



**INTERIM REPORT OF  
THE VIRGINIA COMMISSION  
ON YOUTH**

**TO THE GOVERNOR AND  
THE VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

# **Study of Alternative Education Options**

Commonwealth of Virginia  
July 2008





*COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA*  
*Commission on Youth*

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July 15, 2008

TO: The Honorable Timothy M. Kaine, Governor of Virginia

and

Members of the Virginia General Assembly

In May of 2006, the Virginia Commission on Youth was directed to review alternate education programs for suspended and expelled students in Virginia. At its November 28, 2006 meeting, the Commission on Youth approved the continuation of this study. This study is currently in its third year and will be finalized in 2008.

Enclosed is the interim report. The Commission received support from all affected agencies and gratefully acknowledges their input into this report.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William H. Fralin, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

William H. Fralin, Jr.  
Chairman



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## **I. Authority for Study**

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Section 30-174 of the *Code of Virginia* establishes the Commission on Youth and directs it to "...study and provide recommendations addressing the needs of and services to the Commonwealth's youth and their families." The Commission studies and provides recommendations addressing the needs of and services to the Commonwealth's youth and families. The Commission also monitors the development of laws and policies impacting youth and their families thus contributing to the General Assembly's ability to make sound policy decisions on these matters.

At the Commission on Youth meeting on May 17, 2006, Commission staff was directed to conduct a review of alternative education programs for youth who are suspended, expelled or at-risk. Additionally, the Commission was directed to explore data available at the Department of Education to determine whether a problem exists regarding the number of school suspensions and expulsions within Virginia public schools. Findings and recommendations were to be presented to the Commission on Youth prior to both the 2007 and 2008 General Assembly Sessions.

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## **II. Study Mandate**

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Legislators, child advocates and others have expressed concern about the utilization of suspension and expulsion in Virginia's public school system. Research has revealed that such disciplinary actions may increase a student's risk of becoming disengaged from and even dropping out of school. While student discipline laws and policies must maintain a student's right to a safe and orderly learning environment, there is a concern that exclusionary discipline approaches have the potential to increase poor outcomes in students. In Virginia, alternative education programs are available to bridge this gap by providing educational services to disciplined students or students who have not been successful in a traditional learning environment. The question arises whether existing programs in Virginia are sufficiently meeting the need of these students.

At the Commission on Youth meeting on May 17, 2006, Commission staff was directed to conduct a review of alternative education programs for youth who are suspended, expelled or at-risk. Additionally, the Commission was directed to explore data available at the Department of Education to determine whether a problem exists regarding the number of school suspensions and expulsions within Virginia public schools. Findings and recommendations were to be presented to the Commission on Youth prior to both the 2007 and 2008 General Assembly Sessions.

The Commission established an Alternative Education Advisory Group consisting of representatives from the Department of Education, the School Board Association, the Education Association, local school divisions, and other stakeholders as listed in Appendix A. The Advisory Group met three times through the course of the study's first year (July 12, August 9 and September 19). Following presentations by Commission on Youth staff at the October 3 and November 28, 2006 meetings, it was recommended that the study be continued and findings and recommendations from the second year of the study be reported to the Commission on Youth prior to the 2008 General Assembly Session.

In fulfilling its legislative mandate, the Commission undertook the study.

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### **III. Members Appointed to Serve**

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The Commission on Youth is a standing legislative commission of the Virginia General Assembly. It is comprised of twelve members: six Delegates, three Senators and three citizens appointed by the Governor.

Members of the Virginia Commission on Youth are:  
Delegate William H. Fralin, Jr., Chairman, Roanoke  
Senator Harry B. Blevins, Vice Chairman, Chesapeake  
Delegate Mamy E. BaCote, Newport News  
Delegate Robert H. Brink, Arlington  
Delegate Mark L. Cole, Fredericksburg  
Senator R. Edward Houck, Spotsylvania  
Senator Yvonne B. Miller, Norfolk  
Delegate Chris Peace, Mechanicsville  
Delegate Beverly J. Sherwood  
Mr. Anthony L. Dale, Richmond  
Ms. Joy Myers, Arlington  
Mr. Marvin H. Wagner, Fredericksburg

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### **IV. Study Goals and Objectives**

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#### **A. YEAR ONE**

The following study goals were developed by the staff and approved by the Commission in May 2006:

