



**VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**2003 Annual Report**

# **REGIONAL ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROJECTS**

**PRESENTED TO**

**THE HONORABLE MARK R. WARNER  
GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA  
AND  
MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**December 1, 2003**

## Preface

Section 22.1-209.1:2 of the *Code of Virginia* requires that a report be provided annually by the Board of Education to the Governor and the General Assembly on the effectiveness of the Regional Alternative Education Projects.

This report was prepared by staff at the Virginia Department of Education and approved by the Virginia Board of Education on November 19, 2003. The staff member assigned to the preparation of the report was Diane L. Jay, specialist, Office of Program Administration and Accountability, Division of Instruction, Virginia Department of Education, P. O. Box 2120, Richmond, Virginia 23218-2120. Questions concerning the report should be directed to Ms. Jay at (804) 225-2905 or by e-mail at [djay@mail.vak12ed.edu](mailto:djay@mail.vak12ed.edu).

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## Executive Summary

The regional alternative education projects were established by the General Assembly in 1993-94 with the intent to involve two or more school divisions working in collaboration to establish options for disruptive students. To complete the 2003 annual report, information was collected and analyzed from the 30 projects based on 2002-03 data. Findings are summarized below:

- Each center has a different approach to providing alternative school settings for students requiring such placement.
- A low pupil-to-teacher ratio is maintained in over 96 percent of the projects.
- Centers offer a wide variety of options for parental involvement but experience the same frustrations that many schools do with levels of parental participation.
- Community involvement is less than optimal in most of the projects.
- Participation in staff development occurs more often in the student service areas than it does in the academic areas and that level of participation in the student service area varies greatly from project to project.
- Staff comments indicated the need to focus on program evaluation in subsequent years.

In their tenth year of operation, the regional alternative education projects continue to provide a positive alternative learning environment for students who have a pending violation of a school board policy, have been expelled or long-term suspended, or who are returning from a juvenile correctional center. In some cases the projects offer students an avenue to an education that would be denied under normal circumstances. The additional state resources provided through this program have helped many students continue their formal education, return to the school of origin, and graduate from high school or earn a General Educational Development (GED) certificate.

## Chapter One

### Purpose

The purpose of the regional alternative education projects is to involve two or more school divisions working in collaboration to establish options for disruptive students who no longer have access to traditional school programs or who are returning from juvenile correctional centers.

### Background

Section 22.1-209.1:2 of the *Code of Virginia* requires that a report be provided annually by the Board of Education to the Governor and the General Assembly on the effectiveness of the Regional Alternative Education Projects.

The 1993 General Assembly approved legislation that directed the Board of Education to establish and implement no more than four regional alternative pilot projects. The 1994 General Assembly continued support for the biennium and authorized funds for new projects. The Department of Education also made available funds from federal sources for additional projects.

During the summer of 1996, school divisions that were not involved in a regional program were contacted regarding interest in participating in a regional project. The intent was to ensure that all school divisions had access to a regional program. As a result, all school divisions who were interested in joining a regional program were provided that opportunity.

By 1996-97, there were 29 regional programs statewide. A formula was approved that year by the Board of Education based on staffing patterns and the composite index of local ability-to-pay to determine the level of continuation funding for each regional project. While local school boards contributed in-kind services and funds to support the alternative projects, the law required no local matching of funds.

The 29 programs remained in operation until the General Assembly authorized the establishment of one new regional program in 2000-2001. A listing of the 30 projects involving 116 school divisions for 2002-2003 is found in Appendix A. At the end of 2002-2003 one regional program dissolved. Two of the three school divisions in that program continue to offer alternative programs locally; the third school division joined one of the other operating regional programs.

## Establishment of Sites and State Appropriations

The following information presents the growth of the sites and the state appropriations since the first four regional alternative education projects were established in 1993-1994.

| Year      | No. of Sites | Funding       |
|-----------|--------------|---------------|
| 1993-1994 | 4 sites      | \$1,200,000   |
| 1994-1995 | 13 sites     | *\$1,200,000  |
| 1995-1996 | 19 sites     | *\$1,200,000  |
| 1996-1997 | 29 sites     | **\$4,142,000 |
| 1997-1998 | 29 sites     | \$3,716,652   |
| 1998-1999 | 29 sites     | \$4,431,089   |
| 1999-2000 | 29 sites     | \$4,484,123   |
| 2000-2001 | 30 sites     | \$5,766,626   |
| 2001-2002 | 30 sites     | \$5,386,590   |
| 2002-2003 | 30 sites     | \$5,386,590   |
| 2003-2004 | 29 sites     | \$5,210,891   |

\*Federal funds supplemented the state appropriation.

