk student have added clarity to the definition. For example the 1987 School Improvement Act as amended in 1988 defined at-risk as:

> Students who, because of learning deficiencies, lack of school readiness, limited English proficiency, poverty, educational or economic disadvantage, or physical or emotional handicapping conditions, face greater risk of low educational achievement and have greater potential of becoming school dropouts (sec. 3243).

Sagor and Cox (2004) offer a similar definition of an at-risk student as "someone who is unlikely to graduate on schedule with both the skills and the self-esteem necessary to exercise meaningful options in the areas of work, leisure, culture, civic affairs, and inter/intrapersonal relationships" (p.1).

At-Risk Factors

In a cooperative effort between Communities in Schools and the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network at Clemson University, a study was done that identified risk factors or conditions that contributed significantly to the likelihood of students dropping out (Hammond, Smink & Drew, 2007). Possible indicators included the domains of school, community, family and individual. Two domains were investigated: individual and family. The risk factors that were found to be significant in the Individual Domain were as follows:

Individual Background Characteristics — has a learning or emotional disability

Early Adult Responsibilities — works many hours; parenthood

Social Attitudes, Values, and Behaviors — high-risk peers and social behavior

School Performance — low achievement; grade retention

School Engagement — poor attendance; lack of effort; low educational expectations

School Behavior — misbehavior; early aggression

The risk factors that were found to be significant in the Family Domain were:

Family Background Characteristics — low socioeconomic status and education of parents; high family mobility; many siblings; family disruptions; not living with both natural parents

Family Engagement/Commitment to Education — low educational expectations; siblings dropped out; sparse contact with school; lack of conversations about school.

The overall findings of the study show that there is no one single risk factor that can accurately predict if a student will drop out. The findings do show that when there is a combination of risk factors then predictability increases, especially across domains. Dropping out was found to be a process rather than an event and that process often begins before a child enters school (Hammond, et al., 2007). Others have concluded that dropping out appears to be a blend of events and characteristics (Bailey & Stegelin, 2003; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hickman & Garvey, 2006; Smink & Schargel, 2004).

According to the National Children's Defense Fund (2008), "a student leaves high school permanently every 10 seconds" (p. 1). Slavin and Madden (1989) defined "at risk" as "one who is in danger of failing to complete his or her education with an adequate level of skills" (p. 4) and went further to identify risk factors such as "retention in grade, behavior problems, poor attendance, low socioeconomic status and attendance with large numbers of poor students" (p. 4). Slavin and Madden (1989) indicated these risk factors are not only closely associated with

the dropout rate but are also remarkably accurate indicators of predicting who will drop out by the time the student enters the third grade.

Other researchers have concluded virtually the same. The origin of an at-risk student begins much earlier in the student's educational development than in high school (Bailey & Stegelin, 2003; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hickman & Garvey, 2006; Howard & Anderson, 1978; Kelly, Veldman, & McGuire, 1964; NCES, 2001; Smink & Schargel, 2004). Some have concluded that the level of reading at third grade is a strong predictor of students who drop out of high school (Christenson & Thurlow, 2004; Lehr et al., 2004). Others have concluded that early, regular attendance at school is a strong predictor of school success. In fact, attendance in kindergarten is highly predictive of attendance at higher levels of education (Lehr et al., 2004). Absenteeism in kindergarten has been linked to students' future academic attachment, identity, and orientation towards success in school related endeavors (Rush & Vitale, 1994).

> Frymier and Gansneder (1989) suggest that there are various degrees of "at-riskness":
>
> At-riskness is a function of what bad things happen to a child, how severe they are, how often they happen, and what else happens in the child's immediate environment. For example, a pregnant 14-year-old is at risk. But a pregnant 14-year-old who uses drugs is even more at risk. And a pregnant 14-year-old who uses drugs, has been retained in grade, has missed 30 days of schools, and has a low self-esteem is still more seriously at risk (p. 142).

Frymier and Gansneder (1989) evaluated the records of 22,018 students and found that one fourth to one third were "at-risk", meaning that they met six or more of 45 criteria previously identified as having a negative impact on student outcome.

Several of the 45 criteria used can be linked or attributed to societal changes which increased psychosocial pressure on adolescents and can contribute to being at-risk of dropping out of school. Of the 45 criteria, attempted suicide, substance abuse, negative self-esteem, pregnancy, negative attitude of parents towards education, sexual or physical abuse victim, absence from school for more than twenty days, designated as special education, divorced or separated parents, death of a parent, English not their native language, live in urban area, mother is the single head of household, experienced serious accident or illness, and father lost his job within the last year are examples (Frymier & Gansneder, 1989).

The nationwide trends will also add to the identified dropout risk-factors. As the number of citizens sixty-five and older reaches a projected 39.7 million by 2010, more resources geared toward the elderly will be demanded with the possible reduction of available resources for the school-aged population ("Baby Boomers", 2003). As of 1995, it was estimated that there were 15,700,000 poor children, which exceeds the amount over the last thirty years (U.S. Bureau of the Census, Profile of the Nation, 1995, p. 2). In 2008, the National Children's Defense Fund estimates similar statistics with 5.8 million living in extreme poverty and nearly 9 million living with no health care coverage. Children who are hungry, medically deprived, or neglected and/or abused are less likely to succeed in school (Barr & Parrett, 2003). That this trend is on the rise has significant social and economic implications because these at-risk factors are strongly associated with school failure and dropping out (Finn & Rock, 1997).

Alan and Viadero (2005) as well as Bailey and Stegelin (2003) indicate that 30% of students in the United States do not graduate from high school because of boredom, poor attendance, because they spent time with other students who were not interested in school, and teachers were not providing academically challenging work. In addition, these students report

that they did not receive the needed support system from home which could have prevented them from leaving the school system. Seventy percent of high school drop outs believe that they could have finished. Blacks and Hispanics have only a 50% chance of graduating from high school and therefore minority race does appear to be an at-risk factor (Azzam, 2007).

Bailey and Stegelin suggest developing a rationale to address five psychological needs: "feelings of competence, feelings of belonging, feelings of usefulness, feelings of potency, and feelings of optimism" (p. 18). Sloat, Audas, and Wilms (2007) suggest defining at-risk students by assessing their proficiency in three outcome areas: personal development, social behavior, and school engagement. Personal development includes a student's individual self confidence, self esteem, locus of control and personal responsibility as well as their sense of security and well being. It includes family relationships and how the youth strives to share in family responsibilities and how inclusive they see the availability of social support from friends and family. The outcome area of social behavior encompasses outcomes describing a participant's behavior in social contexts and their relationships with peers. It includes relationships with other children, a range of pro and anti behaviors that demonstrate orientation to others or a violation of the rights of others and societal norms. It also encompasses the student's willingness to engage positively with others in individual as well as group configurations. School outcomes consist of measures that are normally associated with goals of schooling. It includes measures of academic assessment, acceptable school conduct, school attendance, engagement in academic activities, engagement in school life, groups and activities, and a sense of belonging at school (Sloat et al., 2007).

Researchers have considered a variety of domains when addressing reasons for students becoming "at-risk" of dropping out of school. Reasons have been classified in categories

including school, family, community and student characteristics (Suh, 2007). Wright (2007) added school to the above list. Other researchers believe that multiple factors create a "tumbling" or "domino" effect of dropping out. When students are included in more than one at-risk group, the chances are significantly increased that they will become another dropout statistic (Kominski et al., 2001; NCES, 2002; Smink & Schargel, 2004).

Bailey and Stegelin (2003) identified factors that are typically associated with students who become at-risk of dropping out of school. Those factors include students who are: 1) from low socio-economic status homes, eligible for free lunch, and are classified as "poor" based on the federal government's definition of poverty, 2) of African American or Hispanic decent, 3) handicapped or receive special education services, 4) gifted students whose needs are not being met, and 5) showing aggression, hyperactivity, and behavior problems that disrupt the learning environment (p. 18).

Nationwide, twelve percent of the alternative school population has been classified as special education and have Individualized Education Plans (IEP's). Research on the special education populations in alternative schools shows that more than fifty percent of the special education students are there due to emotional behavior disorders (Lange & Ysseldyke, 1998; NCES, 2002). Special education students are at-risk of dropping out at a significantly greater rate (2.4 times greater) than regular education students. Minority students generally comprise the majority of learning disabled special education students with Blacks and Hispanics having some of the highest percentages respectively at 33% for each group (Smink & Schragel, 2004).

Antisocial behavior such as defiance, stealing, truancy, bullying, and aggression of students in school are all great predictors of delinquency and at-risk of dropping out of school (Walker, Ramsey & Gresham, 2004). Sprague, Walker, Stieber, Simonsen, Nishioka and

Wagner (2001) found that there is a correlation between offenses that occur outside of school and the frequency of office referrals. They also found that ten or more office referrals per year placed a student at-risk for being retained and other negative outcomes. These negative outcomes, over time, cause students to lose interest in school, adopt negative attitudes, and eventually cease to respect even the moral authority of the school.

Kominski, Jamieson and Martinez (2001), in concluding their work using 1999 Census Bureau data, found three personal and four familial at-risk conditions. The three personal indicators were: a physical or mental disability, retained in a school grade at least once, and speaks English less than 'very well'. The four familial variables were: does not live with both parents, at least one parent emigrated in the past 5 years, the family income is less than $10,000 per year, and neither parent/guardian is employed.

If the child has multiple combinations of these factors, the possibility of being at-risk of dropping out of school acts as a "multiplier" effect. Forty six percent of all children reported had at least one factor. Seventy two percent of Black children, sixty two percent of Hispanic children, forty five percent of Asian and Pacific Islander children and thirty five percent of White children reported having at least one of the risk factors. In regard to multiple risk factors, thirty four percent of Black children, twenty seven percent of Hispanic children, eighteen percent of Asian and Pacific children, and only eleven percent of White children reported more than one risk factor (Kominski, et al., 2001).

Retention is the single most important school-related predictor of at-risk of dropping out of school (Edley & Wald, 2002; Schargel, 2004; Slavin & Madden, 1989). One rationale behind retaining a student in a grade is that a child's deficits can be corrected. However, an increasing body of research indicates that retention may not be the best answer and may prove detrimental

to a students self efficacy and academic success (Hauser, Pager & Simmons, 2004; Roderick, Byrk, Jacob, Easton & Allensworth, 1999). Retaining students while their peers are promoted is bad for a child's self-esteem and may not help them academically, according to the argument. But promoting children without the skills for the next grade can be just as demoralizing. Retention rates and students who are overage for their grade vary significantly by race and gender. There is a strong association between retention and dropping out, and the literature on grade retention suggests three important aspects of the retention experience that combine to place students at risk of school failure and early school leaving. First, as a remediation strategy, retention does not appear to improve school performance. Secondly, retention sends a powerful message to the student that school personnel do not consider them capable of succeeding. Finally, it may increase student frustration and disengagement and consequently cause the student to leave school (Delisio, 2007; Roderick, 1995; Smith, 2004).

Other than the family, schools are normally the first institution that has authority over a student's life (Angenent & de Man, 1996; Emler & Reicher, 1995). If the student has very weak affectional ties to the parent, then any relationship with school officials usually becomes negatively impinged on. If the child did not rely on the love and approval of their parents then seeking the approval of teachers and administrators will not be highly valued (Hirschi, 1969). Barlow and Ferdinand (1992) state that a student's behavior at home parallels his behavior at school:

> The family seems to be a foundation for sound development through adolescence. When parent-child relations are solid, the child avoids destructive, malicious peers, adjusts well to the rigors of school, and in general makes a good adjustment during adolescence.

When parent-child relations are flawed, the child selects malicious, delinquent peers and cannot tolerate school. (Barlow& Ferdinand, 1992, p. 158)

In addition to these factors, the predominant family structure has changed over the last century. The fastest growing is the single parent household with one third of all households comprising only one parent. According to Kominski et al. (2001), it is this single parent household that has a tremendous influence on becoming an at-risk youth. Twenty-three percent of White families, sixty one percent of Black families and thirty-three percent of Hispanic families fall into this category. While some children are born to single parents, others are from a nationwide 40% divorce rate (Munson & Sutton, 2005). As separations and divorce rates increase, so do the chances of a student living in poverty. In fact, poverty increases by approximately 60% (Day, 1993; Munson & Sutton, 2005). One in four American children lived with an unmarried parent in 2002. This statistic has more than doubled since the early 1970s. The majority of these children live with their mothers and of this group forty percent live in poverty (Cozzorelli, 2004).

The United States continues to draw immigrants to its shores. Within this immigrant group, there is quite a bit of variance in language, cultures, wealth, and educational level (U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Profile of the United States, 1995). In 1999 approximately 20% of elementary and high school students had at least one foreign-born parent. An estimated 88 percent of Asian and Pacific Islander students had a foreign-born parent, compared with 7 percent of Caucasians and 11 percent of African Americans. About 65% of Hispanic students had a foreign-born parent (US Census, 2001).

On average, today's immigrant has less education due to its native country not having compulsory education laws. Enrolling students who have never had any formal education, at a

late age for America's standards, will place those students at- risk. These students will experience the added burdens of adapting to a new environment, learning a new language, as well as attempting to learn the subject-matter being taught. This only increases the chance of failure or retention (Schargel, 2004).

Not only are families from foreign shores moving into the United States but movement within the country appears to have increased. One in six Americans moves each year with the average being 11 to 12 moves in a lifetime (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993). While most moves are local within the same county, almost eight million people annually move between counties and almost seven million people move to other states (Roberts, 1995). With public education a state and local government responsibility there is disparity from local community to local community in terms of curriculum standards and the amount of funding available to the school systems. With varied resources also comes disparity in educational opportunities. Furthermore, continual movement can cause students to become disengaged because school becomes challenging or is not challenging enough (Schargel, 2004).

Schools and the At-Risk Student

Schools must take some of the responsibility for placing students at-risk. A prominent sociologist, James Coleman, produced a report in 1966, Equality of Educational Opportunity, which purported that ninety percent of students achievement had nothing to do with the quality of their schooling. He concluded that the majority of the control for a student's education lay beyond the school walls. Since this time researchers and authors such as Lorraine Monroe and Rubye Payne have supporting evidence to the contrary. Payne's 1996 *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* was a seminal work providing substantial evidence that proper schooling

should still be considered the great equalizer for children of poverty and those culturally different from the norm.

Barr and Parrett (2003) use a phrase called institutional racism which describes the conditions that minority students are placed in. Minority student stereotypes have led them to be placed in remedial classes, special education, and even suspended more often that their majority counterparts. Additionally, minority students are less likely to be placed in college preparatory classes, gifted programs, advanced placement classes, or other accelerated programs. In part this is supported by Payne's (1996) work which suggests minority students, students of color, and those with fewer financial resources must be taught to survive and maneuver in the world of middle class value systems echoed by many schools and school systems.

Instructional practices too have been overly used that do not prove to be effective with culturally diverse students. These practices include drill, lecture, remediation, and worksheets, which are all teacher-focused (Pardon, Waxman, & Rivera 2002). Several other researchers have identified factors that produce an at-risk environment for culturally diverse students such as cultural alienation, low expectations, lower standards, poor quality of education, and classroom practices that are unresponsive to students (Jagers & Carroll, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Pardon, Waxman, & Rivera 2002).

Research by Barr and Parrett (2001) suggest that the needs of the at-risk population are better served by well-trained, empathetic, demanding, and highly motivated teachers. They also found that when a teacher is involuntarily assigned to the at-risk population of the alternative school then the students suffer as well as the teacher. Fortunately, the Public Alternative Schools and Programs for Students At Risk of Education Failure: 2000-01 report showed that eighty-six percent of the districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students selectively hired

teachers to fit the needs of the students. Only ten percent of the districts involuntarily assigned teachers to the at-risk population. However, large districts, high poverty districts, and majority minority districts were more likely than other districts to involuntarily assign teachers to the at-risk population.

Five critical areas were identified for educational policymakers by Mavis Sander (2002) in her work at Johns Hopkins University. The areas include 1) appropriate expenditures that address past and present inequities; 2) a focused educational policy on the most high need areas; 3) an effective partnership that includes family, school and the community; 4) improved quality of teaching and the total school experience; and 5) an improvement of teacher preparation programs and continued professional development.

Barr and Parrett (2003) conclude that if the five critical areas identified by Sander are not addressed, it is not the impoverished and culturally diverse student who is at risk; they are simply placed in at-risk conditions that are created by the school.

Students At-Risk of Dropping Out in Georgia

The state created the Georgia Student Achievement Pyramid of Interventions (2007) in order to support access and success in the general curriculum. The Pyramid of Interventions was designed to give students increasing support systems in academics, behavior and social issues to increase student success and achievement and decrease the number of students who become at-risk of dropping out of school. The Pyramid was created to provide educators, students and their families with an instructional interventions framework to maximize student achievement for all students. This pyramid is considered to be a proactive approach focusing on when students are struggling in academics or social and behavioral areas. Implementation of the Pyramid of Interventions requires educators to become creative problem solvers, constantly identify those

struggling students, generate creative solutions or more intensive interventions and monitor student progress. By constantly analyzing student performance, school personnel will know when students are struggling before the gap becomes too wide. In essence, areas of student risk cannot be ignored for long periods of time or not addressed at all (GDOE, 2007).