- I. Review of Expulsion and Suspension Data
  - a. Identify number of students in the Commonwealth, by locality, who have either been expelled or suspended.
  - b. Determine whether issues that need to be addressed regarding the use of school expulsion and suspensions.
  - c. Review various challenges facing school districts in the Commonwealth regarding expulsion or suspensions.
- II. Review of Alternative Education Approaches
  - a. Clarify existing alternative educations policies and practices.
  - b. Review other states' activities in the provision of alternative education to ascertain if they are appropriate for use in the Commonwealth.
  - c. Identify potential solutions, if appropriate, for school divisions to provide educational services to students who have been expelled.
  - d. Examine utilization of restorative justice and its potential as a solution for students facing disciplinary action by school divisions.
- III. Review Federal Legislation/State Legislation
  - a. Review impact of No Child Left Behind (NCLB)
  - b. Review impact of Standards of Learning (SOLs).
  - c. Impact of House Bill 347 – General Educational Development Program.
- IV. Analysis of Virginia practices
  - a. Review state and local Code of Student Conduct provisions.
  - b. Review school boards' suspension, exclusion, expulsion and appeals policies.
  - c. Review of school boards' utilization of alternative education practices.
  - d. Review existing alternative education programs.



## **B. YEAR TWO**

The following study goals were approved by the Commission in April 2007:

- I. Complete analysis of Alternative Education survey conducted by the Commission in the fall 2006.
  - a. Identify alternative education programs available in the Commonwealth that serve suspended and expelled youth.
  - b. Determine whether there are issues that need to be addressed in serving students in alternative education programs.
  - c. Review various challenges facing school divisions in the Commonwealth regarding alternative education programs.
  - d. Identify best practices employed by school divisions.
  - e. Compile best practices guide on Virginia's Alternative Education Approaches.
  - f. Clarify existing alternative education policies and practices.
  - g. Review Virginia's activities in the provision of alternative education to students using survey data and other sources.
  - h. Compile a best practices guide for alternative education programs/practices. The guide will include a listing of all existing alternative education programs across the Commonwealth, including local programs.
- II. Investigate funding opportunities for school-based prevention programs to supplant the Safe and Drug-Free Schools grants.
  - a. Investigate availability of federal grants through the United States Department of Justice, Center for Disease Control, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, United States Department of Education, Safe and Drug Free-Schools program, and the Center for Mental Health Services.
  - b. Investigate availability of state grants, such as funds available from the Department of Criminal Justice Services, Department of Health, and Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services.
  - c. Investigate availability of other funding sources such as the Virginia Tobacco Settlement Fund.
  - d. Review other states' fundraising Initiatives for funding prevention programs such as private, non-profit, and foundation grants.
  - e. Review feasibility of conducting a comprehensive statewide youth risk survey to access untapped federal funds.
- III. Investigate feasibility of funding for a second tier of regional alternative education programs.
  - a. Utilize survey results to ascertain need for second tier of regional alternative education programs.
  - b. Offer funding proposal, if appropriate, prior to the 2008 General Assembly Session.
- IV. Review existing state programs that address prevention and discipline for at-risk youth.
  - a. Review Virginia's Student Assistance programs to ascertain their role in prevention of at-risk behavior in students.
  - b. Review the Behavioral Intervention Plans for Virginia's Schools offered through Virginia's Training/Technical Assistance Center to determine whether it is effective in meeting the needs of at-risk students.

## V. Methodology

The findings of the 2006 and 2007 study years are based on several distinct research activities. Each activity is described briefly below.

### A. RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

A review of federal and Virginia education statutes was conducted to ascertain the impact upon existing student disciplinary procedures in the Commonwealth. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001,<sup>1</sup> The Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994,<sup>2</sup> the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Act of 1994<sup>3</sup> were reviewed. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004<sup>4</sup> was reviewed to understand federal requirements and procedures involved in disciplining students diagnosed with a disability.

Those sections of the *Code of Virginia* specifically addressing student discipline<sup>5</sup> were reviewed, as were sections which addressed the definition and utilization of alternative education programs<sup>6</sup> the process for notifying school officials when students have been charged with serious crimes off of school property,<sup>7</sup> and discipline of a student convicted of such crimes.<sup>8</sup> The regulations governing the discipline procedures for students with a disability were also studied.<sup>9</sup>

Various reports published by the Virginia Department of Education were also analyzed. These included: the Department's Annual Report on *Discipline, Crime, and Violence*; the annual report *Regional Alternative Education Programs; Summary of Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Programs in Virginia School Divisions*; and *Creating Community Service Opportunities for Suspended and Expelled Youth: A Final Report on Virginia's Experience*. The Board of Education's *Student Conduct Policy Guidelines* was also reviewed.