\*\*First year state funding formula was applied.

## Chapter Two

### Targeted Students

Each regional alternative education project involves two or more school divisions working in collaboration to establish options for students who no longer have access to traditional school programs or are returning from juvenile correctional centers. Specifically targeted are students who:

- Have a pending violation of a school board policy;
- Have been expelled or long-term suspended; or
- Have been released from a juvenile correctional center and identified by the Department of Correctional Education and the program's local division superintendent to be in need of an alternative program.

### Program Objectives

The programs have a common set of objectives. These objectives include the following:

- Conducting annual assessment of student placement;
- Providing an intensive, accelerated instructional program, with high standards for academic achievement and student behavior;
- Ensuring a low pupil-teacher ratio (average ratio is one teacher for every ten students);
- Facilitating collaborative efforts with parents and the community;
- Including program evaluation; and
- Providing staff development and training.

### Purposes of the Program

More than 75 percent of the center directors identified the following as the main purposes of the programs:

- Returning students to the sending high schools to graduate;
- Building self-esteem and responsibility;
- Reducing the dropout rate;
- Correcting dysfunctional or dangerous behavior; and
- Identifying career interests.

Other purposes cited, but to a lesser degree, included earning a General Educational Development (GED) certificate, obtaining a diploma, and gaining admission to a community or four-year college.

## Chapter Three

### Student Demographics

There were 3,403 placements in the regional alternative education projects for 2002-2003. The greatest number of students served in a program was 428, and the smallest number was 10.

#### Ethnicity

|                                |       |
|--------------------------------|-------|
| White                          | 1,869 |
| African American               | 1,325 |
| Unspecified                    | 122   |
| Hispanic                       | 62    |
| Asian/Pacific Islander         | 16    |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native | 9     |

#### Gender

|             |       |
|-------------|-------|
| Male        | 2,381 |
| Female      | 995   |
| Unspecified | 27    |

#### Age at Placement (Average age of student: 15.4 years)

| Age | Number of Students | Age | Number of Students |
|-----|--------------------|-----|--------------------|
| 9   | 1                  | 16  | 567                |
| 10  | 1                  | 17  | 483                |
| 11  | 16                 | 18  | 128                |
| 12  | 81                 | 19  | 19                 |
| 13  | 184                | 20  | 4                  |
| 14  | 374                | 21  | 1                  |
| 15  | 469                | 22  | 1                  |

#### Grade Level at Placement (Average grade level of student: 9.2)

| Grade   | Number of Students | Grade        | Number of Students |
|---------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| Grade 2 | 1                  | Grade 9      | 1,068              |
| Grade 3 | 1                  | Grade 10     | 533                |
| Grade 4 | 12                 | Grade 11     | 279                |
| Grade 5 | 14                 | Grade 12     | 425                |
| Grade 6 | 150                | Ungraded     | 19                 |
| Grade 7 | 319                | Not reported | 91                 |
| Grade 8 | 491                |              |                    |



**Living Situation at Placement**

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| Mother Only                                   | 1,444 |
| Two Parents/Step Parents                      | 1,245 |
| Grandparents or Other Relatives               | 292   |
| Father Only                                   | 242   |
| Non-Related Legal Guardian or Foster Parent   | 64    |
| Unknown                                       | 43    |
| Group Home                                    | 34    |
| Not Emancipated but Living Alone/with Friends | 22    |
| Emancipated/Married                           | 14    |
| Department of Corrections                     | 3     |

**Program Information**

Projects are designed to meet the needs of students in the school divisions where they are located. Academic options vary as well as the program schedules and class organization.

**Services to Students**

|  |
|--|
| Educational (core subject instruction, vocational, remediation tutoring)               |
| Counseling (individual, group, family)   |
| Social skills training   |
| Career counseling (work adjustment, job shadowing, mentoring, work/student agreements) |
| Technology education (direct instruction, networking, Internet, research)              |
| Field trips  |
| Conflict resolution and mediation  |
| Drug prevention education  |

**Percent of Centers Offering the Following Academic Options**

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| Necessary courses   | 100.0 % |
| General Educational Development (GED) Certificate preparation classes | 73.3%   |
| Vocational or technical course work                                   | 53.3%   |
| Independent study   | 50.0%   |
| Work study component  | 50.0%   |
| Taking some courses at the sending high school                        | 23.3%   |
| Public service component  | 13.3%   |