The Pyramid of Intervention includes four tiers. Each tier becomes more formal and intensive in its intervention and will progressively involve more members of the school community if the child must continue through the tiers of intervention. Tier 1 includes classroom interventions and progress monitoring by the teacher. Teachers are expected to adjust instruction typically within two weeks. Data gathered by the teacher determines if more formalized and intensive interventions are needed and if the child needs to progress to Tier 2. In Tier 2 formalized interventions are provided in addition to Tier 1 for students who are not making progress in academics, communications or behavioral areas. If the student does not make progress with Tier 2 interventions, student personnel refer the child to the schools Student Support Team (SST) which comprises Tier 3 of the Pyramid. In Tier 3 the SST may identify extended opportunities to enrich learning or support the student in areas of behavior and socialization. Individualized interventions are implemented over a twelve week period with constant progress monitoring, formal and informal instruments, and a minimum of six total assessments. Tier 4 is reserved for students found to need additional supports and meet eligibility criteria for special education placement. Tier 4 does not necessarily represent a location for services, but instead indicates a layer of interventions that may be provided in the general education setting or in a separate setting. With the implementation of the Georgia Student Achievement Pyramid of Interventions and the passage of No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the IDEA of 2004, special educators are involved in all four tiers (GDOE, 2007).

Georgia's high school graduation rate of 76% has steadily risen from 63% in 2002 due in part to the implementation of graduation coaches as well as a new process of identifying and providing interventions to students who are struggling. Graduation coaches worked with almost 34,000 students with poor attendance and 14, 000 students who were not on track to graduate. Over 78 percent of seniors who were identified as at-risk of not graduating were able to obtain their high school diploma (Perdue, 2008). As Kathy Cox stated, "reducing Georgia's dropout rate and increasing the graduation rate is our top priority and it's clear we are making great progress" (p. 1).

The staggering economic and social costs of providing for the increasing population of youth who are at-risk of leaving or who have left the education mainstream are an intolerable drain on the resources of federal, state, and local governments and the private sector (Cox, 2008; Ingersoll & LeBoeuf, 1997). In Georgia, the passage of the A+ Education Reform Act of 2000 eliminated earlier types of alternative school funding and instituted Quality Basic Education (QBE) funds for a "new" Alternative Education Program for students in grades 6–12. The purpose of the legislation was to set state expectations for increasing academic achievement and for improving the quality of education in Georgia schools. Included in the code were rules and guidelines for establishing alternative education programs within local school districts and to address the needs of at-risk students within the state (Cox, 2008).

Summary of the Review of Literature

Students who attend Type II punitive alternative schools have been given a "last chance" to succeed (Aron, 2006; Cash, 2004). Behavioral, academic, family and societal issues have usually combined in some fashion to set these youth on a path that leads them to dropping out of school or being at-risk of dropping out (Barr & Parrett, 2003; Frymier & Gansneder, 1989;

Smink & Schargel, 2004). As student risk factors increase so do their chances of becoming problems for schools. Some of those student factors include: academic failures and retention, lack of school readiness, irregular attendance, limited English proficiency, pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse and sexual or physical abuse. Special education and handicapped children as well as minority children should also be considered when looking at individual student factors related to being at-risk of dropping out of school (Frymier & Gansneder, 1989).

Family factors such as parental divorce, poverty or family incomes which are lessened because of loss of employment of one or both parents are cited as contributors to youth becoming at-risk of leaving school or becoming discipline problems at their schools (Finn & Rock, 1997; Kominski, Jamieson & Martinez, 2001; Smink & Schargel, 2004). In addition, students who have weak affectional ties to parents and family may also tend to have these same behaviors with the teachers they spend the largest part of their day with. If family ties are strong, children tend to avoid destructive behaviors and do not gravitate to other children who do practice negative or delinquent actions (Barlow & Ferdinand, 1992; Hirschi, 1969; Mapp, 2004).

Societal institutions such as schools may also play a part in perpetuating the dropout mill cited by some research. Minority student stereotypes have caused inequities in placement of advanced and/or gifted classes, special education classes and remedial school settings (Barr & Parrett, 2003; Payne, 1996). Instructional practices that have not been effective with minority students have continued to be a mainstay of pedagogical practices. Teachers continue to use drill and practice, worksheets and teacher centered instruction rather than small group, hands on and cooperative learning arrangements (Pardon, Waxman & Rivera, 2002). In addition, research indicates it takes a special breed of school personnel to work with children who come to school with any number or combination of challenging behaviors and experiences. The teachers and

administrators for students who are at-risk of dropping out must be motivated to work with these children (Barr & Parrett, 2001).

Communities as a whole must take some responsibility for the at-risk child. With varied amounts and distributions of tax dollars and resources to support youth and schools, the United States has fostered disparity and inequities in schools, community centers, libraries, and related health and human services. Even juvenile justice, gang task forces and protections services vary tremendously within local communities and states. The inequities created by funding and support of local schools causes great disparity in educational opportunities and curriculum standards (Sander, 2002).

As the factors mentioned above increase and become entwined, students become despondent, lack engagement and "tune out" of school. Lack of engagement caused by risk factors causes children to lose focus on academics or to not be even aware of the importance of an education. Without the proper support from home and family and the school and community, the "domino effect" can become overwhelming and impossible to negotiate for young children and adolescents.

As policy makers and school systems have become more sophisticated in identifying and working with at-risk students, they have also been able to refine services available to keep these children in school and have success. Alternative school settings have become a growing body of school structures to focus on this population. Throughout the decades but especially since the 1960s this broad umbrella of schools has been able to address the needs of various subsets of students. Some of these institutions include charter, magnet and vocational/community based schools. Also included are the Type II punitive alternative schools which serve students who have not been successful in traditional schools and are disruptive, prone to suspension, and/or

practice various risky behaviors. The Type II punitive alternative school has been designed to specifically meet the needs of these students.

As the development of these schools has advanced research suggests that there are some promising avenues for Type II alternative schools to be effective. Some of those factors include: 1) academic instruction that is focused on student learning, promotes high expectations for students and teachers, and uses pedagogical practices specifically related to the needs of at-risk youth; 2) instructional staff which believes that the at-risk student can be successful; 3) a faculty which sees staff development as an on-going and continuous process towards improvement; 4) a facility which is clean and accessible; 5) a school organization which understands the importance a sense of community and belongingness; 6) leadership and governance which is engaged, allowed to govern the facility and have a certain amount of autonomy and 7) a strong student support system which involves transition elements to and from the alternative school as well as community sustainability systems.

The present study is being conducted to advance the knowledge of what schools can do to make Type II punitive alternative schools more effective for students who become at-risk of dropping out. In addition, the study should advance the knowledge of what we know to use as student success measures at Type II alternative schools. Presently, the literature is mixed as to what should indicate student success in these environments. Attendance, GPA, suspension rates, recidivism and dropout rates may or may not be satisfactory indicators of how effective the alternative school is at meeting student needs. In conclusion, while Georgia has advanced the development of alternative schools in some meaningful ways, collection of data has been sparse and irregular. A statewide survey such as is being used in the present study could yield

interesting findings concerning the effectiveness of our Type II alternative schools and the demographics of the youth being served at these institutions.

Rationale for the Research Questions

Based on the findings, the following research questions have been generated for study. The hypothesis reflects the body of evidence presented in the literature review. Research suggests there are essential elements of effective alternative schools and that these elements can influence certain measures of student success. The following research questions focused on the univariate relationships between essential alternative school elements as perceived by school administrators and measures of student success.

1. What is the relationship between the student outcome measure of GPA and Planning, Leadership, Organizational Structure, Culture, Climate and Diversity, Professional Development, Parental Involvement, Community Involvement, School Linked Services and Academic Press in the alternative schools as perceived by the alternative school principals?

2. What is the relationship between student dropout rate and Planning, Leadership, Organizational Structure, Culture, Climate and Diversity, Professional Development, Parental Involvement, Community Involvement, School Linked Services and Academic Press in the alternative schools as perceived by the alternative school principals?

3. What is the relationship between the student outcome measure of absentee rate and Planning, Leadership, Organizational Structure, Culture, Climate and Diversity, Professional Development, Parental Involvement, Community Involvement, School Linked Services and Academic Press in the alternative schools as perceived by the alternative school principals?

4. What is the relationship between the student outcome measure of suspension and Planning, Leadership, Organizational Structure, Culture, Climate and Diversity, Professional

Development, Parental Involvement, Community Involvement, School Linked Services and Academic Press in the alternative schools as perceived by the alternative school principals?

5. What is the relationship between the student outcome measure of recidivism and Planning, Leadership, Organizational Structure, Culture, Climate and Diversity, Professional Development, Parental Involvement, Community Involvement, School Linked Services and Academic Press in the alternative schools as perceived by the alternative school principals?

CHAPTER III. METHODS

Overview

This chapter describes the methodology used in the study. It contains a description of the purpose of the study, the research questions, population and sample, research design, the instrumentation used and data collection and analysis procedures. The study involved conducting a survey of Georgia alternative school principals' perceptions of the relationship between student outcome measures and elements of effective alternative schools.

Purpose of the Study

There are 154 public and 21 private Type II alternative schools in the state of Georgia. The Type II alternative schools began with a state grant in 1994. Yet, very little research has been conducted regarding their effectiveness or success. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships between Georgia alternative school administrator perceptions of alternative school effectiveness domains and these administrators' perceptions of alternative school student success. Alternative school effectiveness domains were identified from the literature and correlated with those identified as essential by Swarts (2002). The three school effectiveness domains examined were: efficiency, learning environment, and academic performance. Each of these three domains included essential elements of alternative education programs. The efficiency domain included the dimensions of planning, leadership and organizational structure. The learning environment domain included the dimensions culture, climate and diversity, professional development, parental involvement, community involvement

and school linked services. The academic performance domain consisted of the curriculum, instruction and assessment dimensions. Student outcome variables addressed were attendance, dropout rate, recidivism (returning to alternative setting more than once), GPA and suspension rate.

Significance of the Study

In general, the literature pertaining to alternative schools continues to grow but it is limited in the examination of essential elements of effectiveness. In addition although there is significant knowledge concerning what causes a student to drop out there is limited information about prevention and successful interventions necessary to keep these children in school. Those who wish to advance this area need to explore how alternative settings can successfully keep students in school and on-track academically.

Research concerning Georgia alternative schools and the at-risk youth they serve is almost nonexistent. This study can provide the State of Georgia with a research-based tool to evaluate Type II alternative schools and can possibly advance areas of future growth or attention needed to assure the success of these institutions. In addition, Georgia has not gathered the student data used in this study in regards to students who are attending the Type II alternative school. Some of the demographic data may be useful in advancing what is known about the typical alternative school student in Georgia.

School and State Superintendents in Georgia and in other states may find these data useful as they seek to develop effective programs for students who are not succeeding in schools. Institutions of higher learning can also use this research in their leadership preparation programs to help future leaders understand factors that may foster success for potential dropouts. In addition, those school systems and higher education institutions may use the data from this study

to garner "themes" needed for professional development in college/university programs or school systems.

Research Questions

The study addressed the relationship between the student outcome measures of: dropout rate, absentee rate, suspension rate, recidivism and GPA and the nine dimensions outlined in the three effective alternative school domains. Those nine dimensions are planning; leadership; organizational structure; culture, climate and diversity; professional development; parental involvement; community involvement; school linked services and curriculum; and instruction and assessment. Alternative school principals were asked to report their perceptions of the student outcome measures and alternative school essential element — the nine dimensions as they relate to their Type II alternative school.

1. What is the relationship between student dropout rate and the dimensions of the Efficiency Domain (Planning, Leadership, Organizational Structure), the dimensions of the Learning Domain (Culture, Climate and Diversity, Professional Development, Parental Involvement, Community Involvement, School Linked Services) and Academic Performance Domain (Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment) in the alternative schools as perceived by the alternative school principals?

2. What is the relationship between the student outcome measure of absentee rate and the dimensions of the Efficiency Domain (Planning, Leadership, Organizational Structure), the dimensions of the Learning Domain (Culture, Climate and Diversity, Professional Development, Parental Involvement, Community Involvement, School Linked Services) and Academic Performance Domain (Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment) in the alternative schools as perceived by the alternative school principals?

3. What is the relationship between the student outcome measure of suspension and the dimensions of the Efficiency Domain (Planning, Leadership, Organizational Structure), the dimensions of the Learning Domain (Culture, Climate and Diversity, Professional Development, Parental Involvement, Community Involvement, School Linked Services) and Academic Performance Domain (Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment) in the alternative schools as perceived by the alternative school principals?

4. What is the relationship between the student outcome measure of recidivism and the dimensions of the Efficiency Domain (Planning, Leadership, Organizational Structure), the dimensions of the Learning Domain (Culture, Climate and Diversity, Professional Development, Parental Involvement, Community Involvement, School Linked Services) and Academic Performance Domain (Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment) in the alternative schools as perceived by the alternative school principals?

5. What is the relationship between the student outcome measure of GPA and the dimensions of the Efficiency Domain (Planning, Leadership, Organizational Structure), the dimensions of the Learning Domain (Culture, Climate and Diversity, Professional Development, Parental Involvement, Community Involvement, School Linked Services) and Academic Performance Domain (Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment) in the alternative schools as perceived by the alternative school principals?

Role of the Researcher

As Chief Officer of Student Services for a large school system in Georgia, this researcher was charged with overseeing the school system's alternative school and the tribunal process which assigns youth to the facility. Working in this capacity has allowed the researcher to witness successes and failures at this district facility. In addition, the researcher is heavily

involved in the statewide alternative school consortium. This allowed a comparative lens of various alternative school sites and alternative school leadership throughout the state. The literature has suggested that leadership, organizational structures and processes, community support, academic press and other school related variables would encourage student successes at alternative schools. While the researcher's school system had a dynamic alternative school principal, external support from the community and central office and a highly qualified and dedicated faculty, other systems appeared not to have the same level of commitment and resources. In essence, this research project was not only prompted by the literature surrounding the topic, but also the stark realities the researcher had witnessed in his system and those throughout the state.

Population and Sample

Georgia alternative school administrators (principals) were selected as the population for this study. The focus of the research revolves around the CrossRoads model, i.e. Type II punitive alternative school. These Georgia alternative schools place emphasis on academic and social skills and are considered an intervention to help students become more successful in the traditional school settings. Most of these students are placed in the Type II schools for violating school rules and policies such as violent and disruptive behavior, inappropriate sexual behavior, drug and alcohol use and possession, and weapon violations (Cox, 2008). Students are placed in these schools by the school district and do not have an option to opt out of attending if they wish to remain in the school system. Georgia's Type II alternative schools serve students in grades 6–12. A current listing of Georgia punitive or Type II alternative schools was obtained from the Director of Alternative Schools in the Georgia Department of Education. The director provided email addresses of the current administrators of these school sites. There were 154 punitive or

Type II alternative schools in Georgia and the principals of each were included in the study (Barr & Parrett, 2003; Reimer & Cash, 2003). Sixty-nine principals participated in the study.

Instrumentation

Swarts (2002) operationalizes his definition of alternative school effectiveness through the Alternative Education Accountability Model and the Alternative School Performance Standard Indicators. Swarts (2003/04) developed three domains of alternative school effectiveness. Those domains are efficiency, learning environment, and academic performance. In the efficiency domain are the dimensions of leadership, organizational structure and resources and comprehensive and effective planning. In the learning environment domain are the dimensions of organizational culture and diversity, student, family and community support and professional development. In the domain of academic performance are the dimensions of curriculum, assessment, and instruction. A visual outline of the domains and dimensions are as follows:

1) Efficiency Domain
   - Dimension–Leadership
   - Dimension–Organizational Structure and Resources
   - Dimension–Comprehensive and Effective Planning
2) Learning Environment Domain
   - Dimension–Culture and Diversity
   - Dimension–Student, Family and Community Support
   - Dimension–Professional Development
3) Academic Performance Domain
   - Dimension–Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

A description of the above three domains and their dimensions follows (Swarts, 2002).

The Efficiency Domain includes the dimensions of leadership, organizational structure and resources and comprehensive and effective planning. Alternative school leadership should be focused on support for teaching and learning, providing organizational direction and vision, having high performance expectations for all members of the school community and creating a learning community. Leadership from the school community (i.e. faculty and administrators) should reinforce the program mission, beliefs, goals, rules, and routines. Organizational structure and resources in alternative school settings should be maximized to support high student and staff performance. There should be an emphasis on high-quality instruction to measure student academic gains, behavioral gains and student outcomes such as attendance, grades and graduation rates. The dimension of comprehensive and effective planning includes the development, implementation, and evaluation of a clear purpose, direction and focus on teaching and learning. In particular, the planning dimension should include safety and crisis management plans whereby particular procedures and protocols have been established.

The Learning Environment Domain includes the dimensions of culture, student, family and community support, and professional development. Alternative school culture should be a climate conducive to performance excellence and should offer small classes, and low student/teacher ratios as well as high quality instruction. A healthy school culture openly supports issues of diversity and models and practices tolerance of cultures and groups different from our own. Support for family, student and community suggests that alternative schools should work with these stakeholders to remove barriers to learning so as to meet the cognitive, social and vocational development of the students. Counseling, social services and health assistance should be available consistently and on many levels to students and their families.