### B. Advisory Group

The Commission established an Alternative Education Advisory Group consisting of representatives from the following agencies and organizations:

- Virginia Parent Teacher Association;
- Virginia Education Association;
- Association of Elementary School Principals;
- Department of Criminal Justice Services;
- Department of Juvenile Justice;
- School Safety Specialists;
- Virginia Alternative Education Association;
- Virginia School Board Association;
- Association of School Superintendents;

<sup>1</sup> 20 U.S.C. § 6301 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> 20 U.S.C. § 8921

<sup>3</sup> 20 U.S.C. § 7101 *et seq.*

<sup>4</sup> 20 U.S.C. § 1400 *et seq.*

<sup>5</sup> Va. Code Ann. §§22.1-276 to -277.08.

<sup>6</sup> Va. Code Ann. § 22.1-276.01.

<sup>7</sup> Va. Code Ann. § 16.1- 260(g)

<sup>8</sup> Va. Code Ann. § 22.1-277.06.C.

<sup>9</sup> 8 VAC 20-80-68

- Association of Secondary School Principals;
- Association of Middle School Principals;
- School Resource Officers;
- School Principals;
- School Administrators;
- Alternative Education Principals/Directors; and
- Commission on Youth Members.

The membership of the Advisory Group is provided as Appendix A.

During the first year of the study, the Advisory Group met three times (July 12, August 9 and September 19, 2006). In the second year, the Advisory Group also met three times (June 25, July 24 and November 13, 2007). The Advisory Group helped identify, refine and prioritize the issues of the study.

### **C. SITE VISIT INTERVIEWS**

Another research activity employed by staff was to conduct site visit interviews with personnel in several regional alternative education programs. During the first year, staff visited several regional alternative education programs and learned about the policies and practices of the programs as well as outcomes of the students served. The programs selected served students in both rural and urban school divisions and varied in service provision approaches.

During the first year of study, Commission on Youth conducted site visits at the following programs:

- Roland E. Cook School – Roanoke & Bedford Counties
- Project RETURN – Fluvanna, Alleghany Highlands, Bath, Botetourt, Buchanan, Charles City, Clarke, Craig, Culpeper, Floyd, Franklin, Giles, Grayson, Greene, Halifax, Highland, Lancaster, Madison, Orange, Shenandoah, and Smyth Counties; Radford City
- Bermuda Run Alternative Education Program – Petersburg, Colonial Heights, Hopewell Cities; Dinwiddie, Prince George, and Sussex Counties
- Metro-Richmond Alternative Education Program – Richmond City; Hanover and Henrico Counties

During the second year of study, Commission on Youth staff visited additional programs administered by either the local school division or a nonprofit entity to gain a broader perspective of alternative education programs in the Commonwealth. The following schools/programs were visited in the second year of the study:

- Project Discovery – 22 Virginia localities
- Project Recovery – Roanoke City
- Woodlawn Learning Center – Hopewell City
- Office of Student Management and Alternative Programs – Prince William County

### **D. SURVEY OF LOCAL ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

During the first year of study, a major finding of the Advisory Group was the lack of information on the availability of local programs that provide educational services to suspended and expelled students. While there is an annual report on state-funded regional alternative education programs, there is no central inventory of locally-created

and administered alternative education schools/programs. The annual report on the Department of Education's regional alternative education programs is included as Appendix B. Information on locally-created programs and schools would offer a more complete picture of unmet service needs as well as promising practices utilized throughout the Commonwealth. A survey of school divisions regarding available alternative education programs would be helpful in determining whether there was a need for additional alternative education programs or program slots.

In November of 2006, the Commission, in cooperation with the Department of Education, surveyed all 132 school divisions. The survey was designed by Commission staff and modified pursuant to the Advisory Group's recommendations. Surveys were sent to Virginia's school superintendents and accompanied by a letter of introduction. Instructions for completing the survey form, as well as instructions for accessing the survey on the Commission on Youth's website, were also included. The survey instrument is included as Appendix C. Concurrently, the Department issued a Superintendent's Memorandum with instructions for accessing the survey on the Commission's website, provided as Appendix D. Respondents were asked to complete and return the surveys by November 22, 2006, although surveys returned after that date were ultimately included.

The survey instrument contained two sections. The first section requested information about the number of children suspended or expelled by the school division, the number of students offered educational services, and whether the school division had alternative educational programs, either regional or locally-created. The second section requested a description of the locally-created programs/schools, the number of students, the funding for the program, the teacher-student ratio, and other specific characteristics about the program. This section also request information about school divisions without alternative education programs or schools to specify the reasons for the lack of programs/schools.

The response rate from school divisions was 95 percent (126 of 132) and responses reflected activities that occurred during the 2005-2006 academic year. Survey responses included information on:

- Virginia's 29 regional alternative education programs; and
- School divisions' practices for offering alternative educational services to suspended/expelled students.