**Percent of Centers Operating the Following Schedules**

|                                   |       |
|-----------------------------------|-------|
| Full day programs only            | 51.7% |
| Partial day program               | 44.8% |
| Both morning and evening programs | 44.8% |
| Some form of block scheduling     | 44.8% |
| Unconventional schedule           | 27.6% |
| 6, 7, or 8 periods a day          | 20.7% |

**Organization of Classes**

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| Classes organized by subject or course                  | 67.9% |
| Students work independently on computer-based curricula | 60.7% |
| Students work independently                             | 53.6% |
| Non-graded, mixed grouping classes                      | 42.9% |
| Classes organized by grade level                        | 42.9% |

## Chapter Four

### Collaborative Efforts

Assurances are signed each year between participating school divisions to participate jointly in the continued activities of the programs. In addition, other collaborative efforts include parental involvement in the education process of students, interagency agreements, and a plan of community outreach.

### Effective Aspects

Project administrators continue to cite the following as effective aspects of their programs:

- Small school size;
- Small student-to-teacher ratio;
- Effective communication with probation officers, the courts, and social services;
- Individual, individualized, and small group instruction;
- Teacher and staff collaboration;
- Parental support;
- Site separation from sending schools;
- Cooperation from sending schools;
- Support from school boards; and
- Infusion of technology.

## Chapter Five

### Evaluation

The evaluation focused primarily on the description of the programs and detailing participant demographics. Because students are placed in the programs for relatively short periods of time—often a year or less—traditional assessments often do not accurately reflect the progress the student has made in the program. While the Standards of Learning tests are administered to students, other evaluation criteria such as attendance, classroom behavior, and grades are also used to assess student progress in these programs. It should be noted that the Standards of Learning test scores are maintained at the sending school. Often by the release date of scores, students have exited the alternative program and returned to the regular school.

The Virginia Department of Education contracted with The Bach Center, a consulting firm that specializes in products and services for data collection and program evaluation, to examine various aspects of the program. The summary of their findings follows.

- Each center has a different approach to providing alternative school settings for students requiring such placement.
- A low pupil-to-teacher ratio is maintained in over 96 percent of the projects.
- Centers offer a wide variety of options for parental involvement but experience the same frustrations that many schools do with levels of parental participation.
- Community involvement is less than optimal in most of the projects.
- Participation in staff development occurs more often in the student service areas (drug awareness, violence prevention, discipline, character development) than it does in the academic areas.
- The level of participation in the student service areas varies greatly from project to project. For example, some schools report zero percent participation in a drug awareness or anger management course, and others report 100 percent participation.
- Staff comments indicated the need to focus on program evaluation in subsequent years. In doing so, the external evaluator has recommended that the program focus on clearly defined goals and objectives both in terms of operations and in terms of student outcomes both academically and behaviorally.

### Conclusion

In their tenth year of operation, the regional alternative education projects continue to provide a positive alternative learning environment for identified disruptive students. In some cases the projects offer students an avenue to an education that would be denied under normal circumstances. The additional state resources provided through this program have helped many students continue their formal education, return to the school

of origin, and graduate from high school or earn a General Educational Development (GED) certificate.

In the fall of 2003, the Virginia Department of Education began using unique student identification numbers for every student in the state. In terms of long-range evaluation, this will be helpful in determining the impact of the alternative projects in the future. It will enable evaluators to track such factors as academic progress and behavior offenses to determine if participation in alternative settings makes a difference.

**Appendix A  
REGIONAL ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS  
2002-2003**

| <b>Fiscal Agent</b> | <b>Alternative Program Name</b>                          | <b>Participating School Divisions</b>  | <b>Year Began</b> | <b>Grades Served</b> | <b>Student Placements 2002-2003</b> |
|---------------------|--|--|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Albemarle           | Project Return II  | Albemarle, Charlottesville, Nelson   | 1996              | 7-12                 | 10                                  |
| Bristol             | Crossroads   | Bristol, Washington  | 1994              | 7-12                 | 26                                  |
| Brunswick           | Southside L.I.N.K  | Brunswick, Greenville, Mecklenburg   | 1995              | 7-12                 | Not Reported                        |
| Carroll             | Carroll-Galax Regional Alternative Educational Program   | Carroll, Galax   | 1996              | 7-12                 | 45                                  |
| Fairfax             | Transition Support Resource Center                       | Alexandria, Fairfax  | 1994              | 7-12                 | 47                                  |
| Fauquier            | The Regional Continuum of Alternative Education Services | Fauquier, Rappahannock   | 1996              | 7-12                 | 64                                  |
| Fluvanna            | Project Return   | Alleghany, Bath, Botetourt, Buchanan, Charles City, Clarke, Craig, Culpeper, Floyd, Fluvanna, Franklin County, Giles, Grayson, Greene, Halifax, Highland, Lancaster, Madison, Orange, Shenandoah, Smyth, Radford | 1994              | K-12                 | 125                                 |
| Henry               | Breaking Barriers  | Henry, Martinsville, Patrick   | 1996              | 6-12                 | 138                                 |
| King William        | Middle Peninsula Regional Alternative Program            | Essex, Gloucester, King and Queen, King William, Mathews, Middlesex, New Kent, West Point  | 1995              | 6-12                 | 122                                 |