Professional development, professional growth and evaluation in alternative schools means providing professional development experiences and opportunities that are relevant to teaching assignments and working with alternative school youth which are typically at-risk of failure. At-risk children have their own special set of circumstances and needs. Professional development must be attached to these needs. For example, faculty and staff may need intensive experience and training in behavior management strategies and assessment or mentoring at-risk children.

The Academic Performance Domain included the dimension curriculum, instruction and assessment. Students are instructed using best practices, based on research to include high quality diagnostic instruction. Alternative schools should provide high quality instruction which includes small, interactive groups and is aligned with state and local standards to provide students with a rigorous and relevant curriculum. Assessment should include multiple evaluation strategies to continuously monitor and modify instruction to meet student needs. High quality assessment must also include behavioral interventions which are based on functional behavioral assessments and identify causes of behavior and appropriate interventions to correct and reinforce student behaviors.

As outlined above, Swarts (2002) had created a model and elements for successful alternative schools to use in evaluating their programs but validity and reliability of the model's instrument has not been established. Many of the items included lengthy and described multiple answer possibilities. For example, one performance indicator under the planning dimension read as follows:

> State Statutes, Regulations, and Board Policies. Decisions are made regarding school program types, special need students, individual education plan (IEP) for special education students, entry and exit criteria, transitions, teacher certification, school term,

referral, instructional hours, course credit, attendance, discipline, etc. (p. 78, Swarts, 2002)

In addition the instrument was very long and contained 117 items. Since the researcher desired a return rate as high as possible, the length and time involved in completing the survey was another concern. Because there did not appear to be an instrument available that had been deemed valid and reliable and which the research viewed as something that could be easily administered, part of the researcher's goal was to design an evaluation instrument which could be used to replicate evaluative measures in numerous alternative school settings.

The first step was to form an expert panel to assist in the process. The panel included the researcher, the school systems testing and accountability director who holds a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology and five principals from elementary, middle school and high school levels within the researcher's school system who had served on the district's discipline tribunal and were very familiar with the mission of alternative schools. In addition, one of these is an officer in the statewide alternative school consortium. A university faculty member who was familiar with the school system and had served in the Student Services Division for seventeen years also agreed to serve on the panel. She had a distinguished career as a teacher and administrator in numerous at-risk settings.

The panel met and addressed all of the 117 indicators represented in the Swarts (2002; 2005) evaluation tool. These indicators were fairly equally distributed within the nine Swarts dimensions and Swarts had also established the three domains: Efficiency, Learning Environment and Academic Performance. Meetings were held six times and each meeting was designed to address appropriate questions for the 9 dimensions outlined as independent variables. Instead of using individual interviews, these meetings could best be described as instrument

focus groups. In addition to these meetings, emails and telephone conversations ensued over an eight month period between the researcher and various members of the principals, central office administrators, consortium representatives and university committee member.

Once final revisions were made by the expert panel there were 101 total items including the five student outcome measures, the 87 items to measure alternative school effectiveness and the nine demographic variables. A 5 point Likert scale, with Strongly Disagree rated as 1 to Strongly Agree rated as 5, was used for the 87 indicators used to measure alternative school effectiveness. Five student outcome measures known in the research to be important indicators of student success in alternative schools (GPA, absentee rate, dropout rate, recidivism and suspension rate) were addressed as dichotomous variables. School, teacher and student demographic data was gathered using nine questions. Through the various meetings and communications, the expert panel group finally agreed the instrument was ready to pilot (see Appendix 1).

Pilot Study

The group of experts described above assembled for a final revision of the instrument and then agreed to an administration of a paper version of the survey. The expert panel served as a pilot group and participants were timed for completion so the researcher would know the approximate time commitment that would be expected from participants. The three part questionnaire took approximately 25 minutes to complete. Based upon their experience of completing the instrument, final input concerning the questions was garnered from the group during this administration. Panel members were asked to identify any items that did not appear to represent the dimension. Several items were simplified in wording to align them more closely with particular dimensions.

A survey design appeared to be the appropriate means of gathering the data necessary for this study. An online version of the survey was constructed using Survey Methods (see http://www.surveymethods.com). The greatest strengths of Internet survey data collections are the potential to collect a large amount of data in a relatively short period of time. It also eliminates the necessity for researchers to enter or process the data because it is done by the online program, i.e. Survey Methods. Data from web-based questionnaires can also be automatically validated and if a data value is entered in an incorrect format, or outside the defined range, the web-based program can return an error message requesting the respondent to change their answer immediately (Coomer, 1997; Smith & Leigh, 1997).

By using an online version of the survey the researcher was able to easily reach all Georgia alternative school administrators. Costs are much less because printing and postal mailing are not necessary. The major disadvantages include response rates. For example, in this survey there were 27 non-completers or those who started the survey and did not finish. Another disadvantage is SPAM blockers. Most school systems have powerful blocking capabilities. The researcher did feel that some did not respond because they were never aware of the survey.

The instructions for the instrument consisted of two parts. Respondents were given an informational email with a link to the survey. If the respondent agreed to answer the survey and went to the link they were instructed to first provide some basic demographic data about their alternative school, the teachers and the students who attended the school. The respondent was then asked to participate in a second part of the survey which consisted of five questions about student success: dropout rate, suspension rate, grade point average (GPA), absentee rate and recidivism rate. The third part of the survey consisted of the 87 items which were garnered from the work of Swarts (2002; 2005) and refined by the researcher and expert panel.

Instrument Reliability

When the survey results were received from the 69 study participants, instrument reliability was computed for all dimensions. The reliability data follows.

Planning Dimension Scale

Alpha internal consistent reliability coefficients were computed for each of the eight scales using responses from all 69 participants. Results are reported in Tables 1–8. Reported in Table 1 are results for the Planning Scale. The correlation coefficients between each of the nine items and the total score on the Planning scale ranged from .40 to .66, thereby verifying that each of the items consistently measured what the total Planning scale was measuring. The coefficient alpha if item deleted was reduced for all nine items further verifying that each of the items increased the reliability of the planning scale. With all nine items, the reliability coefficient for the Planning Scale was .82.

Table 1

Item-Total Correlation, Coefficient Alpha if Item Deleted, and Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for the Planning Scale

Scale : Planning Dimension	Corrected item-total correlation	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted
15. A collaborative process is used to address the question of who is responsible for the alternative school.	.401	.810
16. Decisions are made according to board policy.	.504	.799
17. Staff number, position types and other financial decisions are based on student enrollment and need.	.450	.804
18. The facility is appropriate for alternative programs.	.658	.778
19. Essential district plans are used at the alternative programs.	.401	.812
20. A copy of the school improvement plan is available to all stakeholders.	.502	.799
21. School operational procedures are appropriate for alternative education.	.663	.778
22. Staff and students have appropriate resources.	.607	.786
23. Staff and students have up-to-date technology such as computers, internet access, educational and behavioral software, etc.	.477	.802
Coefficient alpha internal consistency reliability for the Planning scale		.815

Leadership Dimension Scale

Table 2 contains the results for the Leadership Dimension Scale. The correlation coefficients between each of the seven items and the total score on the Leadership Scale ranged from .583 to .790, thereby verifying that each of the items consistently measured what the total

Leadership scale was measuring. The coefficient alpha if item deleted was reduced for all seven items except item number 27. "Communication is enhanced by collaborative processes that exist between leadership and staff" which had a Cronbach alpha of .583 and a deletion factor of .906 or .001 difference. These coefficients further verified that each of the items increased the reliability of the leadership scale. With all seven items, the reliability coefficient for the Leadership scale was .90.

Table 2

Item-Total Correlation, Coefficient Alpha if Item Deleted, and Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for the Leadership Scale

Scale : Leadership Dimension	Corrected item-total correlation	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted
24. Leadership adheres to State statutes, regulations and board policies.	.758	.886
25. Building level leadership dispositions include perceptive insight in decision making.	.777	.884
26. Leadership uses school data to systematically reduce barriers to school performance.	.790	.884
27. Communication is enhanced by collaborative processes that exist between leadership and staff.	.583	.906
28. Leadership and faculty select and evaluate materials, equipment and supplies with high academic expectations for students.	.716	.891
29. Leadership uses developmental supervision to improve teachers' performance.	.728	.890
30. Leadership provides staff and students with behavior management practices needed to ensure that the school is safe and orderly.	.710	.894
Coefficient alpha internal consistency reliability for the Leadership scale		.905

Organizational Structure and Resources Dimension Scale

Results for the Organizational Structure and Resources Dimensions Scale are contained in Table 3. The correlation coefficients between each of the eight items and the total score on the Organizational Structure and Resources scale ranged from .274 to .691, thereby verifying that each of the items consistently measured what the total Organizational Structure and Resources scale was measuring. The coefficient alpha if item deleted was reduced for seven of the eight items. Item 35, "Behavior management at the alternative school emphasizes positive rather than

punitive actions", with a Cronbach alpha of .274 and a deleted factor of .827, appeared to be only slightly larger than the overall Cronbach alpha of .810. This further verifies that seven of the items increased the reliability of the Organizational Structure and Resources scale with only item 35 slightly detracting from the instrument. With all eight items, the reliability coefficient for the Organizational Structure and Resources scale was .81.

Table 3

Item-Total Correlation, Coefficient Alpha if Item Deleted, and Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for the Organizational Structure and Resources Scale

Scale : Organizational Structure and Resources Dimension	Corrected item-total correlation	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted
31. Universal classroom management and individually targeted and intensive behavior management practices are used.	.542	.786
32. Rituals and routines are established in order to improve classroom management.	.679	.768
33. Classroom behavior management includes communication skills such as effective "sending" and "receiving".	.570	.782
34. Continuous classroom monitoring includes walking around the classroom, frequent scanning of students, their work and reinforcement and motivating comments.	.528	.788
35. Behavior management at the alternative school emphasizes positive rather than punitive actions.	.274	.827

(table continues)

Table 3 (continued)

Scale : Organizational Structure and Resources Dimension	Corrected item-total correlation	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted
36. Behavior management tools include internal school and external community support from counselors, workers and psychologists.	.447	.799
37. The alternative school has highly structured classrooms.	.691	.763
38. The alternative school practices individualized behavioral interventions.	.533	.788
Coefficient alpha internal consistency reliability for the Planning scale		.810

Culture, Climate and Diversity Dimension Scale

Table 4 contains results for the Culture, Climate and Diversity Dimension Scale. The correlation coefficients between each of the sixteen items and the total score on the Culture, Climate and Diversity Scale ranged from .245 to .744, thereby verifying that each of the items consistently measure the total Culture, Climate and Diversity scale except for 3 items. Those items were:

- 46. The selection of alternative school rules is made and agreed to by all staff and students with a deletion coefficient alpha of .889,
- 50. Administrators, teachers and support staff are given professional development opportunities to explore their own ethnic and cultural identities with a deletion coefficient alpha of .884 and

- 53. Teachers gain knowledge about the communities and families represented in their classrooms with a deletion coefficient alpha of .884.

While the overall Cronbach Alpha for the Culture, Climate and Diversity Dimension Scale was .883, the above 3 items should not be considered as significant detractors to the overall scale because the deletion factor .001 for item fifty and fifty-three and .006 for item forty-six. With all sixteen items, the reliability coefficient for the Culture, Climate and Diversity scale was .883.

Table 4

Item-Total Correlation, Coefficient Alpha if Item Deleted, and Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for the Culture, Climate and Diversity Scale

Scale : Culture, Climate and Diversity Dimension	Corrected item-total correlation	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted
39. The definition and purpose of our alternative school is based on student academic and non-academic needs	.667	.870
40. The mission statement i.e. broad, general statement about the commitment and direction of the alternative school exists.	.654	.872
41. Our alternative school has both short and long-term goals that are general and yet specific enough to include all stakeholders' needs.	.744	.868
42. Measurable objectives are used in the planning phase of the alternative program.	.672	.870
43. Measurable objectives are used in the implementation phase of the alternative program.	.711	.870
44. Measurable objectives are used in the evaluation phase of the alternative program.	.544	.876
45. Staff has a shared vision that with appropriate individual support all students can learn at high levels.	.464	.879

Table 4 (continued)

Scale : Culture, Climate and Diversity Dimension	Corrected item-total correlation	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted
46. The selection of alternative school rules is made and agreed to by all staff and students.	.245	.889
47. Ceremonies for grade advancement, graduation, and other significant student accomplishments are scheduled frequently.	.593	.874
48. Leadership, teachers, and non-teaching staff encourage a positive environment.	.533	.877
49. Curriculum consists of varying examples of cultures and emphasizes material and resource diversity which are distributed equitably.	.532	.876
50. Administrators, teachers and support staff are given professional development opportunities to explore their own ethnic and cultural identities.	.370	.884
51. Administrators, teachers and support staff are given professional development opportunities to explore their attitudes toward ethno-cultural groups and the dynamics of privilege and economic oppression.	.503	.877
52. Teachers possess curriculum knowledge about the histories and contributions of various ethno-cultural groups and the relationships among language, culture and learning.	.560	.875
53. Teachers gain knowledge about the communities and families represented in their classrooms.	.312	.884
54. To insure educational equity community agencies, service groups, law enforcement, business and industry and other external support systems help the alternative school meet the diverse needs of families and students	.538	.876

Table 4 (continued)

Scale : Culture, Climate and Diversity Dimension	Corrected item-total correlation	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted
Coefficient alpha internal consistency reliability for the Culture, Climate and Diversity Scale		.883

Professional Development Dimension Scale

Reliability results for the Professional Development Dimension Scale are reported in Table 5. The correlation coefficients between each of the nine items and the total score on the Professional Development Scale ranged from .685 to .864, thereby verifying that each of the items consistently measure the total Professional Development Scale of .944. Only item sixty, *Staff are encouraged and given opportunities to explore and share newly acquired knowledge and skill with their peers via regularly scheduled release time from the classroom and/or other compensatory measures*, had a slightly larger deletion alpha coefficient factor of .945 or .001 larger than the overall Professional Development Scale Cronbach Alpha coefficient of .944. It is therefore safe to conclude that all nine items contributed to the Professional Development Scale and that there were no significant detractors to the scale.

Table 5

Item-Total Correlation, Coefficient Alpha if Item Deleted, and Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for the Professional Development Scale

Scale: Professional Development Dimension	Corrected item-total correlation	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted
55. School boards, superintendents, principals recognize the need for and encourage alternative school faculty to receive professional development from internal and community resources.	.811	.936
56. Leadership bridges the gap between theory and practice by creating a dialogue among staff to explore change and reinforce growth	.725	.941
57. Long-term professional growth plans are established through a needs assessment in the areas of content, support and staff needs.	.826	.935
58. Professional development is on-going and focused on continuous learning opportunities.	.864	.933
59. New technologies are used for innovative professional development.	.751	.939
60. Staff are encouraged and given opportunities to explore and share newly acquired knowledge and skill with their peers via regularly scheduled release time from the classroom and/or other compensatory measures.	.685	.945
61. School faculty and administration are trained to analyze and interpret student academic and non-academic data and align the results with alternative school and student performance goals.	.788	.937

(table continues)

Table 5 (continued)

Scale: Professional Development Dimension	Corrected item-total correlation	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted
62. Professional development emphasizes high quality academic, social, and behavior management skills for students.	.851	.933
63. The staff evaluation process is aligned with professional improvement opportunities.	.796	.937
Coefficient alpha internal consistency reliability for the Professional Development scale		.944

Parental Involvement Dimension Scale

Table 6 contains reliability results for the Parental Involvement Dimension Scale. The correlation coefficients between each of the eight items and the total score on the Parental Involvement Scale ranged from .572 to .823, thereby verifying that seven of the items consistently measured what the total Organizational Structure and Resources scale was measuring. The coefficient alpha if item deleted was reduced for all of the items except one. Item 67, "*Parents are included as advisors or council members in the school decision-making process*", with a Cronbach alpha of .572 and a deleted factor of .923, was larger than the overall Cronbach alpha of .810. This further verifies that seven of the eight items increased the reliability of the Parental Involvement Scale with only item 67 detracting from the instrument. With all eight items, the reliability coefficient for the Parental Involvement Scale was .919.

Table 6

Item-Total Correlation, Coefficient Alpha if Item Deleted, and Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for the Parental Involvement Scale

Scale : Parental Involvement Dimension	Corrected item-total correlation	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted
64. Leadership understands the importance of communication between home and the alternative school.	.823	.903
65. Leadership affirms parent/guardian diversity when establishing a parent action plan (i.e. education, work schedules, siblings).	.765	.906
66. Parents are given opportunities to become informed about school policies and programs.	.686	.913
67. Parents are included as advisors or council members in the school decision-making process.	.572	.923
68. Parents are encouraged to have their voice heard by seeking administrator and/or teacher support when student outcomes decrease, grades decline, or behavior escalates.	.783	.905
69. Parents are encouraged to value learning, to be involved in learning and to set high expectations for their children.	.785	.905
70. Parents are given opportunities to volunteer as mentors, tutors, chaperones etc.	.778	.905
71. Parents are given timely information concerning their student's progress and performance.	.721	.910
Coefficient alpha internal consistency reliability for the Planning scale		.919

Community Involvement Dimension Scale

Table 7 contains reliability information for the Community Involvement Dimension Scale. The correlation coefficients between each of the nine items and the total score on the Community Involvement scale ranged from .634 to .906, thereby verifying that each of the items consistently measured what the total Community Involvement scale was measuring. The coefficient alpha if item deleted was reduced for eight of the nine items further verifying that eight of the nine items increased the reliability of the Community involvement scale. Item 78, *Business partnerships offer career preparation and school-to-work support like career advice, work visitations, job shadowing and internships,* had a Cronbach Alpha if item deleted coefficient of .946 which is .005 larger than the overall reliability coefficient for all nine items at .941.