An April 3, 2007 presentation summarizing the survey results for the 126 responding school divisions is included as Appendix E. The *Guide to Local Alternative Education Options for Suspended and Expelled Students in the Commonwealth (Report Document 144, 2008)*, was been compiled by Commission staff using survey data.

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## **VI. Findings and Recommendations**

### **A. Year One**

#### **Lack of Data on Locally Administered Alternative Education Programs**

##### *Finding*

*Virginia's Regional Alternative Education programs were established to provide options for students who no longer have access to traditional school programs because they were suspended or expelled. There are 114 school divisions participating in these 29 regional programs. These regional programs are required to report data to the*

*Department of Education. However, there is a lack of data on local alternative education programs/practices.*

#### **Recommendation 1 (No Commission Approval Required)**

The Commission on Youth will survey school divisions to receive a complete picture of locally created alternative education programs and ascertain whether there are unmet service needs. The results of the survey shall be communicated to the Virginia Commission on Youth.

#### **Lack of Information of Programs Serving Suspended or Expelled Youth**

##### *Finding*

*There is no available information on the programs/practices that effectively serve youth who have been suspended or expelled. There is a need for more awareness of best practices in alternative education programs. Moreover, local school divisions are frequently unaware of available programs that exist in the Commonwealth. Such information could guide local school divisions in building programs and meeting service needs.*

#### **Recommendation 2**

The Commission on Youth will compile a best practices guide for alternative education programs/practices. The guide will include a listing of all existing alternative education programs across the Commonwealth, including local programs. This compilation will commence once survey data is analyzed and shall be conducted. The Commission shall complete the guide prior to the 2008 General Assembly Session.

#### **Additional Slots for Regional Alternative Education Programs**

##### *Finding*

*Regional Alternative Education programs are working and efficiently leveraging funds to serve youth across the Commonwealth. However, some localities do not participate in these programs. Furthermore, some programs indicate that they have waiting lists and that the division has unmet needs for students requiring alternative education placements.*

#### **Recommendation 3**

The Commission on Youth, in conjunction with other child-serving agencies, shall investigate ways to increase funding for a second tier of regional alternative education programs. Such an investigation will be based on an analysis of survey results. Any proposal for a second tier of funding shall not dilute the funding already distributed to existing regional programs. The findings from this investigation shall be reported to the Commission on Youth prior to the 2008 General Assembly Session.

#### **Shortage of School-based Prevention Programs**

##### *Finding*

*There is a shortage of school-based prevention programs that address issues such as violence prevention, anger management, conflict resolution, and other behavioral health needs. These programs reduce suspensions and expulsions by offering valuable prevention services for youth who may be considered "at-risk." These programs have been negatively impacted by the reductions to the federal Safe and*

*Drug-Free School grants. In 2006, the level of funding has decreased 21 percent and it is anticipated that there will be an additional 11 percent reduction in 2007.*

#### Recommendation 4

The Commission on Youth, in conjunction with various child-serving agencies, including the Department of Education, Department of Criminal Justice Services, Department of Juvenile Justice, Department of Health, and Department of Social Services, will investigate ways to fund prevention programs to supplant funding lost in recent years from the decreases in the federal Safe and Drug-Free School grants. The findings from this investigation will be reported to the Commission on Youth prior to the 2008 General Assembly.

#### **Continuation of Study**

##### *Finding*

*In 2006-2007, the Virginia Commission on Youth convened the Alternative Education Advisory Group to examine barriers in providing alternative education options to suspended and expelled youth. A survey was conducted as were site visits of various alternative education programs. The Advisory Group recommended that the study be continued so that the survey data could be analyzed and reported to the Commission on Youth.*

#### Recommendation 5

The Commission on Youth will continue to study alternative education program options and report findings to the Commission on Youth prior to the 2008 General Assembly Session.

### **B. Year Two**

#### **Lack of Information on Locally Administered Alternative Education Programs**

##### *Finding*

*There is a lack of information regarding local programs/schools providing educational services to suspended and expelled students. While there is an annual report on Regional Alternative Education Programs pursuant to §22.1-209.1:2 of the Code of Virginia, there is no central inventory of locally created and administered alternative education schools/programs. Such a guide would be helpful to provide educators, health and human service workers, juvenile justice officials, caregivers and others with information on all available alternatives to students who have been suspended or expelled and would be a resource to local school divisions which may be unaware of programs that exist in the Commonwealth. Such information could also guide local school divisions in building programs to address unmet service needs of at-risk and disciplined students. Moreover, such a guide could provide a more complete picture of existing programs and promising practices throughout the Commonwealth.*

#### Recommendation 1

The Virginia Commission on Youth shall finalize its report on *Local Alternative Education Options for Suspended and Expelled Youth* and request the Virginia Association of School Superintendents to assist in disseminating it to all interested organizations via the Internet or any other cost-effective dissemination method they choose.