| <b>Fiscal Agent</b> | <b>Alternative Program Name</b>                         | <b>Participating School Divisions</b>   | <b>Year Began</b> | <b>Grades Served</b> | <b>Student Placements 2002-2003</b> |
|---------------------|---|---|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Lynchburg           | Middle School Learning Program, Amelia Pride Center     | Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford, Lynchburg   | 1993              | 6-8                  | 105                                 |
| Montgomery          | Regional Program for Behaviorally Disordered Youth      | Montgomery, Pulaski   | 1994              | 6-12                 | 428                                 |
| Newport News        | Enterprise Academy                                      | Hampton, Newport News, York   | 1993              | 6-12                 | 421                                 |
| Norfolk             | Tidewater Regional Alternative Education Program        | Chesapeake, Franklin City, Isle of Wight, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Southampton, Suffolk, Virginia Beach | 1993              | 6-12                 | 323                                 |
| Northampton         | Project Renew   | Accomack, Northampton   | 1996              | 11-12                | 33                                  |
| Nottoway            | Piedmont Regional Alternative Education                 | Amelia, Buckingham, Charlotte, Cumberland, Lunenburg, Nottoway, Prince Edward                       | 1996              | 6-12                 | 128                                 |
| Petersburg          | Bermuda Run Educational Center                          | Colonial Heights, Dinwiddie, Hopewell, Petersburg, Prince George, Sussex                            | 1994              | 6-12                 | 58                                  |
| Pittsylvania        | Pittsylvania County/ Danville City Regional Alternative | Danville, Pittsylvania  | 1994              | 6-12                 | 70                                  |
| Powhatan            | Project Return  | Goochland, Louisa, Powhatan   | 1994              | 6-12                 | 174                                 |
| Prince William      | New Dominion  | Manassas City, Manassas Park, Prince William  | 1995              | 6-12                 | 144                                 |
| Richmond City       | Metro Richmond Alternative Education Program            | Hanover, Henrico, Richmond City   | 1994              | 6-12                 | 59                                  |
| Roanoke City        | Roanoke City/Salem Regional                             | Roanoke City, Salem   | 1993              | 7-12                 | 80                                  |
| Roanoke County      | Power Program   | Bedford, Roanoke County   | 2000              | 8-12                 | 31                                  |
| Russell             | Project BRIDGE  | Russell, Tazewell   | 1995              | 6-12                 | 246                                 |
| Scott               | Renaissance   | Lee, Scott  | 1996              | 4-12                 | 140                                 |

| <b>Fiscal Agent</b> | <b>Alternative Program Name</b>  | <b>Participating School Divisions</b>                         | <b>Year Began</b> | <b>Grades Served</b> | <b>Student Placements<br/>2002-2003</b> |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|---|-------------------|----------------------|---|
| Stafford            | The Regional Alternative Program | Caroline, Fredericksburg, King George, Spotsylvania, Stafford | 1994              | 9-12                 | 126                                     |
| Staunton City       | Genesis                          | Augusta, Harrisonburg, Staunton, Waynesboro                   | 1996              | 6-12                 | 118                                     |
| Westmoreland        | Northern Neck Regional           | Colonial Beach, Northumberland, Richmond County, Westmoreland | 1996              | 6-12                 | 68                                      |
| Wise                | Regional Learning Academy        | Dickenson, Norton, Wise                                       | 1996              | 7-12                 | 60                                      |
| Wythe               | Wythe/Bland Alternative          | Bland, Wythe  | 1995              | 8-12                 | 14                                      |
| <b>Totals</b>       |                                  |   |                   |                      | <b>3,403</b>                            |