Table 7

Item-Total Correlation, Coefficient Alpha if Item Deleted, and Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for the Community Involvement Scale

Scale : Community Involvement Dimension	Corrected item-total correlation	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted
72. School leadership has developed a collaborative process with community and business partners that is based on trust and respect, open communication, and shared responsibility.	.814	.933
73. Community partnerships are designed to enrich the school leadership environment by including the community as a source of educational resources.	.809	.932

(table continues)

Table 7 (continued)

Scale : Community Involvement Dimension	Corrected item-total correlation	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted
74. Community partnerships are designed to enrich the school learning environment by including the community as a source of support systems.	.856	.931
75. Partnerships exist with community service organizations.	.906	.927
76. Business partnerships include industries as well as "white collar" professions and trade.	.747	.936
77. School leadership has taken the initiative to establish partnerships with community agencies, organizations and businesses.	.876	.929
78. Business partnerships offer career preparation and school-to-work support like career advice, work visitations, job shadowing and internships.	.634	.946
79. At the alternative school, business and community partners act as volunteers, mentors, tutors and advisors to students.	.697	.939
80. Business and community partnerships offer scholarships, student recognition, sponsorships, and other incentives to students and school staff.	.748	.936
Coefficient alpha internal consistency reliability for the Community Involvement Scale		.941

School Linked Integrated Support Services Dimension Scale

Reliability information for the School Linked Integrated Support Services Dimension Scale is contained in Table 8. The correlation coefficients between each of the nine items and the total score on the Community Involvement scale ranged from .723 to .897, thereby verifying that each of the items consistently measured what the total School Linked Integrated Support

Services scale was measuring. The coefficient alpha if item deleted was reduced for five of the six items which further verified that five of the six items increased the reliability of the Community involvement scale. Item 83, *Services provided by community agencies are an integral part of the educational process*, had a Cronbach Alpha if item deleted coefficient of .943 which is .003 larger than the overall reliability coefficient for all nine items at .940.

Table 8

Item-Total Correlation, Coefficient Alpha if Item Deleted, and Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for the School Linked Integrated Support Services

Scale : School Linked Integrated Support Services Dimension	Corrected item-total correlation	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted
81. The school board and superintendent encourage maintaining school/community support services.	.875	.923
82. The alternative school principal and or faculty are strong links between the school and community.	.842	.927
83. Services provided by community agencies are an integral part of the educational process.	.723	.943
84. Teachers are instrumental in identifying students with health and social needs, sharing information, and assisting with the delivery of agency services.	.884	.921
85. To facilitate services support staff (nurses, counselors, social workers, psychologists) collaborate with the principal, teachers, and community agencies.	.897	.920
86. Parents and families help identify community supports, voice their concerns, contribute to policies affecting their families, collaborate with service providers, volunteer, and take part in the evaluation process.	.730	.940
Coefficient alpha internal consistency reliability for the School Linked integrated support services.		.940

Academic Dimension Scale

Table 9 contains reliability data for the Academic Dimension Scale. The correlation coefficients between each of the nine items and the total score on the Academic scale ranged

from .603 to .887, thereby verifying that each of the items consistently measured what the total Academic Scale was measuring. The coefficient alpha if item deleted was reduced for fifteen of the sixteen items and further verified that all but item 93, *The curriculum includes school-to-work opportunities for students,* increased the reliability of the Academic Scale. Item 93 had a Cronbach Alpha if item deleted coefficient of .966 which is .001 larger than the overall Cronbach Alpha coefficient of .965 for all sixteen items of the Academic scale.

Table 9

Item-Total Correlation, Coefficient Alpha if Item Deleted, and Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for the Academic Scale

Scale: Academic Dimension	Corrected item-total correlation	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted
87. All students have access to academic core content, i.e. English, mathematics, science, social studies.	.818	.963
88. Teachers are certified and have experience in the core content areas in which they teach.	.804	.963
89. All students have opportunities to learn and/or participate in arts, humanities, practical living, physics education, life skills, and career or vocational education.	.833	.962
90. Curriculum is aligned with Georgia Performance Standards.	.835	.962
91. Teachers use a variety of pedagogical practices such as multidisciplinary teaching, an integrated curriculum approach and/or team teaching.	.866	.962

(table continues)

Table 9 (continued)

Scale: Academic Dimension	Corrected item-total correlation	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted
92. In order to eliminate and close achievement gaps, teachers collaborate, plan and review curriculum to develop and organize units of study.	.726	.964
97. Instruction offers students opportunities for basic skill reinforcement, cognitive development and affective gains.	.634	.946
98. Teachers use multiple evaluations and assessment strategies that are frequent, rigorous, and aligned with curriculum and instruction.	.819	.962
99. Teachers use assessments to analyze student work in order to identify achievement gaps.	.887	.961
100. Teachers assess student performance using traditional education testing and evaluation.	.697	.965
101. Teachers use authentic assessment that includes producing an original product.	.812	.963
102. Scoring devices like rubrics are used to specify student performance expectations.	.728	.964
Coefficient alpha internal consistency reliability for the Academic Scale		.965

Reliability of All Scales

With Cronbach's alpha of .60 or greater being a generally accepted standard for measures assessing group differences (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Thorndike, 1997), the reliability coefficients which ranged from .81 to .97 strongly substantiates the internal consistency of all

nine scales. In fact, the scales far exceed the standards set for minimum levels of reliability (Thorndike, 2005). Subsequent analyses using data from these scales were supported.

In closing, the reliability of all scales supported the work of the expert panel in validating the instrument. Outcomes suggest that issues associated with content and construct validity were addressed and that the researcher created an instrument which could be used in other studies. Between the meetings of the panel, emails, telephone conversations and informal discussions between members of the team, the instrument held up well when used with the statewide population of alternative school principals.

Research Design

Quantitative research strategies were used in the design of the study. The researcher considered the dependent variables or student outcomes of GPA, dropout rate, absentee rate, suspension rate and recidivism rate and nine independent variables included under the domains of efficiency, learning environment and academic performance. In addition, student, teacher and school demographic data were gathered to help describe the population and settings served by the Type II Georgia alternative schools.

Independent Variables

The three domains included nine essential elements or dimensions of effective alternative schools. The Efficiency Domain included the dimensions of: planning, leadership, organizational structure and resources. The Learning Environment Domain included the dimensions of culture, climate and diversity, professional development, parental involvement, community involvement and school linked integrated support services. The Academic Performance Domain included the dimensions of curriculum, instruction and assessment.

The essential elements (the three domains and their nine dimensions) were considered the independent variables for study and appeared in the survey instrument in Part III. An outline of Part III of the instrument appears below:

Efficiency Domain

a. Dimension–Planning

b. Dimension–Leadership

c. Dimension–Organizational Structure and Resources

Learning Environment Domain

a. Dimension–Culture, Climate and Diversity

b. Dimension–Professional Development

c. Dimension–Parental, Student, Family and Community Support

Academic Performance Domain

a. Dimension–Curriculum

b. Dimension–Instruction

c. Dimension–Assessment

Dependent Variables

Alternative school administrators were also asked for their perceptions of alternative school student success. Success addressed student dropout rate, suspension rate, student grade point average (GPA), student absentee rate and recidivism rate. These dependent variables appeared in the survey instrument in Part II. The specific dependent variables are listed as follows:

a. Dropout rate less than 10%

b. Student Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.0 or better

c. Student absentee rate that is less than 7 days per semester

d. Student recidivism rate that is less than 10% (those students returning to alternative setting more than once)

e. Suspension rate is greater than 10%.

Demographic Data

Certain school, student and administrator demographic characteristics known in the literature to possibly be related to student success in alternative schools and essential elements of successful alternative schools were gathered in Part I of the instrument Literature research suggested that alternative school size and class size both can make an impact on effectiveness and student performance. School grade levels were included in the study so differentiation could be made between middle school and high school settings. Certification and highly qualified — or teaching in area of certification — can also influence school effectiveness and student success. For this study the demographic information gathered was used to describe the alternative school settings and population under investigation.

Research Procedures

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

To complete the study, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was applied for and granted. The researcher secured exempt status for the study (see Appendix 3).

Data Collection

Data were collected anonymously using an online survey. The online survey was sent to Georgia's 154 alternative school principals via email using the mailing list garnered from the state department. Using Survey Methods allows the researcher to gather the responses using an Excel worksheet which is automatically generated from this online survey company. No

identifiers are included. Therefore the responses are anonymous. A follow-up email was sent 2 weeks later asking the participants to respond to the survey. In total, 69 alternative school principals completed the survey instrument. Timing of the data collection was a major consideration because it might have influenced administrator perceptions. Administrators who served on the expert panel were consulted in determining the most appropriate time to administer the survey. Those serving on the expert panel were practicing central office and school level administrators and indicated that certain times of the year were busier than others. Typically, the beginning of the school year (August through December) and the end of the school year (May through June) demand undivided attention. Late December through March was deemed the most appropriate time to gather information.

Once the instrument was designed and reviewed and the research was approved by the IRB a current list of full-time building level administrators (principals) and email addresses were obtained from the Director of Alternative Schools in the Georgia Department of Education. There were 154 principals. A letter of support was obtained from the Director of Alternative Schools at the Georgia Department of Education. A short information letter about the researcher and the study accompanied the email and a link was provided to the online survey (see Appendix 3). Respondents were asked to return the survey within a two week period. A follow-up email and letter asking non-respondents to complete the survey was sent after the two week period.

Statistical Analysis

The researcher utilized the statistical analysis procedures of descriptive statistics programs in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 17.0. Responses from the 69 surveys returned were entered into SPSS and all analysis was performed using the SPSS 17.0 version (Levesque, 2007).

The most appropriate statistical method for this study was determined to be a series of one-way ANOVAS using the F-test statistic. The design of this study involved studying five dependent variables and their relationship to each of the independent variables (Ross & Shannon, 2008; Spatz, 2007). In this case, the dependent variables were student success as measured by dropout rate, suspension rate, grade point average (GPA), student absentee rate and student recidivism rate. The independent variables included the nine dimensions of 1) planning and continuous improvement, 2) school leadership, 3) organizational structures and resources, 4) culture, climate and diversity, 5) professional development, 6) parent involvement, 7) community involvement, 8) school-linked integrated support services and 9) supportive academic performance measures.

Descriptive statistics were used with the demographic data gathered on alternative school students and schools. For this study we were primarily interested in the development of the survey instrument and collecting statewide perception data of the student outcome measures and the essential elements of alternative school dimension. The demographic data was gathered to describe students and alternative school settings.

Summary

This chapter provided the details about the methodology used in the study. The study focused on gathering data from Georgia alternative school administrators (principals) that would allow the researcher to identify essential alternative school elements and student success indicators in order to determine if there were significant relationships among these variables. The statewide survey was administered to the entire 154 alternative school principals via Survey Methods, an Internet company used to administer online surveys. Sixty-nine completed surveys were returned. Validity was established using a series of focus groups with the expert panel.

Reliability coefficients were established with the administration of the instrument to statewide alternative school principals.

The next chapter reports the findings of this study. It includes information about the demographic make-up of the students in these schools and respondents perceptions regarding the dimensions and outcomes addressed in the study.

CHAPTER IV. RESULTS

Introduction

Chapter four contains the research findings of this study. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships between Georgia alternative school administrator perceptions of alternative school effectiveness domains and these administrators' perceptions of alternative school student success. The student outcome measures used were attendance, dropout rate, recidivism (returning to alternative setting more than once), GPA and suspension rate. Alternative school effectiveness domains were identified from the literature and correlated with those identified as essential by Swarts (2002). The three school effectiveness domains examined were: efficiency; learning environment and academic performance. Each of these three domains included essential elements of alternative education programs. The efficiency domain included the dimensions of: planning, leadership and organizational structure. The learning environment domain included the dimensions of culture, professional development, parental involvement, community involvement and school linked services. The academic performance domain consisted of the following dimensions: curriculum, instruction and assessment.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze basic demographic information relative to students, teachers and alternative school settings. A series of univariate F tests were used to explore the relationship of each dichotomous student outcome measure with the nine alternative school dimensions which represent the three domains of efficiency, learning environment, and academic performance. These are represented by the following five research questions.

1. Is there a relationship between the student outcome measure of GPA and Planning, Leadership, Organizational Structure (Efficiency Domain), Culture, Professional Development, Parental Involvement, Community Involvement, School Linked Services (Learning Environment Domain), and Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment (Academic Domain) in alternative schools?

2. Is there a relationship between student dropout rate and Planning, Leadership, Organizational Structure (Efficiency Domain), Culture, Professional Development, Parental Involvement, Community Involvement, School Linked Services (Learning Environment Domain), and Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment (Academic Domain) in alternative schools?

3. Is there a relationship between the student outcome measure of absentee rate and Planning, Leadership, Organizational Structure, (Efficiency Domain), Culture, Professional Development, Parental Involvement, Community Involvement, School Linked Services (Learning Environment Domain), and Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment (Academic Domain) in alternative schools?

4. Is there a relationship between the student outcome measure of suspension and Planning, Leadership, Organizational Structure (Efficiency Domain), Culture, Professional Development, Parental Involvement, Community Involvement, School Linked Services (Learning Environment Domain), and Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment (Academic Domain) in alternative schools?

5. Is there a relationship between the student outcome measure of recidivism and Planning, Leadership, Organizational Structure, (Efficiency Domain), Culture, Professional Development, Parental Involvement, Community Involvement, School Linked Services

(Learning Environment Domain), and Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment (Academic Domain) in alternative schools?

Table 10

Alternative School Effectiveness Domains and Dimensions

Efficiency Domain:
1) Planning Dimension
2) Leadership Dimension
3) Organizational Structure Dimension
Learning Environment Domain:
4) Culture Dimension
5) Professional Development Dimension
6) Parental Involvement Dimension
7) Community Involvement Dimension
8) School Linked Services Dimension
Academic Performance Domain:
9) Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

In all, there were forty-five statistical tests performed to determine if there was a relationship between the five student outcome measures and the nine effective elements contained within the three domains of effective alternative schools.

Description of the Population

There are 157 Type II Georgia alternative schools. Type II alternative schools usually do not involve choice and characteristically work with at-risk students (Aron, 2006; Gregg, 1999; Lange & Sletten, 2002; Lehr et al, 2004; Raywid, 1994). Type II alternative programs emphasize discipline. Many times Type II alternative schools represent a remedial emphasis where students are placed as a final step before they are expelled. The aim of these schools is to reform students who have not been successful in traditional settings and usually place them in a separate location. These schools include an involuntary placement for a specified period of time. The atmosphere is highly structured and punitive and the curriculum is limited and the assignments are provided by the home school (Aron, 2006; Lange & Sletten, 2002; Raywid, 1994). Violent or disruptive students are sentenced to these alternative schools (Kochhar-Bryant & Lacey, 2005). Other typical names or examples of such alternative schools are last-chance schools or second-chance schools (Aron, 2006; Cash, 2004).

An online survey, The Essential Elements of Effective Alternative School Survey, described in the previous section, was sent via email to all 157 Georgia alternative school principals. Initially, 55 surveys were returned. Two weeks after the initial surveys were returned a second email was sent to the alternative school administrators. Fourteen additional surveys were returned for a total of 69 responses or 44%. After the second attempt, it was decided that the response rate would not increase and the researcher discontinued attempts to contact the alternative school principals. The following sections report the analyses for the five research questions posed in the study.

Description of Georgia Alternative School Settings

Demographic data were collected from the 69 responding principals concerning Type II alternative school settings, teachers and students. The alternative school principals who responded to the three school setting questions are compiled in Table 11.

Table 11

Description of Type II Alternative School Settings

Total principal respondents: n = 69

Question 1 On average, about how many students in your district were enrolled in your alternative school program? _____
Average reported by 69 principals: 122
Question 2 Place an X by the choice that best represents the teacher/student ratio at your alternative school.
_____ 1 teacher/less than 5 students — Percentage reported by 69 principals: 0%
_____ 1 teacher/less than 10 students — Percentage reported by 69 principals: 12%
_____ 1 teacher/less than 15 students — Percentage reported by 69 principals: 74%
_____ 1 teacher/less than 20 students — Percentage reported by 69 principals: 15%
_____ 1 teacher/greater than 20 students — Percentage reported by 69 principals: 0%
Question 8 During the school year what grades are taught in your alternative school? (Place an X by all that apply).
_____ K–5 Elementary School — Percentage reported by 69 principals: 27.5%
_____ 6–8 Middle School — Percentage reported by 69 principals: 88.5%
_____ 9–12 High School — Percentage reported by 69 principals: 94.2%

(table continues)

Table 11 (continued)

Question 9 During the school year what is/are the most frequently taught grades at your facility?
_____ K-5 Elementary School – Percentage reported by 69 principals: 2.9%
_____ 6-8 Middle School – Percentage reported by 69 principals: 60.9%
_____ 9-12 High School – Percentage reported by 69 principals: 56.5%

From this information, principals of Georgia alternative schools reported that on average they have 122 students assigned to the school during a given school year. Seventy-four percent (74%) of alternative school principals in Georgia stated an average teacher/student ratio of less than 15 students in a classroom. Twelve percent (12%) reported less than 10 students as a teacher/student classroom ration while 15% described a teacher/classroom ratio of more than 20 students. None of the alternative school principals (0%) stated that the teacher/student ratio was more than 20 students or less than 5 students per classroom. Most Georgia alternative schools (94.2%) described their school as serving grades 9–12 while 88.5% served grades 6–8. Additionally, 27.5% of the principals stated they served grades K–5.