## Recommendation 2

The Virginia Commission on Youth shall contact all child-serving agencies and inform them of the availability of the report on *Local Alternative Education Options for Suspended and Expelled Youth*. The Commission will also request the Secretariats of Health and Human Resources, Public Safety, and Education, as well as all affected agencies delivering services to children, to link this report on their websites.

## Recommendation 3

The Virginia Department of Education, in cooperation with the Virginia Alternative Education Association and the Virginia Association of Independent Education Specialized Education Facilities, will continue to collect data on locally administered alternative education programs. Data collected will include the number of students served, service needs, funding, components of the programs, and any other information that evaluates both the performance of the programs and the students served by the program. This information will be submitted biennially to the General Assembly.

### **Shortage of School-based Prevention Programs**

#### *Finding*

*There is a shortage of school-based prevention programs that address issues such as violence prevention, anger management, conflict resolution, and other behavioral health needs. These programs reduce suspensions and expulsions by offering valuable prevention services for youth who may be considered "at-risk." These programs have been negatively impacted by the reductions to the federal Safe and Drug-Free School grants. In 2006, the level of funding decreased 21percent and there was an additional 11percent reduction in 2007. Moreover, there is no designated state funding for school-based prevention programs.*

*Virginia has an infrastructure in place to meet the programming needs of local school divisions. Student Assistance Programs (SAPs) utilize a comprehensive systems approach of evidence-based curricula, practices, principles, and strategies to respond to K-12 student challenges. They are designed to reduce risk factors, promote protective factors, increase asset development and foster resilience.*

*SAPs create a flexible process intervention plan that is consistently monitored. In Virginia, 36 school divisions reported having SAPs. In 2006, 297,700 students (20percent of the total student population) were served by SAPs.*

*The basic goals of SAPs are to:*

- *provide collaboration between in-school and community resources;*
- *encourage parent involvement;*
- *increase the opportunity to help students participate in positive activities;*
- *promote a safer school environment;*
- *seek to improve grades, attendance and social challenges;*
- *examine the best method for transitioning students back into a traditional school setting following alternative education; and*
- *surround students with support services.*

#### Recommendation 4

Request the Virginia Department of Education to establish guidelines for statewide implementation of Student Assistance Programs (SAPs). The guidelines for SAPs will be shared with school divisions to ensure consistent and uniform application and implementation of SAP, based on best practices.

#### Recommendation 5

Request a budget amendment for the Virginia Department of Education to construct a database to capture data on utilization of Student Assistance Programs (SAPs) in Virginia. Such a database will allow for ongoing assessment of the efficacy of SAP and for the development of a framework to guide future evaluations.

### **Effective Schoolwide Discipline Programs & Reductions in Disciplinary Referrals**

#### *Findings*

*Research indicates that exclusionary discipline approaches potentially increase poor outcomes. Training school staff and educators in effective classroom management may increase the consistency of discipline, which can potentially reduce suspensions and expulsions.*

*A schoolwide system of effective discipline consists of proactive strategies that focus on teaching and rewarding student behavior, which in turn contributes to improved academic performance and social behavior. Results of implementing effective schoolwide discipline programs in Virginia are:*

- *one middle/high school reduced the number of discipline referrals by two-thirds;*
- *administrators with another middle school found that they saved the equivalent of 20 eight-hour days;*
- *teachers found they gained 430 more hours of instruction time;*
- *statewide achievement scores increased dramatically over a four-year period;*  
*and*
- *the number of elementary school students who met state achievement standards in reading increased from 20 percent to 79 percent over a four-year period.<sup>10</sup>*

*National data show a gain of 10,620 instructional minutes over a two-year period. Time gained due to reduced behavioral interruptions was over 27 days in year one and 31 days in year two.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the Virginia Department of Education, in its Comprehensive State Plan, has offered a strategy to encourage school divisions to utilize innovative ways to keep students with behavioral challenges in school.*

#### Recommendation 6

Request the Virginia Department of Education and the Virginia Department of Education's Training and Technical Assistance Center to continue to include information on effective schoolwide discipline programs to all school divisions. Information will be offered to school divisions to educate them on the effectiveness of this program model.

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<sup>10</sup> Virginia Department of Education, *An Introduction of Effective Schoolwide Discipline in Virginia*.

<sup>11</sup> Scott, T., & Barrett, S. (2004). *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*.



### Recommendation 7

Request the Virginia Department of Education and the Virginia Department of Education's Training and Technical Assistance Center to continue to provide information on all evidence-based school-based programs to all school divisions.