Georgia regards middle school and high school grades as the target population for Type II alternative school population. Typically elementary school is not included in Type II alternative school programs. The most frequently taught grades were described by principals as middle school (60.9%) and high school (56.5%) with a very low percentage (2.9%) of elementary grades being taught. Middle school (60.9%) and high school (56.5%) appeared to be virtually the same.

Description of Georgia Alternative School Teachers

Most teachers working in Georgia alternative schools are certified and working in their area(s) of certification.

Table 12

Type II Alternative School Teacher Demographics

Total principal respondents: n = 69

Question 3 Are more than 90% of your teachers certified by the state of Georgia?

_____ Yes – Percentage reported by 69 principals: 98%

_____ No – Percentage reported by 69 principals: 2%

Question 4 Are more than 90% of your teachers Highly Qualified? (Place an X in the appropriate space).

_____ Yes – Percentage reported by 69 principals: 90%

_____ No – Percentage reported by 69 principals: 10%

In Georgia highly qualified means that the teacher is teaching in the area of certification for the majority of the day. Alternative school principals reported that 98% of the teachers working in their school were certified while 2% were not. Alternative school administrators stated that 90% of their teachers were highly qualified. In addition, the principals responded that 90% of the teachers working in their Georgia alternative school were working in their area of expertise and met highly qualified status.

Description of Georgia Alternative School Students

Student demographic data collected included gender, ethnicity and total special education percentages.

Table 13

Type II Alternative School Student Demographics

Total principal respondents (n = 69)

Question 5 What percentage of your students were special educations students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)? (Place an X in the appropriate space).

_____ Less than 10% — Percentage reported by 69 principals: 24%

_____ 10% to 15% — Percentage reported by 69 principals: 51%

_____ 16% to 20% — Percentage reported by 69 principals: 22%

_____ 21% to 25% — Percentage reported by 69 principals: 3%

Question 6 During any given school year what gender has the highest enrollment?

_____ Male — Percentage reported by 69 principals: 85%

_____ Female — Percentage reported by 69 principals: 15%

Question 7 During any given school year rank the average ethnic student population percentage at your alternative school (A rank of 1 equals the highest and 4 equals the lowest).

_____ Black — Percentage reported by 69 principals: Rank = 2 (avg. rank 1.45)

_____ White — Percentage reported by 69 principals: Rank = 1 (avg. rank 1.71)

_____ Hispanic — Percentage reported by 69 principals: Rank = 3 (avg. rank 3.03)

_____ Other — Percentage reported by 69 principals: Rank = 4 (avg. rank 3.73)

Results indicate that 85% of the students served by their alternative school are male and 15% are female. Ethnicity appeared s to be fairly evenly split between Black and Caucasian students with Hispanic and other reported at a significantly lower ranking. Special education students in Georgia comprise 15% of the state's overall population (2009 U.S. Census Bureau). Approximately half (51%) of the alternative school administrators reported 10% to 15% of the

students they served were special education students while 24% of the alternative school principals stated less than 10% of their students were special education. The majority, or 75%, of administrators who responded to this instrument suggested they served special education students at no rate higher than the state average of 15%. White students were ranked as the highest ethnic group to attend alternative schools while Black students were ranked as the second most frequent group. Both groups' average rank (White = 1.71 and Black 1.45) were fairly equal while Hispanic and Other (Hispanic = 3.03 and Other = 3.73) appeared to be less than half the frequency as White and Black students.

Research Questions

Results of the multivariate tests are not being reported because of two delimitations: the small sample size and the number of measured variables. For example, even though a meaningful Eta effect size (.32) was found in a multivariate analysis for the first research question the small sample size and large number of measured variables had a devastating effect on statistical power (.37). The probability of a Type 2 error was .63, a substantial likelihood of failing to reject the null hypothesis when false and should be rejected. Thus, only results from the univariate analyses of variance will be reported separately for each research question.

Alternative School Principals Perception of GPA and the Nine Dimensions of Effective Alternative Schools

The first research question addressed the relationship of students' GPA ($\geq$ 2.00 or < 2.00) and the elements of Planning, Leadership, Organization, (Efficiency Domain) Culture, Professional Development, Parental Involvement, Community Involvement (Learning Environment Domain), and Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment (Academic Performance Domain) as perceived by the Georgia alternative school principals.

Means, standard deviations, and results of the univariate analysis of variance test of the differences on the nine dimensions between the groups (n = 69) reporting student GPA $\geq$ 2.00 (n = 56) and GPA < 2.00 (n = 13) are given in Table 14. Eta and power were also reported. Alternative school principal's perceived a statistically significant relationship between student's with a GPA greater than or equal to a 2.0 ($\geq$ 2.00) and Professional Development (p = .036), Parental Involvement (p = .049) and the Community Involvement (p = .026) dimensions within the Learning Environment Domain. Means on these three scales were significantly different at the .05 level for the GPA less than 2.0 (< 2.00) and the GPA that was equal to or greater than 2.0 ($\geq$ 2.00). The means for the Professional Development, Parental Involvement, and Community Involvement dimensions were significantly higher and more positive, for the group with a GPA equal to or greater than 2.0 than the group with a GPA lower than 2.0. Also the correlations, Eta, which can be interpreted as if it were a Pearson correlation coefficient between the dichotomously scored GPA measure and the three continuous quantitative dimensions ranged from .24 to .27 which should be interpreted as a meaningful effect size. Interestingly these three dimensions comprise 3 of the 5 dimensions of the Learning Environment Domain. The fifth dimension, School Linked Integrated Support Services (p = .057) was not significant with a GPA equal to or greater than a 2.0 ($\geq$ 2.00). The first dimension, school culture was not significant with a GPA of 2.0 (p = .077).

Table 14

Means, Standard Deviations, Univariate Analysis of Variance, Eta, and Power for GPA Groups and the Nine Dimensions of Effective Alternative Schools (n = 69)

	GPA ≥ 2.00		GPA < 2.00					
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	*F*	Eta	*P*	Power
Efficiency Domain:								
Planning Dimension	3.82	.60	3.72	.92	.20	.055	.653	.07
Leadership Dimension	4.08	.58	3.90	1.02	.67	.100	.416	.13
Organization Structure Dimension	4.04	.62	3.92	.63	.40	.077	530	.10
Learning Environment Domain:								
Culture Dimension	3.66	.53	3.33	.76	3.23	.217	.077	.43
Professional Development Dimension	3.71	.73	3.13	1.32	4.60	.255	.036	.56
Parental Involvement Dimension	4.09	.72	3.55	1.31	4.04	.241	.049	.51
Community Involvement Dimension	3.68	.88	3.05	1.33	5.18	.270	.026	.61
School Linked Services Dimension	3.90	.88	3.29	1.42	3.76	.232	.057	.48
Academic Performance Domain:								
Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Dimension	3.93	.89	3.48	1.41	2.01.	.170	.161	.29

These data indicated that alternative school principals report a significant relationship between students who have a GPA of 2.0 or higher and what teachers and administrators know and learn through professional development opportunities and the level of involvement and encouragement alternative schools provide for parents and community stakeholders. None of the other dimensions were significantly related at the .05 level to student GPA.

Alternative school administrators do not perceive a relationship between student GPA and the domain of alternative school efficiency. The dimensions within the efficiency domain, school planning, alternative school leadership and organizational structures did not appear to be related to GPA. For example, collaborative relationships between the alternative school and the central district office did not appear to be related. In addition leadership decisions that are related to the mission, goals or based on data did not appear to be related to student GPA.

Finally, there was no significant relationship between student GPA and the Academic Performance Domain. Alternative school administrators did not perceive a relationship between GPA and curriculum, instruction and assessment. Alignment of the curriculum, teacher pedagogical practices, the use of technology and teacher assessment practices did not appear to be related to student GPA.

Before making the decision to conclude that these five dimensions are not related to the dichotomously scored GPA measure, consideration should be given to other information in Table 14. The average statistical power for these five dimensions is .25 which means that the likelihood or probability of finding a statistically significant relationship when there is a true relationship between these five variables and GPA groups is .20. Further, the means for the GPA $\geq$ 2.00 group is consistently higher on all five of these measures, and corresponding Eta correlations with the dichotomously scored GPA variable are noteworthy. A better decision

might well be to neither accept or reject the null hypothesis for these five scales but rather to suspend judgment (Keppel & Wickens, 2004) and recommend that under such conditions further study should be conducted with a larger sample size with the dichotomously scored variable being redefined so as to get a GPA variable that is either a numerical variable or one that has a dichotomous split of approximately 50% in each group.

Alternative School Principal's Perception of Dropout Rate and the Nine Dimensions of Effective Alternative Schools

The second research question addressed the relationship of students' drop out rate ($\geq$ 10.0% or < 10.0%) and Planning, Leadership, Organizational Structure, (Efficiency Domain) Culture, Professional Development, Parental Involvement, Community Involvement, School Linked Services, (Learning Environment Domain) and Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment (Academic Performance Domain) as perceived by the Georgia alternative school principals.

Means, standard deviations, and results of the univariate analysis of variance test of the differences on the nine dimensions between the groups (n = 69) reporting student dropout rate greater than or equal to 10% ($\geq$ 10.0%; n = 20) or less than 10% (< 10%; n = 49) are given in Table 15. Eta and power were also reported. Alternative school principals perceived a statistically significant relationship at the .05 level between student dropout rate less than 10% (< 10%) and the dimension of school culture (p = .03). The mean for student dropout rate and school culture related indicators was significantly higher and more positive for the student dropout rate of less than 10% than the greater than or equal to 10% ($\geq$ 10.0%; n = 20) dropout rate. Also the correlations Eta, which can be interpreted as if it were a Pearson correlation coefficient between the dichotomously scored dropout rate measure and the school culture dimension was .26 which should be interpreted as a meaningful effect size. None of the

remaining eight dimensions was significantly related to dropout rate of greater than or equal to 10% ($\geq$ 10.0%) or the dropout rate group of less than 10% (< 10%). According to the particular areas questioned in the culture dimension alternative school principals perceived student dropout rate as being low in schools where the organization is focused on student learning, is committed to the vision, mission and goals of the school and ethnic and cultural diversity of faculty, students and the community is honored.

Table 15

Means, Standard Deviations, Univariate Analysis of Variance, Eta, and Power for Dropout Rate Groups and the Nine Dimensions of Effective Alternative Schools (n = 69)

	Drop out ≥ 10.00 %		Drop out < 10.00 %					
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	*F*	Eta	*P*	Power
Efficiency Domain:								
Planning Dimension	3.65	.98	3.83	.50	1.10	.126	.30	.18.
Leadership Dimension	3.87	1.06	4.12	.42	1.91	.17	.17	.28
Organizational Structure Dimension	3.84	.89	4.07	.49	1.81	.16	.18	.26
Learning Environment Domain:								
Culture Dimension	3.35	.82	3.68	.45	4.82	.26	.03	.58
Profession Development Dimension	3.41	1.13	3.68	.75	1.32	.14	.26	.21
Parental Involvement Dimension	3.78	1.12	4.08	.73	1.78	.16	.19	.26
Community Involvement Dimension	3.35	1.16	3.66	.75	1.68	.155	.20	.25
School Linked Services Dimension	3.68	1.21	3.84	.91	.37	.071	.55	.09
Academic Performance Domain:								
Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Dimension	3.66	1.19	3.91	.92	.882	.114	.35	.15

Before making the decision to conclude that these eight dimensions are not related to the dichotomously scored dropout measure, consideration should be given to other information in Table 15. The average statistical power for these eight dimensions is .21 which means that the likelihood or probability of finding a statistically significant relationship when there is a true relationship between these eight student outcome measures and dropout rate groups is .25. Further, the means for the dropout rate less than 10% (< 10%) group is consistently higher on all nine dimensions and corresponding Eta correlations with the dichotomously scored dropout rate measure are noteworthy. A better decision might well be to neither accept or reject the null hypothesis for these five scales but rather to suspend judgment (Keppel & Wickens, 2004) and recommend further study with a larger sample size with the dichotomously scored variable being redefined so as to get a dropout rate measure that is either a numerical variable or one that has a dichotomous split of approximately 50% in each group.

Alternative School Principal's Perception of Student Absentee Rate and the Nine Dimensions of Effective Alternative Schools

The third research question addressed the relationship of student absentee rate of greater than or equal to 7 days per semester ($\geq$ 7 days per semester) or less than 7 days per semester (< 7 days per semester) and Planning, Leadership, Organizational Structure, (Efficiency Domain) Culture, Professional Development, Parental Involvement, Community Involvement, School Linked Services (Learning Environment Domain) and Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment (Academic Performance Domain) as perceived by the Georgia alternative school principals (n = 69).

Means, standard deviations, and results of the univariate analysis of variance test of the differences on the nine scales between the groups reporting student absentee rate of greater than

or equal to 7 days per semester (≥ 7 days per semester) (n = 26) or a student absentee rate of less than 7 days per semester (< 7 days per semester) (n = 43) are given in Table 16. Eta and power were also reported. According to the results, alternative school principal's did not perceive any significant relationship between absentee rates of greater than or equal to 7 days per semester (≥ 7 days per semester) or less than 7 days per semester (< 7 days per semester) and the nine dimensions of Planning, Leadership, Organizational Structure, (Efficiency Domain), Culture, Professional Development, Parental Involvement, Community Involvement, School Linked Services (Learning Environment Domain) and Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment (Academic Performance Domain).

Table 16

Means, Standard Deviations, Univariate Analysis of Variance, Eta, and Power for Student Absentee Rate Groups and the Nine Elements of Effective Alternative Schools

	Absences < 7 days per semester		Absences ≥ 7 days per semester					
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	*F*	Eta	*P*	Power
Efficiency Domain:								
Planning Dimension	3.86	.561	3.67	.823	1.16	.130	.29	.19
Leadership Dimension	4.12	.370	3.92	.986	1.52	.148	.22	.23
Organizational Structure Dimension	4.08	.488	3.88	.818	1.48	.148	.23	.22
Learning Environment Domain:								
Culture Dimension	3.67	.455	3.45	.768	2.10	.173	.15	.30
Professional Development Dimension	3.62	.916	3.57	.828	.04	.032	.84	.06
Parental Involvement Dimension	3.97	1.01	4.05	.544	.15	.045	.70	.07
Community Involvement Dimension	3.57	.994	3.56	.717	.00	.000	.98	.05
School Linked Services Dimension	3.81	.960	3.76	1.09	.05	.032	.83	.06
Academic Performance Domain:								
Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Dimension	3.91	.976	3.73	1.06	.47	.084	.49	.10

Before making the decision to conclude that these nine dimensions are not related to the dichotomously scored absentee measure, consideration should be given to other information in Table 16. The average statistical power for these nine dimensions is .14 which means that the likelihood or probability of finding a statistically significant relationship when there is a true relationship between these nine alternative school dimensions and dropout rate groups is .14. Further, the means for the absentee rate less than 7 days per semester (< 7 days/semester) group is consistently higher on all but one dimension (Parental Involvement Dimension) and corresponding Eta correlations with the dichotomously scored absentee rate student outcome measure are noteworthy. Once again a better decision might well be to neither accept or reject the null hypothesis for these seven scales but rather to suspend judgment (Keppel & Wickens, 2004) and recommend further study with a larger sample size with the dichotomously scored variable being redefined so as to get a absentee rate that is either a numerical variable or one that has a dichotomous split of approximately 50% in each group.

Alternative School Principals Perception of Student Recidivism Rate and the Nine Dimensions of Effective Alternative Schools

For the fourth question recidivism was defined as returning to the alternative school more than once. Alternative school principals (n = 69) were asked to determine if recidivism was greater than or equal to 10% (recidivism $\geq$ 10%) or less than 10% recidivism (< 10%) and if they perceived a relationship between recidivism and Planning, Leadership, Organizational Structure, (Efficiency Domain) Culture, Professional Development, Parental Involvement, Community Involvement, School Linked Services (Learning Environment Domain)and Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment (Academic Performance Domain).

Means, standard deviations, and results of the univariate analysis of variance test of the differences on the nine dimensions between the groups reporting student recidivism rates greater than or equal to 10% (≥ 10%; n = 18) or less than 10% (< 10%; n = 51) are given in Table 17. Eta and power were also reported. Alternative school principals perceived a statistically significant relationship at the .05 level between recidivism rates of less than 10% (< 10%) and the dimensions of school organization (p = .01) and school culture (p = .03). The mean for student recidivism rates of less than 10% (< 10%) and school organization and the mean for student recidivism rates of less than 10% (< 10%) and school culture were significantly higher and more positive. Also, the correlations, Eta, which can be interpreted as if it were a Pearson correlation coefficient between the dichotomously scored recidivism rate and the school organization dimension was .33 This should be interpreted as a meaningful effect size. In addition the correlation, Eta, for student recidivism and the school culture dimension was .27. This should also be considered a meaningful effect size. None of the remaining seven dimensions was significantly related to high and low recidivism rates (≥ 10% or < 10%).

Table 17

Means, Standard Deviations, Univariate Analysis of Variance, Eta, and Power for Student Recidivism Rate and the Nine Elements of Effective Alternative Schools

	Recidivism Rate ≥ 10%		Recidivism Rate < 10%					
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	*F*	Eta	*P*	Power
Efficiency Domain:								
Planning Dimension	3.71	.93	3.80	.582	.25	.063	.62	.08
Leadership Dimension	4.00	.94	4.07	.579	.13	.045	.73	.06
Organizational Structure Dimension	3.66	.85	4.14	.505	7.77	.330	.01	.78
Learning Environment Domain:								
Culture Dimension	3.32	.66	3.70	.555	5.10	.270	.03	.61
Professional Development Dimension	3.55	1.19	3.64	.773	.13	.045	.72	.06
Parental Involvement Dimension	3.88	1.18	4.06	.746	.56	.089	.46	.11
Community Involvement Dimension	3.46	1.09	3.59	.841	.24	.063	.63	.08
School Linked Services Dimension	3.89	1.17	3.77	.967	.18	.055	.63	.07
Academic Performance Domain:								
Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Dimension	3.78	1.24	3.87	.945	.10	.032	.76	.06

Before making the decision to conclude that these seven dimensions are not related to the dichotomously scored recidivism measure, consideration should be given to other information in Table 17. The average statistical power for these seven dimensions is .07 which means that the likelihood or probability of finding a statistically significant relationship when there is a true relationship between these seven alternative school dimensions and dropout rate groups is .25. Further, the means for the recidivism rate less than 10% (< 10%) group is consistently higher on all but one dimension (School Linked Services Dimension) and corresponding Eta correlations with the dichotomously scored recidivism rate student outcome measure are noteworthy. As with other findings a better decision might well be to neither accept or reject the null hypothesis for these seven scales but rather to suspend judgment (Keppel & Wickens, 2004) and recommend further study with a larger sample size with the dichotomously scored variable being redefined so as to get a recidivism rate that is either a numerical variable or one that has a dichotomous split of approximately 50% in each group.

Alternative School Principal's Perception of Student Suspension Rate and the Nine Dimensions of Effective Alternative Schools

For the fifth question suspension was defined as out of school but could return. Alternative school principals (n = 69) were asked to respond to this student outcome measure as a dichotomous yes or no response. Was the student suspension rate at their school greater than or equal to 10% or less than 10% ($\geq$ 10% or < 10%)? Alternative school principals perception of student suspension rate was tested to see if their was a relationship between the two suspension rates and Planning, Leadership and Organizational Structure (Efficiency Domain), Culture, Professional Development Parental Involvement, Community Involvement, School Linked

Services (Learning Environment Domain) and Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment (Academic Performance Domain).

Means, standard deviations, and results of the univariate analysis of variance test of the differences on the nine dimensions between the group reporting student suspension rate of greater than or equal to 10% (≥ 10%; n = 19) or student suspension rate of less than 10% (< 10%; n = 50) are given in Table 18. Eta and power were also reported. According to the results, alternative school principals perceived a statistically significant relationship between a suspension rate of less than 10% and school planning (p = .003), leadership (p = .007), organizational structure (p = .001), and culture (.003). The mean for a suspension rate of less than 10% and school planning, leadership, organization, and culture was significantly higher and more positive for the less than 10% suspension rate group at the .05 level. Also the correlations, Eta, which can be interpreted as a Pearson correlation had meaningful effect sizes: planning (.351), leadership (.319), organization (.396) and culture (.358). The other dimensions of essential alternative school were not significantly related to suspension rates greater than or equal to 10% or less than 10%r (≥ 10% or < 10%).

Table 18

Means, Standard Deviations, Univariate Analysis of Variance, Eta, and Power for Student Suspension Rate and the Nine Dimensions of Effective Alternative Schools

	Suspension Rate ≥ 10%		Suspension Rate < 10%					
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	*F*	Eta	*P*	Power
Efficiency Domain:								
Planning Dimension	3.40	1.01	3.93	.417	9.38	.351	.003	.86
Leadership Dimension	3.70	1.08	4.18	.365	7.62	.319	.007	.78
Organizational Structure Dimension	3.60	.92	4.16	.402	12.52	.396	.001	.94
Learning Environment Domain:								
Culture Dimension	3.24	.89	3.72	.372	9.83	.358	.003	.87
Professional Development Dimension	3.64	.98	3.58	.846	.06	.032	.806	.06
Parental Involvement Dimension	3.91	.76	4.03	.902	.27	.063	.602	.08
Community Involvement Dimension	3.36	.95	3.64	.868	1.38	.141	.245	.21
School Linked Services Dimension	3.89	.89	3.75	1.05	.24	.063	.627	.08
Academic Performance Domain:								
Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Domain	3.80	.86	3.86	1.06	.05	.032	.823	.06

Alternative school principals perceived a relationship between suspension rates less than 10% and all three dimensions of the efficiency domain (planning, leadership and organization structure). The dimension of comprehensive and effective planning includes the development, implementation, and evaluation of a clear purpose, direction and focus on teaching and learning. In particular, the planning dimension should include safety and crisis management plans whereby particular procedures and protocols have been established. Principals at alternative schools saw a statistically significant relationship between student suspension rates that were less than 10% and an alternative school whose leadership is focused on support for teaching and learning, providing organizational direction and vision, having high performance expectations for all members of the school community and creating a learning community. Organizational structure and resources in alternative school settings should be maximized to support high student and staff performance. There should be an emphasis on high-quality instruction to measure student academic gains, behavioral gains and student outcomes such as attendance, grades and graduation rates.

In addition to the 3 dimensions of the efficiency domain, student suspension rate of less than 10% was also related to school culture in the learning domain. Alternative school principals perceived a strong positive relationship between student suspension rates and healthy school culture. School culture was perceived as a climate conducive to performance excellence, small classes, and low student/teacher ratios as well as high quality instruction. A healthy school culture openly supports issues of diversity and models and practices tolerance of cultures and groups different from our own.

Before making the decision to conclude that four dimensions are not related to the dichotomously scored suspension rate, consideration should be given to other information in

Table 18. The average statistical power for these four dimensions is .11 which means that the likelihood or probability of finding a statistically significant relationship when there is a true relationship between these four dimensions and suspension rate groups is .11. Further, the means for the suspension rate less than 10% (< 10%) group is consistently higher on seven of the nine dimensions and corresponding Eta correlations with the dichotomously scored suspension rate measure are noteworthy. A better decision might well be to neither accept or reject the null hypothesis for these four dimensions but rather to suspend judgment (Keppel & Wickens, 2004) and recommend further study with a larger sample size with the dichotomously scored variable being redefined so as to get a suspension rate measure that is either a numerical variable or one that has a dichotomous split of approximately 50% in each group.

Conclusion

This chapter contained the results of Georgia alternative school principal's perceptions of alternative school effectiveness domains and these administrators' perceptions of alternative school student success. The student outcome measures used were attendance, dropout rate, recidivism (returning to alternative setting more than once), GPA and suspension rate. Alternative school effectiveness domains were identified from the literature and correlated with those identified as essential by Swarts (2002). The three school effectiveness domains examined were: efficiency; learning environment; and academic performance. Each of these three domains included essential dimensions of alternative education programs. The efficiency domain included the dimensions of: planning, leadership and organizational structure. The learning environment domain included the following dimensions: culture, climate and diversity, professional development, parental involvement, community involvement and school linked

services. The academic performance domain consisted of the following dimensions: curriculum, instruction and assessment.

Table 19

Significant Relationships of Student Outcome Measures to the Nine Dimensions of Alternative School Effectiveness

	GPA (≥ 2.0)	Dropout Rate (< 10%)	Absentee Rate (< 7 days)	Recidivism Rate (<10%)	Suspension Rate (<10%)
Efficiency Domain:					
1) Planning					**X**
2) Leadership					**X**
3) Organizational Structure				**X**	**X**
Learning Domain:					
4) Culture		**X**		**X**	**X**
5) Professional Development	**X**				
6) Parental Involvement	**X**				
7) Community Involvement	**X**				
8) School Linked Services					
Academic Domain:					
9) Curriculum					

The 69 respondents were principals of Georgia alternative schools. Demographic information concerning the school setting, teacher qualifications and student characteristics was gathered in order to describe the alternative school setting. The primary focus of the study was

to garner insight concerning student outcome measures used by the state and found to be important in the literature concerning at-risk students and alternative schools to determine if their was a relationship between these measures and elements found important to successful alternative schools. Apparently the student outcome measures of GPA and Suspension Rate garnered more statistical relationships to effective alternative school dimensions. Recidivism rate may be a student outcome measure for future use but absentee rate and dropout rate may be measures that should not be used to garner relationships to alternative school effectiveness. School Linked Community Services and Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment yielded were not statistically tied to any student outcome measures.

Chapter five presents a discussion of this study, implications of the findings and provides recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER V. SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine principals' perceptions of the relationships between indicators of alternative school effectiveness and student outcomes in Type II alternative schools in Georgia. Additionally, a valid and reliable instrument was developed to conduct the study, which added to its value and importance. This chapter discusses the development of the instrument and its potential uses. It also discusses the findings related to the study, their implications, and future research that could be conducted.

The Instrument

The instrument's development and individual measures were outlined in chapter III. A rigorous process of development was used. Content validity was established using an expert panel discussions, engaging in conversations with practitioners, and conducting meetings with team members. The panel made several revisions to the instrument to make the questions clearer and more concise. After initial development, the instrument was also revised so that it would take approximately 25 minutes to complete with hopes of getting a high return rate.

A Cronbach alpha of .60 or higher is considered to be a generally accepted standard for measures assessing group differences. The reliability coefficients of the instrument ranged from .81 to .97 which strongly substantiates the internal consistency of all nine scales. The validity of the instrument is supported by the reliability of the nine scales.

This instrument is important in the state in which the study occurred and in other states as well because it provides an evaluative tool that has been tested for validity and reliability to study the issue of principal perception of the value of factors which research has determined related to student success in a variety of areas. These studies could be conducted in Type II environments such as the one examined in this study or in all types of schools in Raywid's typology (1994) in schools and school systems across the nation. Among these settings might be those considered as primarily academic (Type 1) such as charter schools, magnet schools, and thematic schools or in student centered therapeutic and rehabilitative voluntary-type schools (Type III).

For this study, the instrument was distributed and the responses collected, using Survey Methods, an on-line survey company. The researcher was able to check the return rate at any time and automatically resend the survey to those who did not return their survey. It was noted that 27 administrators started the survey but did not complete it. It was also noted that most school system web sites block incoming e-mail if they do not recognize the sender. It is suggested that if this study is duplicated that the on-line survey would be supplemented by a mailed hard copy of the survey in order to increase the return rate. The hard copy should be sent to all the principals who also receive the on-line survey because, due to the anonymous nature of the survey, they would not know who responds to either form of the survey. The principals should be asked to return either the on-line survey or the hard copy.

Summary and Discussion of Demographic Findings

Almost 75% of the sixty-nine respondents reported an average teacher/student ratio of 15 or less students per classroom. The principals surveyed reported their schools to be within these small class best practices. This finding might be the result of the way in which these schools

tend to be structured. In these alternative schools, there usually are several different subjects being facilitated by the same teacher during the same class period. A larger class size might make it difficult for one teacher to provide the needed support, even when using the available technology.

Most Type II alternative schools serve a multitude of grades. The majority of the population of Type II Alternative School comes from grades 6–12 while some will also serve K–5 student populations. When questioned about what grades they served principals were asked to respond to this question:

> **Question 8** During the school year what grades are taught in your alternative school? (Place an X by all that apply).
>
> _____ K–5 Elementary School — Percentage reported by 69 principals: 27.5%
>
> _____ 6–8 Middle School — Percentage reported by 69 principals: 88.5%
>
> _____ 9–12 High School — Percentage reported by 69 principals: 94.2%

Twenty-five percent of the principals reported serving the K–5 population. The inclusion of K–5 students in these schools speaks to the problems that are being manifested in elementary schools. Ninety-four percent of the principals reported serving grades 9–12 and eighty-eight percent reported serving grades 6–8.

Ninety-eight percent of the principals reported that at least 90% of their teachers were certified and working within their area of certification. The 10% that are not reported as being highly qualified are likely teaching many subjects during the school day and even during the same class period. If this is so, then the teacher is not considered highly qualified because they are not teaching the majority of the day in their subject area. Because almost all principals reported teachers were instructing in their area the majority of the day (highly qualified), it does

appear that Type II alternative schools are following best practices in regards to teaching qualifications (highly qualified) and that they have an ample supply of well qualified teachers to choose from. This is rather surprising as there appears to be a national shortage of teachers in mathematics, science, foreign language, and special education. It might be of value to conduct a study to determine why these teachers choose to teach in these schools and what keeps them there. Georgia was at 98.2% Highly Qualified teachers for 2009 (J. Alley, personal communication, January 23, 2010), so the state average and what was reported by the alternative schools appears to be very similar.

Eighty-five percent of the students served were male as opposed to fifteen percent of the students being female. The alternative school gender population does not come close to mirroring the state's student population which is fifty-one percent male and forty-nine percent female. The only information for national statistics found was the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Fast Response Survey System (FRSS) from 2000-01 (Kleiner, et al., 2002. Gender of alternative school students was not reported. In several state studies, for example, in Illinois, Foley and Pang (2006) found 54% males and 36% females while a Pennsylvania study found 89% male and 11% female (Poyrazli, Ferrer-Wreder, Meister, Forthun, Coatsworth, Grahame, 2008). Without other available data it is difficult to determine what the national picture would be, but the researcher believes the results would be similar to the Georgia and Pennsylvania ratios. Further research needs to be collected so that a national picture can be garnered. What appears interesting is that while the gender seems not to fit the state wide gender statistics in Pennsylvania and Georgia, the racial demographics of students attending alternative schools appears to be similar to the racial demographics of students attending regular school in all three states, i.e. Illinois, Pennsylvania and Georgia.

In the present Georgia study the Black and White populations were evenly split. Hispanic and other ethnic groups were lower in their numbers of students being served in the Type II Alternative schools. The alternative schools' racial makeup is closer to the state's racial makeup which is thirty-nine percent Black, forty-eight percent White and thirteen percent Other. In the Foley and Pang (2006) study the ethnic numbers for alternative school populations was similar to the state school populations of 56% White, 20% Black, and 20% Hispanic. Special education students were served at the same rate as the population in the state, which is fifteen percent. Nationally, the special education population is thirteen percent of the total student population. Nationally, the special education population in alternative schools is twelve percent (Kleiner et al., 2002).

Summary of Overall Findings

Table 19 represents a summary of the findings from the survey instrument which examined principals' beliefs about the relationship of the Efficiency, Learning, and Academic Domains and student outcomes in a variety of areas and is reprinted here for the reader's convenience. The table indicates the dimensions within these domains that principals perceive as being most and least important in assuring student success.

Table 19

Significant Relationships of Student Outcome Measures to the Nine Dimensions of Alternative School Effectiveness

	GPA (≥ 2.0)	Dropout Rate (<10%)	Absentee Rate (< 7 days)	Recidivism Rate (<10%)	Suspension Rate (<10%)
Efficiency Domain:					
1) Planning					**X**
2) Leadership					**X**
3) Organizational Structure				**X**	**X**
Learning Domain:					
4) Culture		**X**		**X**	**X**
5) Professional Development	**X**				
6) Parental Involvement	**X**				
7) Community Involvement	**X**				
8) School Linked Services					
Academic Domain:					
9) Curriculum					

Examining the data as a whole, principals appear to agree that the most important domains for student success are the Learning Environment Domain and the Efficiency Domain. The dimension most often found to have a relationship with students outcome measures was school culture. This dimension was noted as being important in reducing dropout rate, recidivism, and suspension rate. The dimensions of professional development, parental

involvement, and community involvement, which are also in the Learning Domain, were identified as being important in raising student GPA.

Organizational structure, within the Efficiency Domain, was perceived as impacting recidivism and suspension rate. Planning, leadership, and organizational structure, also in this domain, were perceived as relating to suspension rate. Principals did not agree with the research that suggests that school-linked services and dimensions within the Academic Domain are related to positive student outcomes.

If one examines the findings related to the questions asked within the survey and the concepts contained within each domain, principals' beliefs about student success are as follows: Principals believe that:

- when professional development is on-going, uses innovative technologies, is supported by all stakeholders, emphasizes high quality academic, social, and behavior management skills, addresses individual needs, and is aligned to the evaluation process for professional improvement opportunities, it will positively affect student GPA.
- when parents are informed about school policies and procedures, involved in decision-making, encouraged to value learning, involved in setting high expectations for their students, given opportunities to volunteer, mentor and or tutor, are given timely information about their student's progress and performance, and their diversity is affirmed by staff and faculty, student GPAs will be positively affected.
- if the community and businesses are used as educational resources, provide advice and school-to-work opportunities, offer student recognition, incentives and scholarships, and the central office encourages community involvement, student GPAs of 2.00 or above can be expected.