#### **Lack of Definition for Alternative Education for Disciplined Youth**

##### *Finding*

*There is no consistent and established definition of what an alternative program/school is and what components must be present. Currently, there is great diversity among the local alternative education programs regarding program components, such as program hours and the ability to earn verified credits. The term "alternative education" covers all educational activities that fall outside the traditional K-12 school system, including vocational programs, special programs for gifted children, and charter schools.<sup>12</sup>*

*A broad definition of alternative education programs that describes the full array of alternatives may be an important element in encouraging the development of the most effective programs. A unified definition of alternative education could also be helpful for both funding opportunities and evaluation purposes.*

### Recommendation 8

Request the Virginia Alternative Education Association to research alternative education definitions established by the National Education Association. Request the Virginia Alternative Education Association to report its progress and any suggested language to the Virginia Department of Education and the Virginia Commission on Youth prior to the 2009 Session of the General Assembly.

#### **Continue the Alternative Education Advisory Group**

##### *Finding*

*In 2006-2007, the Virginia Commission on Youth convened the Alternative Education Advisory Group to examine barriers in providing alternative education options to suspended and expelled youth. Affected agencies participated in this effort. During the course of the study, it was noted that these youth were also being served by other health and human service agencies, child welfare agencies, as well by the juvenile justice system. The Advisory Group formulated initial recommendations to assist in strengthening service provision to students who have been suspended, expelled, or at risk for disciplinary referral. Gaps in service, along with best practices, were identified; however, more evaluation needs to be conducted to determine whether these approaches can be applied effectively across the Commonwealth. Adding representatives from all child-serving agencies to the Advisory Group would strengthen the study findings.*

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<sup>12</sup> 8VAC20-330-10

### Recommendation 9

Request the Virginia Commission on Youth to continue its Advisory Group on Alternative Education Options and to invite representatives from all child-serving agencies. The Advisory Group will monitor recommendations adopted by the Commission and will work to evaluate gaps in service in alternative education placements, as well as the reasons that students are not offered educational services. A report on the findings from the Advisory Group will be made to the Virginia Commission on Youth prior to the 2009 General Assembly Session.

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## **VII. Acknowledgments**

The Virginia Commission on Youth extends its appreciation to the Department of Education and to the 126 school divisions who participated in the survey and to the following individuals and agencies for their assistance and cooperation on this study:

*Roland E. Cook Alternative School*

Gail Hagerty  
Susan McQuail

*Project Return*

Brenda Gilliam

*Bermuda Run Education Center*

Ron Vance

*Metro-Richmond Alternative Education Program*

Frances Kenyear

*Woodlawn Learning Center*

Joyce Jones

*Division of Legislative Automated Systems*

Troy Crawford

*Office of Comprehensive Services*

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Stacie Fisher  
Dave Nichols  
Brady Nemeyer  
Carol C. Wilson  
Dawn Howard

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Gloria Charlton  
Bill Scharrer

*Project Recovery*  
Annette Lewis  
Ron Jones

*Prince William Office of Student Management and Alternative Programs*  
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Marie Sobers

*Virginia Department of Education*  
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Arlene Cundiff  
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Irene Walker Bolton  
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## Study of Alternative Education Options for Suspended and Expelled Students in the Commonwealth

### Advisory Group Membership

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**Jan McKee**, President

**Marie Sobers**, Secretary

**Gina Wilburn**

Co-chair, Virginia Association of Community

Services Boards

Child and Family Services Task Force



VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

2007 Annual Report

# REGIONAL ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

PRESENTED TO

GOVERNOR TIMOTHY M. KAINE  
AND THE  
VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

September 26, 2007



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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October 5, 2007

The Honorable Timothy M. Kaine  
Governor of Virginia  
Patrick Henry Building, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
1111 East Broad Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Members of the General Assembly of Virginia  
Patrick Henry Building  
1111 East Broad Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Governor Kaine and Members of the General Assembly:

I am pleased to submit the Board of Education's report on Regional Alternative Education Programs pursuant to Section 22.1-209.1:2 of the *Code of Virginia*. The *Code* requires the Board of Education to report annually on the effectiveness of the Regional Alternative Education Programs.

If you have questions or require additional information relative to this transmittal, please do not hesitate to contact Diane Jay at 225-2905 or by e-mail at [Diane.Jay@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Diane.Jay@doe.virginia.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Billy K. Cannaday, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Billy K. Cannaday, Jr.