- if the alternative school openly supports diversity, offers small class sizes, quality instruction, and expects high academic and behavioral performance from its students, the dropout rate will be minimized.
- if the appropriate resources are provided for students and faculty/staff, academic and behavioral gains are expected and measured, quality instruction takes place, small classes are the norm, and diverse cultures are understood and respected, the recidivism rate will be kept at a minimum.
- when the focus of the alternative school is known and regularly evaluated by all stakeholders, and student academic performance is the center of the focus, the suspension rate will be low.
- when the school leadership helps form the vision and organizational direction, has high expectations for all members of the school community, and creates a learning environment that is conducive for success, the suspension rate will be low.
- when the alternative school provides quality support and resources necessary for student and teacher success, the suspension rate will be low.
- when class sizes are small, a climate of excellence is provided for students and faculty/staff, and issues of diversity are supported, the suspension rate will remain low.

Principals did not believe that

- student linked services were related to any of the elements of student success examined.
- the Academic Domain, which includes the dimensions of curriculum, instruction, and assessment is not influential on any of the student performance outcomes examined.
- leadership or planning has any effect on any of the areas examined except for the suspension rate.

- the organizational structures of the school do not relate to student GPA, drop-out , or absenteeism.
- culture has little effect on GPA or absenteeism.
- professional development, parental involvement and community involvement have no effect on drop-out, absenteeism, or recidivism rates.
- the Academic Domain which includes the dimensions of curriculum, instruction, and assessment was not influential on the student performance outcomes.

Implications related to these findings are discussed in the next section which reports the findings for each research question.

Discussions and Implications

This section presents findings for each of the research questions. It includes information pertaining to how the findings relate to the literature, and implications of them for practice.

The first research question examined if there was a relationship between the student outcome measure of grade point average (GPA) and the Efficiency Domain that is comprised of the dimensions: Planning, Leadership, Organizational Structure; the Learning Environment domain that is comprised of the dimensions: Culture, Climate and Diversity, Professional Development, Parental Involvement, Community Involvement, School Linked Services; and Academic Performance Domain (Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment) that is comprised of the dimensions: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment in the alternative schools as perceived by the alternative school principals. A statistically significant relationship was found between students with a GPA of ≥ 2.00 and Professional Development ($p = .036$), Parental Involvement ($p = .049$), and Community Involvement ($p = .049$) at the .05 level. These three dimensions fall within the Learning Environment Domain. Statistical significant relationships were not found

between students with GPAs ≥ 2.00 and any of the dimensions within the Efficiency or Academic Performance Domains.

Several researchers (Aron, 2006; Dugger & Dugger, 1998; Kochhar-Bryant & Lacey, 2005; Schargel & Smink, 2001) found that a strong professional development program was paramount in providing the alternative school staff with the tools to provide a learning environment that would lead to higher levels of student achievement. The research on the importance of professional development and the relationship of professional development found in this study agree.

Professional development for alternative school educators may help ensure that they are continually honing their skills as their regular school educators are doing. The Department of Education as well as local school systems provides updates on curriculum, pedagogy, instruction, and instructional technology for educators. When these students return to their home schools, their academic achievement levels will affect their test scores and ultimately the Adequate Yearly Progress status of their school. This makes it vitally important that the alternative school educator not be left out of professional development (Greg, 1998; Koetke, 1999).

These factors may explain why principals of these Type II Alternative Schools appear to value professional development as a means of improving student learning. Research indicates that to be effective, this professional development must include curricular matters, instructional matters, cultural education, and social issues (Aron, 2006).

Principals appear to believe that parent involvement is related to student academic success. Research strongly supports this finding. When students know that their parents value education and consider the education of their children as paramount, the majority of the students will place value in their own education (Barlow & Ferdinand, 1992). There are many

documented cases of illiterate parents who valued education pushing and supporting their children into becoming very productive citizens in our country. The involvement could be in the form of parents becoming mentors, chaperoning field trips, serving as guest speakers, and tutoring students. Ultimately, when relationships are built with the school and the parent/student relationship is strong, the faculty and staff have no problem seeking the assistance of parents when it is needed. The school would even receive a more positive response when the parent is asked to assist in changing their child's behavior (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).

Parental involvement may be even more important for students in alternative school settings than in the regular school environment. Aron (2006), Leone and Drake (1991), and Raywid (1994) all stressed the importance of all stakeholders, including parents, being involved in the education of the alternative school student. The 'at-risk' research done by Frymier and Gansneder (1989) also pointed to the effects of parental involvement with students at risk for dropping out. The parental views on education, their ability to help their student, and their own personal experiences were found to affect the student's academic performance.

Principals also perceive the community as an important factor in students' academic success. This finding is also supported in the research. Aronson (1995) found that involving community stakeholders with the alternative schools leads to successful alternative schools. The research done by Aron (2006), James and Jurich (1999), Gregg (1998), and Kochhar-Bryant and Lacey (2005) found that addressing the varied needs of the alternative school students through community stakeholders also contributed to the students becoming more productive community members.

It is somewhat perplexing that principals in this study identified only three factors as being related to student GPA. All of these factors were within the Learning Environment

(Professional Development, Parental Involvement, Community Involvement). One of these, Professional Development, is related to the teaching and learning occurring within the school. The other two, parental involvement and community involvement are more external factors.

The principals did not select school-linked services, which is also an external factor, as being related to student performance. This may indicate that these services are not focused on that aspect of student life or that they are perceived by these principals as ineffective. This issue is dealt with more completely when discussing findings related to research question 3.

The principals did not identify the school's culture, climate, or diversity as related to student GPA. When responding to the next research question — factors that influence student drop-out, principals did value the culture, climate, and diversity. This leads one to ponder whether these principals view students dropping-out as less related to their academic performance (GPA) than to their feelings of belonging and connectedness in the school. This possibility seems to be verified by the findings that principals did not identify any of the dimensions in the Academic Domain, or in the Efficiency Domains, which deals with leadership and planning, as being connected to student GPA.

This finding related to the Academic Domain might be explained by the fact that principals must ensure that the state standards, that are already set, must be the order of the day no matter what he/she feels might be important for their students. Thus, they may believe they have little control over curricular and other academic issues and do not see them as being connected to GPA for that reason.

These findings may also be related to the way in which these schools are structured. Students are in alternative schools for only a brief period of time. Principals may believe that this may limit their capacity to impact GPA. All of these realities may cause principals to

believe that assuring that teachers have strong professional development experiences that strengthen their ability to teach and work with students, and involving parents and community members in helping to foster student learning will help establish a foundation for learning that is more important than factors more closely connected to students' day to day learning within the classroom, and the leadership and planning implemented by the principal.

The second research question examined whether there was a relationship between the student outcome measure of dropout rate and the Efficiency Domain that is comprised of the dimensions: Planning, Leadership, Organizational Structure; the Learning Environment Domain that is comprised of the dimensions: Culture, Climate and Diversity, Professional Development, Parental Involvement, Community Involvement, School Linked Services; and the Academic Performance Domain (Academic Press) that is comprised of the dimensions: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment in the alternative schools as perceived by the alternative school principals. A statistically significant relationship was found between low student dropout rate (<10%) and the dimension of school culture ($p = .03$) that falls within the Learning Environment domain. In other words, respondents reported that when the schools focus on student learning, are committed to the vision, mission and goals of the school, and when ethnic and cultural diversity of faculty and the community are honored, there will more than likely be a low dropout rate. None of the other eight dimensions were significantly related to high or low dropout rates.

This finding, that the culture of the school is important in preventing student drop-outs, is supported in the research. Cash (2004), Schargel and Smink (2001), Smink and Schargel (2004), and Paglin and Fager (1997) found that successful alternative schools had an unambiguous vision and mission. Research suggests many cultural factors are contributors to dropping out. The research points to students not feeling as though they belong, low self-esteem, teachers who

don't care to understand them, disrespect of them and their guardian and culture, and dumbing down the curriculum as contributors to students dropping out (Barr & Parrett, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Pardon, Waxman, & Rivera, 2002). The implications from their research and others are that Type II Alternative Schools should provide a culture that is sensitive to the students and parents they serve, challenge the students to achieve beyond their own expectations, encourage them to keep striving, and is respectful of differences.

The research and the findings from this study agree that attending to culture is very important when attempting to address the dropout rate of Type II Alternative School students. As with the first research question, it brings into question why other dimensions that the research has previously pointed to as important were not found to be significant in this study. Consistent with the findings related to student GPA, these principals do not view, the academic aspects of the school or efficiency—which deals with the leadership, planning, and organization as related to students' dropping-out. Surprisingly, although they viewed three aspects of the Learning Environment (professional development, parental and community involvement) as of importance to student GPA, they did not view these elements as related to student drop-out. Considering why there was a difference, it may be that principals view dropping out as relating more to how students feel and to how they are treated than to their academic success. Given the short periods of time most students are in the school, this may be a valid perception.

The third research question determined whether there was a relationship between the student absentee rate and the Efficiency Domain comprised of the dimensions: Planning, Leadership, Organizational Structure; the Learning Environment Domain comprised of the dimensions: Culture, Climate and Diversity, Professional Development, Parental Involvement, School Linked Services; and the Academic Performance Domain, comprised of the dimensions:

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment in the alternative schools as perceived by the alternative school principals. There were no statistically significant relationships between the student absentee rate and any of the nine dimensions that comprise the domains of Efficiency, Learning Environment, and Academic Performance. Once again, it is perplexing that the principals found no relationship between any of the dimensions and student absenteeism. This is particularly problematic because truancy was found to be a great indicator of students becoming at-risk for dropping out of school (Walker, Ramsey & Gresham, 2004). We as a country have placed a great deal of emphasis on attendance by enacting mandatory attendance laws, hiring truant officers, and even denying credit to a student who does not meet the attendance requirements. But with the advent of distance learning and some states moving from a standard that measures daily attendance to one that measures hours or discounts attendance altogether and the performance of the students is all that counts, attendance may not be as important as once thought. If the student can master the curriculum by attending enough to prove his/her mastery through assessments, then attendance is not very important. Perhaps principals are using some form of performance assessment that makes attendance less important than research indicates.

Another possibility is that these principals have come to the conclusion that when the students come to school, they must ensure that they come to a supportive culture and environment, but that they have minimum control over their attendance and can do little to change it within their environment. They also did not indicate that any of the external factors of community involvement or school-linked services could assist in this area. There may be a number of reasons for this. Transportation problems, problematic family issues (absent parent, babysitting younger siblings, parents who refuse to send the child), and community issues

(gangs, poverty, disregard of the importance of education) are possible contributors to students not attending school regularly (Kominski, Jamieson & Martinez, 2001).

Some students enter the alternative school with poor attendance records that have already placed that student in a loss of credit status. If the student knows that have already lost credit, then there is no incentive for school attendance. But if the alternative school is structured so that a student can take advantage of credit recovery opportunities, then the student might increase their attendance. The fact that principals do not view the ways in which they are delivering and assessing curriculum outcomes and the way they are structuring the organization of the school as having a relationship to students coming to school may indicate a lack of knowledge about this approach to teaching and learning. One reason for this finding may also be that there is often not enough time to produce a care plan for students, which might impact attendance, let alone have enough time to implement it, due to the short stay at the alternative schools.

In addition, school-linked services, such as the juvenile justice system, do not work with 17 year olds and above on certain issues that brought that age group to the alternative school. Even the Department of Children Services has case load problems that create delays in response times.

Likewise, the court systems have become inundated with far more serious crimes than truancy, even when there is a strong truancy prevention program. Students and parents alike know that before some truancy cases reach court that school might be over for the year or the students' age surpasses the mandatory school attendance age.

The fourth research question examined if there was a perceived relationship between the student outcome measure of suspension rate and the Efficiency Domain, comprised of the dimensions: Planning, Leadership, Organizational Structure; the Learning Environment Domain

that is comprised of the dimensions: Culture, Climate and Diversity, Professional Development, Community Involvement, School Linked Services and the Academic Performance Domain (Academic Press) that is comprised of the dimensions: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment in the alternative school as perceived by the alternative school principal. A statistically significant relationship was found between a low suspension rate (< 10%) and the dimensions of school planning ($p = .003$), leadership ($p = .007$), and organizational structure ($p = .001$) which comprises the entire Efficiency domain. The school planning dimension includes the development, implementation, and evaluation of a clear purpose, direction and focus on teaching and learning. Safety and crisis management plans are also included in the planning dimension (Barrett, 2003; Wehlage, 1991).

Research supports these relationships. When students feel secure, that the institution has their best interest as a priority, and consider the school as a safe haven, they will desire to produce teacher pleasing behaviors that reduce suspension rates (Sloat, Audas, & Willms, 2007). Schools, on the other hand, must first understand their students and use that knowledge to plan a learning environment that is conducive to students being successful. This is consistent with the finding for research question 2 where principals indicated that having a mission and a vision supports students and prevents drop outs.

The leadership dimension includes leadership not only from the principal but also from the teachers, community, and parents. The leadership should reinforce the mission, goals, and rules of the setting. Rituals and routines should also be understood by those in leadership. Ultimately, leadership should also come from within the student body themselves in the form of self correction and peer influence thereby ultimately reducing the suspension rate.

The student performance measure of suspension rate is the only place where the dimension of leadership was found to have a significant relationship. This can partially be explained by acknowledging that the principal is the only person who is authorized to suspend students. This relationship can further be explained by understanding that if principals are able to garner support from student, parent, and other community leadership to monitor and change the behaviors of the students so that they will not be suspended. Finally, principals appear to understand that the alternative school exists to change behaviors through interventions that traditional schools might not use. Suspensions would be more of the same, and might be a sign of failure by the leadership. Principals also appear to know that multiple suspensions could be a contributor to the dropout rate (Barr & Parrett, 2003; Payne, 1996).

Suspensions are easier to control than dropout rate. As previously stated, the principal has sole responsibility in suspending students. The dropout rate could be caused by outside forces for which the principal has no control. An empowered principal, student body, and community can certainly maintain a low suspension rate.

The organizational structure dimension emphasizes supporting exemplary teacher and student performance. Therefore all the tools and resources that are needed for teachers to teach and students to learn should be in place. The alternative school student has already been removed from their original home school and may be feeling as though they do not matter. Teachers too, may feel alienated if they did not choose to teach in an alternative school setting. If the students and teachers are shown that they are valued through being supplied with the necessary tools to succeed, they will more than likely perform in an exemplary manner. Students and teachers will more than likely work together to reduce the suspension rate (Barr & Parrett,

2001). The research and the results of this study agree on the need of implementing the entire Efficiency domain when attempting to reduce the suspension rate.

A relationship was also noted between low student suspension rate (<10%) and school culture ($p = .003$), one dimension of the Learning Environment domain as defined by small class size, high quality instruction, support of diversity, and tolerance of cultures that are different than their own. The at-risk literature speaks of schools being a contributor to the dropout rate by producing a culture that is detrimental to success. The detrimental culture includes suspending rather than working with students on correcting their behavior. It also includes not caring about cultural differences, filling classes beyond maximum class size, and not teaching the curriculum that is standard for all students. It is noteworthy that teachers must teach using methods that were not the same as those that were used in the school that the students were removed from unless those methods worked. The research and the findings from this study agree about the importance of not discounting school culture when attempting to reduce suspension rates.

The fifth research question asked if there was a relationship between the student outcome measure of recidivism rate and the Efficiency domain that is comprised of the dimensions: Planning, Leadership, Organizational Structure; the Learning Environment domain that is comprised of the dimensions: Culture, Climate and Diversity, Professional Development, Parental Involvement, Community Involvement, School Linked Services; and the Academic Performance domain (Academic Press) that is comprised of the dimensions: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment in the alternative school as perceived by the alternative school principal. A statistically significant relationship was found between a low recidivism rate (< 10%) and the dimensions of school organizational structure ($p = .01$) of the Efficiency domain and school culture ($p = .03$) of the Learning Environment Domain. This indicates that

respondents perceived low student recidivism to be related to a focus on student learning, and a commitment to vision, mission and goals of the school and ethnic and cultural diversity of faculty, students and the community are honored. One might believe that if the organizational structure and the learning environment were conducive to students in the alternative school, then there would be more recidivism. However, in the Type II Alternative School, the purpose is to remediate the behavior that placed them in the school in the first place. Ultimately, when the student leaves the Type II Alternative School, they should be prepared to return to the traditional school with the necessary skills to prevent being sent back to the alternative school. Those necessary skills would include: anger management, study skills, peer interaction, respect for self and others, and resource management. The research and the survey results agree that the dimensions of Organizational Structure and Learning Environment are important in reducing the recidivism rate.

Recommendations for Further Study

The following recommendations for further study are based on the findings and discussion of this study.

1. The instrument needs to be revised to reflect actual numerical responses rather than dichotomous student out measures. Since this is the first time that the instrument has been used, replicating the study, and increasing the response rate could assist in increasing power. Power could also be increased by reducing the number of questions on the survey to those questions that addressed the dimensions that were found to have a significant relationship with the student outcome measures.