BKCJr/dj  
Attachment

c: The Honorable Thomas Morris, Secretary of Education  
Dr. Mark Emblidge, President, Board of Education

## 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 Programs. The primary objectives of this evaluation are as follows:

1. Provide a general overview of the programs, student populations, staff, program resources and support, and parental and community support.
2. Review the program administrators' perceptions of the adequacy of the programs.
3. Evaluate the performance of the programs and students.

The staff member assigned to the preparation of the report was Diane L. Jay, associate director, 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 [Diane.Jay@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Diane.Jay@doe.virginia.gov).

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The evaluation was conducted on Virginia's 29 regional alternative education programs. These programs were established by the General Assembly in 1993-1994 with the intent of involving two or more school divisions working in collaboration to establish options for students who have a pending violation of school board policy, have been expelled or suspended on a long-term basis, or are returning from juvenile correctional centers. 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 programs.

These regional alternative education programs are designed to meet the specific individual needs of students assigned to the programs. While there is some variation in programs, the legislation outlines the following components:

- an intensive, accelerated instructional program with rigorous standards for academic achievement and student behavior;
- a low pupil-teacher ratio to promote a high level of interaction between the student and teacher;
- a plan for transitioning the enrolled students into the relevant school division's regular program;
- a current program of staff development and training;
- a procedure for obtaining the participation and support from parents as well as community outreach to build school, business, and community partnerships; and
- measurable goals and objectives and an evaluation component to determine the program's effectiveness.

The number of students enrolled has increased from 217 students in four regional programs in 1993-1994 to 4,205 students in 29 programs during 2006-2007. The state funding level has increased 418 percent during this same time period. Conclusions related to the program, services, and policies for the 2006-2007 school year follow:

- A majority of program administrators reported academic improvement in their responses regarding perceived changes in student academic performance.
- The program administrators reported decreased violence, firearms, and weapons possession incidences for students while in the program as well as a decrease in substance abuse and property offenses.
- Program administrators reported ratings of good or excellent for parental involvement, technology, staff development, resources, discipline policies, selection process, student assessments, student services, and the academic program.
- Of the 293 teachers employed, 95 percent are licensed. Student-to-teacher ratios range between 4:1 and 15:1.

- The Standards of Learning (SOL) tests in English and mathematics were taken by 1,916 alternative education students during the 2006-2007 school year. These students achieved a 48 percent pass rate on the English SOL and a 33 percent pass rate on the mathematics SOL.
- The dropout rate for these students is 4.9 percent. The expulsion or dismissal rate is 7.6 percent.
- Of the students who were not eligible to graduate in the 2006-2007 school year, approximately 70 percent remained in school at the end of the 2006-2007 school year. Of these students, 48.9 percent plan to return to their regular school beginning in 2007-2008, and 21.3 percent will remain in the alternative education program.

Overall, the regional alternative education programs appear to be achieving their program purposes. The return on the public's investment for regional alternative education programs appears favorable.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Purpose

Virginia's regional alternative education programs are established to provide options for students who no longer have access to traditional school programs because they were suspended for violations of school board policy. Assignment to these programs include violations related to weapons, drugs or alcohol, intentional injury, chronic disruptive behavior, theft, verbal threats, malicious mischief, chronic truancy, vandalism, and other serious offenses. These programs also accommodate students returning from juvenile correctional centers or those who are otherwise assigned by the school divisions. The evaluation examined the 29 programs in operation during the 2006-2007 school year. A total of 114 school divisions worked in collaboration to form these 29 programs; some of the divisions have multiple subprograms and sites. A listing of the programs and participating school divisions is provided in Attachment A1.

### Objectives and Scope of Evaluation

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 programs. The primary objectives of this evaluation are as follows:

1. Provide a general overview of the programs, student populations, staff, program resources and support, and parental and community support;
2. Review the program administrators' perceptions of the adequacy of the programs; and
3. Evaluate the performance of the programs and students.

The goals of the 29 regional alternative education programs are similar in that they are all designed to provide alternative and experiential learning opportunities for their students. They serve students who have been assigned to the school by a local board of education because: (1) the traditional school systems are not equipped to address their needs; and (2) the alternative education programs can provide a wide variety of student services and educational approaches that are tailored to these needs. While the general goals among programs are similar, there are also differences such as:

- grade levels served;
- size of the student bodies;
- characteristics of the students enrolled;
- characteristics of the student enrollment expectations (e.g., very short-term versus long-term);
- educational approaches and priorities; and
- program resources available.