2. Replication of the study nationally with Type II Alternative schools would help determine if the findings are the same in the nation, regions or states. The author was not able to

find an instrument which measured alternative school effectiveness that had been tested for validity and reliability; therefore, a national study can produce national standards.

3. Further research needs to be done to determine why principals did not select many of the items that research identifies as related to student success. They placed limited emphasis upon their own leadership or the academic aspects of schooling. Focus groups, individual interviews and similar approaches may help to explain these findings. If, in fact principals do not believe that they can impact student learning through their leadership and the way in which they plan and structure the school and through the curriculum and assessment which occurs within the schools, this may result in a lack of attention to these factors, which could negatively affect student learning. If the findings are more related to the way in which the schools are structured, which places students in the schools for a short period of time, these principals may be perceiving the situation correctly.

4. Assessments should be conducted to determine the level of success of these students when they leave the schools. Without knowing whether schools are successful in assuring student success when they leave these schools, one cannot determine whether the findings related to these principals' perceptions are effective student success. For example, if there is a very high percent of students who succeed once they leave these schools, then the perceptions of these principals as to what makes a difference in student success may be valid. If the students are not successful than State Department of Education personnel and school superintendents may want to have principals engage in professional development experiences that will enable them to put a greater focus on issues related to factors under their control which may foster student success.

5. Further research into whether different factors are indeed more important in different types of schools or whether they are and should be important in all types of alternative schools needs to be conducted.

6. Research into whether principals' perceptions of the importance of these factors are related to the success of their students is a vital part of the research that needs to be conducted. This information would add in determining how to prepare principals to be successful in alternative school settings.

7. It may be of value to replicate the study to determine teachers' beliefs about the relationship of the domains examined here and student outcomes. Such a study would determine whether there are similarities between what principals and teachers believe about factors that will enhance student success. Teachers' attitudes and beliefs impact student success. Knowing what they believe may enhance the capacity of the State Department and school officials in enhancing student success.

Concluding Statement

The findings from this study discovered that principals in Type II alternative schools believe that culture is the most important dimension in student success. It was noted to have a statistically significant relationship with the student outcome measures of dropout rate, recidivism and suspension rate. Edgar Schein defines organizational culture as

> A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 12)

In effective alternative schools, teachers and students alike feel as though they are in small learning communities where a sense of community and personal caring exists (Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Hord, 1997; Morley, 1991; Raywid, 2006; Wagner, 2000).

Principals did not view many of the dimensions which research indicates are important in student success, as having such a relationship. Whether these beliefs are indicative of principals in these types of schools throughout the region or nation is unknown.

There is no data to determine whether these schools are being successful in preventing these students from dropping out of school and assisting them in being successful when they return to a regular school environment. Without such knowledge it is not possible to determine the true meaning of these findings.

Further research should be conducted to determine if principals' beliefs are related to school and student success. It is hoped that this study will foster such research and help to enhance principal competence and student success in alternative school settings in Georgia and throughout the nation.

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APPENDIX 1

Alternative School Survey

***ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS SURVEY

Directions: This instrument is designed to assess the effectiveness of our alternative schools that are punitive yet therapeutic in nature. The first part of the assessment addresses research-based student accountability measures. The second part addresses research-based standards for alternative schools.

Part I. SCHOOL, FACULTY AND STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS.

1. **On average, about how many students in your district were enrolled in your Alternative program?** _____

2. **Place an X by the choice that best represents the teacher/student ratio at your alternative school.**

   _____ 1 teacher/less than 5 students

   _____ 1 teacher/less than 10 students

   _____ 1 teacher/less than 15 students

   _____ 1 teacher/less than 20 students

   _____ 1 teacher/greater than 20 students

3. **Are more than 90% of your teachers certified by the State of Georgia? (Place an X in the appropriate space).**

   _____ **YES** _____ **NO**

4. **Are more than 90% of your teachers Highly Qualified? (Place an X in the appropriate space).**

   _____ **YES** _____ **NO**

5. **What percentage of your students were special education students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP)? (Place an X in the appropriate space).**

   _____ Less than 10%

   _____ 10% to 15%

   _____ 16% to 20%

   _____ 21% to 25%

6. During any given school year what gender has the highest enrollment?

_____ Male

_____ Female

7. During any given school year rank the average ethnic student population percentage at your alternative school. (A rank of 1 equals the highest and 4 equals the lowest).

_____ BLACK

_____ WHITE

_____ HISPANIC

_____ OTHER

8. During the school year what grades are taught in your alternative school? (Place an X by all that apply)

_____ K-5 Elementary School

_____ 6-8 Middle School

_____ 9-12 High School

9. During the school year what is/are the most frequently taught grades at your facility?

_____ K-5 Elementary School

_____ 6-8 Middle School

_____ 9-12 High School

Part II. ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL STUDENT SUCCESS FACTORS

Directions: Please place an X for each of the student success factors at your alternative school.

10. The dropout rate at your alternative school is lower than 10%.

_____ YES _____ NO

11. The average student GPA at your alternative school is 2.0 or greater.

_____ YES _____ NO

12. The average absences per student at your alternative school are less than 7 days per semester.

_____ YES _____ NO

13. Recidivism rate at your alternative school is less than 10% (i.e. those students returning to the alternative setting more than once).

_____ YES _____ NO

14. Student suspension rate at your alternative school is greater than 10%.

_____ YES _____ NO

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

Procedures:

PERFORMANCE STANDARD INDICATORS: Rate the degree to which indicators are used by using a rating of level of (0-not evident) through (5-high) and using reliable sources of evidence (observation, discussion, documents, surveys, strategic plans, data, policy, etc.). The answers you supply are to represent your alternative school.

Please indicate your choice by placing an X in the square that best represents your perception of your school.		**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
EFFICIENCY DOMAIN: PLANNING						
15.	A collaborative process is used to address the question of who is responsible for the alternative school.					
16.	At the alternative school decisions are made according to board policy.					
17.	Staff number, position types and other financial decisions are based on student enrollment and need.					
18.	The facility is appropriate for alternative programs.					
19.	Essential district plans are used at the alternative school.					
20.	A copy of the school improvement plan is available to all stakeholders.					
21.	School operational procedures are appropriate for alternative education.					
22.	Staff and students have appropriate resources.					
23.	Staff and students have up-to-date technology such as computers, internet access, academic software and a student management system.					

Please indicate your choice by placing an X in the square that best represents your perception of your school.		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
EFFICIENCY DOMAIN: LEADERSHIP						
24.	Leadership adheres to State statues, regulations and board policies.					
25.	Building level leadership dispositions include perceptive insight in decision making.					
26.	Leadership uses school data to systematically reduce barriers to school performance.					
27.	Communication is enhanced processes that exist between leadership and staff.					
28.	Leadership and faculty select and evaluate materials, equipment and supplies with high academic expectations for students.					
29.	Leadership uses developmental supervision to improve teachers' performance.					
30.	Leadership provides staff and students with behavior management practices needed to ensure that he school is safe and orderly.					
EFFICIENCY DOMAIN: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND RESOURCES						
31.	Universal classroom management and individually targeted and intensive behavior management practices are used.					
32.	Rituals and routines are established in order to improve classroom management.					
33.	Classroom behavior management includes communication skills such as effective "sending" and "receiving."					
34.	Continuous classroom monitoring includes walking around the classroom, frequent scanning of students and their work and reinforcement and motivating comments.					
35.	Behavior management at the alternative school emphasizes positive rather than punitive actions.					
36.	Behavior management tools include internal school and external community support from counselors, social workers and psychologists.					
37.	The alternative school has highly structured classrooms.					
38.	The alternative school practices individualized behavioral interventions.					

Please indicate your choice by placing an X in the square that best represents your perception of your school.		**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
LEARNING ENVIRONMENT DOMAIN: CULTURE, CLIMATE AND DIVERSITY						
39.	The definition and purpose of an alternative school is based on student academic and non-academic needs.					
40.	The mission statement, i.e. broad, general statement about the commitment and direction of the alternative school exists.					
41.	Our alternative school has both short and long-term goals that are general and yet specific enough to include all stakeholders' needs.					
42.	Measurable objectives are used in the planning phase of the alternative program.					
43.	Measurable objectives are used in the implementation phase of the alternative program.					
44.	Measurable objectives were used in the evaluation phase of the alternative program.					
45.	Staff has a shared vision that with appropriate individual support all Students can learn at high levels.					
46.	The selection of alternative school rules is made and agreed to by all staff and students.					
47.	Ceremonies for grade advancement, graduation, and other significant student accomplishments are scheduled frequently.					
48.	Leadership, teachers, and non-teaching staff encourage a positive learning environment.					
49.	Curriculum consists of varying examples of cultures and emphasizes material and resource diversity that are distributed equitably.					
50.	Administrators, teachers and support staff are given professional development opportunities to explore their own ethnic and cultural identities.					
51.	Administrators, teachers and support staff are given professional development opportunities to explore their attitudes toward ethno-cultural groups and the dynamics of privilege and economic oppression.					
52.	Teachers possess curriculum knowledge about the histories and contributions of various ethno-cultural groups and the relationships among language, culture and learning.					
53.	Teachers gain knowledge about the communities and families represented in their classrooms.					
54.	To insure educational equity community agencies, service groups, law enforcement, business and industry and other external support systems help the alternative school meet the diverse needs of families and students.					

Please indicate your choice by placing an X in the square that best represents your perception of your school.		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
LEARNING ENVIRONMENT DOMAIN: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT						
55.	School boards, superintendents, principals, etc. recognize the need for and encourage alternative school faculty to receive professional development from internal and community resources.					
56.	Leadership bridges the gap between theory and practice by creating a dialogue among staff to explore change and reinforce growth.					
57.	Long-term professional growth plans are established through a needs assessment in the areas of content, support and individual staff needs.					
58.	Professional development is on-going and focused on continuous learning opportunities.					
59.	New technologies are used for innovative professional development.					
60.	Staff are encouraged and given opportunities to explore and share newly acquired knowledge and skills with their peers via regularly scheduled time from the classroom and/or other compensatory measures.					
61.	School faculty and administration are trained to analyze and interpret student academic and non-academic data and align the results with alternative school and student performance goals.					
62.	Professional development emphasizes high quality academic, social, and behavior management skills for students.					
63.	The staff evaluation process is aligned with professional improvement opportunities.					
LEARNING ENVIRONMENT DOMAIN: PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT						
64.	Leadership understands the importance of communication between home and the alternative school.					
65.	Leadership affirms parent/guardian diversity when establishing a parent action plan (i.e., education, work schedules, siblings).					
66.	Parents are given opportunities to become informed about school policies and programs.					
67.	Parents are included as advisors or council members in the school decision-making process.					
68.	Parents are encouraged to have their voice heard by seeking administrator and/or teacher support when student outcomes decrease, grades decline, or behavior escalates.					

Please indicate your choice by placing an X in the square that best represents your perception of your school.		**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
69.	Parents are encouraged to value learning to be involved in learning and to set high expectations for their children.					
70.	Parents are given opportunities to volunteer as mentors, tutors, chaperons, etc.					
71.	Parents are given timely information about their student's progress and performance.					
LEARNING ENVIRONMENT DOMAIN: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT						
72.	School leadership has developed a collaborative process with community and business partners that is based on trust and respect, open communication, and shared responsibility.					
73.	Community partnerships are designed to enrich the school learning environment by including the community as a source of educational resources.					
74.	Community partnerships provide a safety net for schools, families, and students by strengthening physical, psychological, and social support systems.					
75.	Partnerships exist with community service organizations.					
76.	Business partnerships include industries as well as "white collar" professions and "trades".					
77.	School leadership has taken the initiative to establish partnerships with community agencies, organizations, and businesses.					
78.	Business partnerships offer career preparation and school-to-work support like career advice, as well as opportunities, work visitations, job shadowing and internships.					
79.	At the alternative school, business and community partners act as volunteers, mentors, tutors and advisors to students.					
80.	Business and community partnerships offer scholarships, student recognition, sponsorships, and other incentives to students and school staff.					
LEARNING ENVIRONMENT DOMAIN: SCHOOL LINKED INTEGRATED SUPPORT SERVICES						
81.	The school board and superintendent encourage maintaining school/community support services.					
82.	The alternative school principal and/or faculty are strong links between the school and community.					
83.	Services provided by community agencies are an integral part of the educational process.					

Please indicate your choice by placing an X in the square that best represents your perception of your school.		**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
84.	Teachers are instrumental in identifying students with health and social needs, sharing information, and assisting with the delivery of agency services.					
85.	To facilitate services, support staff (nurses, counselors, social workers, psychologists) collaborates with the principals, teachers, and community agencies.					
86.	Parents and families help identify community supports, voice their concerns, contribute to policies affecting their families, collaborate with service providers, volunteer, and take part in the evaluation process.					

***Please contact the author to obtain permission to use this instrument.

Please indicate your choice by placing an X in the square that best represents your perception of your school.		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE DOMAIN: CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT						
87.	All students have access to academic core content i.e. English, mathematics, science, social studies.					
88.	Teachers are certified and have experience in the core content areas in which they teach.					
89.	All students have opportunities to learn and/or participate in arts, humanities, practical living, physical education, life skills, social skills, and career or vocational education.					
90.	Curriculum is aligned with Georgia Performance Standards.					
91.	Teachers use a variety of pedagogical practices such as multidisciplinary teaching, an integrated curriculum approach and/or team-teaching.					
92.	In order to eliminate and close achievement gaps, teachers collaborate, plan and review curriculum to develop and organize units of study.					
93.	The curriculum includes school-to-work opportunities for students.					
94.	Curriculum selection and use is not limited to print sources.					
95.	All students have access to instructional technology.					
96.	Consideration is given to individual student learning styles.					
97.	Instruction offers students opportunities for basic skill reinforcement, cognitive development and affective gains.					
98.	Teachers use multiple evaluations and assessment strategies that are frequent, rigorous, and aligned curriculum and instruction.					
99.	Teachers use assessments to analyze student work in order to identify achievement gaps.					
100.	Teachers assess student performance using traditional education testing and evaluation.					
101.	Teachers use authentic assessment that includes producing an original product.					
102.	Scoring devices like rubrics are used to specify student performance expectations.					

APPENDIX 2

Permission Letter to Use Instrument

To Whom It May Concern,

Eddie V. Obleton, Chief Student Services Officer

539 Brown Avenue

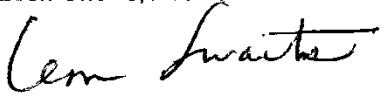
Columbus, Georgia 31906

Muscogee County School District

The above graduate has my permission to use the content of my book, Alternative Education - A Guide To School/Program Improvement as a research tool for his dissertation.

Additionally, the instrument used and detailed as "checklist" on pages 145 to 156 may also be amended and used for evaluation purposes.

Leon Swarts, Author



APPENDIX 3

Information Letter

Auburn University

Auburn University, Alabama 36849-5221

Educational Foundations
(334) 844-4460
Leadership and Technology
844-3072
4036 Haley Center

Telephone:

Fax: (334)

INFORMATION LETTER

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GEORGIA ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS AS PERCEIVED BY THE ADMINISTRATORS

You are invited to participate in a research study to determine the effectiveness of the punitive type alternative school in the state of Georgia. This study is being conducted by Mr. Eddie Obleton and Dr. Francis K. Kochan in the Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership and Technology at Auburn University. We hope to learn more about alternative school program elements which might have positive or negative influences on the student accountability measures of grade point average, absentee rate, recidivism rate, dropout rate and suspension rate. You were selected as a possible participant because you are the alternative school administrator.

If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to read this email information letter and access the survey from the link contained in this letter. Your total time commitment will be approximately 20 minutes.

No risks or discomforts are anticipated with participation in this study. It is an anonymous survey. No Georgia school system or Georgia State Department members will be involved in any way.

There will be no compensation for participating. Additionally, there is no cost for your participation in the study.

If you change your mind about participating, you can withdraw at any time during the study. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you choose to withdraw, your data can be withdrawn as long as it is identifiable. Your decision about whether or not to participate or to stop participating will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University, the Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership and Technology or your respective institution, school, or department.

Any data obtained in connection with this study will remain anonymous. Information collected through your participation may be used to fulfill an educational requirement, published in a professional journal, and/or presented at a professional meeting.

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If you have questions about this study, please email me at obleton@aol.com.

If you have questions about rights as a research participant, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Human Subjects Research or the Institutional Review board by phone (334) 844-5966 or e-mail at hsubjec@auburn.edu or IRBChair@auburn.edu.

HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE IF YOU WANT TO PARTICPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT. IF YOU DECIDE TO PARTICIPATE, THE DATA YOU PROVIDE WILL SERVE AS YOUR AGREEMENT TO DO SO. THIS LETTER IS YOURS TO KEEP.

The provided link to the on-line survey is:
http://www.surveymethods.com/EndUser.aspx?D9EF9189D9998B8CDA93

Eddie V. Obleton 10-3-08
Investigator's signature Date

Eddie V. Obleton
Printed Name

Frances K Kochan 10-7-08
Co-Investigator Date

Frances K Kochan
Printed Name

The Auburn University
Institutional Review Board
has approved this document for use
from 8/25/08 to 8/24/09.
Protocol # 08-TS EX0808