## Data Sources

The information, observations, and findings in this summary report are primarily based on the following sources:

- Information collected by the Virginia Department of Education through an annual information data collection instrument and supplemental information provided with these reports. In June 2006 the reports were submitted by each of the 29 programs for the 2006-2007 school year.
- Follow-up communications with program administrators and personnel.
- Relevant information included in previous regional alternative education program evaluations published by the Virginia Department of Education.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Background and Summary Information

In 1993, the General Assembly directed the Board of Education to establish and implement four regional pilot projects to provide an educational alternative for certain students in violation of school board policy. The General Assembly subsequently provided state funding, augmented for several years by federal funds, to make regional alternative education programs available on a statewide basis. A Virginia Department of Education formula based on staffing patterns and the composite index of local ability to pay determines state funding. No local matching funding is required; however, local school divisions sometimes use local and federal monies to augment these programs by providing in-kind support for such items as instructional materials, additional staff, pupil transportation, and facilities.

Alternative education programs are designed to meet the specific individual needs of students assigned to the programs. While there is some variation in programs, the legislation outlines the following components:

- an intensive, accelerated instructional program with rigorous standards for academic achievement and student behavior;
- a low pupil-teacher ratio to promote a high level of interaction between the student and teacher;
- a plan for transitioning the enrolled students into the relevant school division's regular program;
- a current program of staff development and training;
- a procedure for obtaining the participation and support from parents as well as community outreach to build school, business, and community partnerships; and
- measurable goals and objectives and an evaluation component to determine the program's effectiveness.

The delivery of services includes traditional and non-traditional forms of classroom instruction, distance learning, and other technology-based educational approaches. Delivery of services also includes day, after-school, and evening programs. Alternative education centers have flexibility with regard to their organizational structure, schedule, curriculum, programs, and disciplinary policies. While the centers may differ in method of delivery, the services they provide typically fall into the following categories:

- educational (core subject instruction, vocational, remediation, tutoring);
- counseling (individual, group, family);
- social skills training;
- career counseling (transitioning to the world of work, job shadowing, mentoring, work/study agreements);
- technology-related education (direct instruction, Internet research, keyboarding);
- conflict resolution and mediation; and
- drug prevention education.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Regional Alternative Education Program Overview

This chapter provides an overview of program and student trends, program purposes, organization, innovative practices, reasons for student enrollment, student selection processes, academic offerings, student services, student assessments, and general and discipline policies of the regional alternative education programs.

#### A. Characteristics of Programs and Student Population

**Statistical Overview** – Of the 29 regional programs, all except one serve students in grades 9-12. The remaining program serves only middle school students in grades 6-8. Eighty-six (86) percent of the programs also serve grades 7-8; and 72 percent also serve 6th grade students. Three programs also serve students in grades K-5. Additionally, 62 percent of the programs report serving General Educational Development (GED) certificate students.

The programs report having 2,424 assigned slots and serving 4,205 students during the 2006-2007 school year. Since students are assigned for short periods of time in some programs (e.g., a week in some cases), multiple students can be served per slot. Attachment A2 provides a more detailed overview of the 29 programs.

Over the first four years of Virginia's regional alternative education program, the number of programs grew rapidly from the four pilot sites in 1993-1994 to 29 programs by 1996-1997. Since that time, the number of programs has remained constant. A new regional program was approved by the General Assembly in 2000-2001 bringing the number of programs to 30. In 2003-2004, one regional program dissolved, thus reducing the number of programs to 29. During this same period, state funding increased from the initial General Assembly appropriation of \$1.2 million for 1993-1994 to a total state funding level of slightly over \$6.2 million for 2006-2007. Programs are permitted to receive additional funding and in-kind support from other sources although no local match is required.

The number of students enrolled increased from 217 students in four regional programs in 1993-1994 to 4,205 students in 29 regional programs in 2006-2007. The state funding level has increased by 418 percent during this same time period.

Table 1 summarizes trends for the number of regional alternative education programs in Virginia, state funding levels for these programs, and numbers of students served since the 1993-1994 school year.

**Table 1.**  
**Trends in Regional Alternative Education Programs**

School Year	Number Of Programs [1]	State Funding [2]	Number of Students Served
1993-1994	4	\$1,200,000	217
1994-1995 [2]	13	\$1,200,000	849
1995-1996 [2]	19	\$1,200,000	1,550
1996-1997	29	\$4,142,000	2,297
1997-1998	29	\$3,716,652	2,350
1998-1999	29	\$4,431,089	3,255
1999-2000	29	\$4,484,123	3,494
2000-2001	30	\$5,766,626	3,347
2001-2002	30	\$5,386,590	3,895
2002-2003	30	\$5,386,590	3,509
2003-2004	29	\$5,210,891	3,534
2004-2005	29	\$5,486,348	3,903
2005-2006	29	\$5,561,410	4,155
2006-2007	29	\$6,220,518	4,205

Note [1]: Some data refer to sites and some refer to programs.

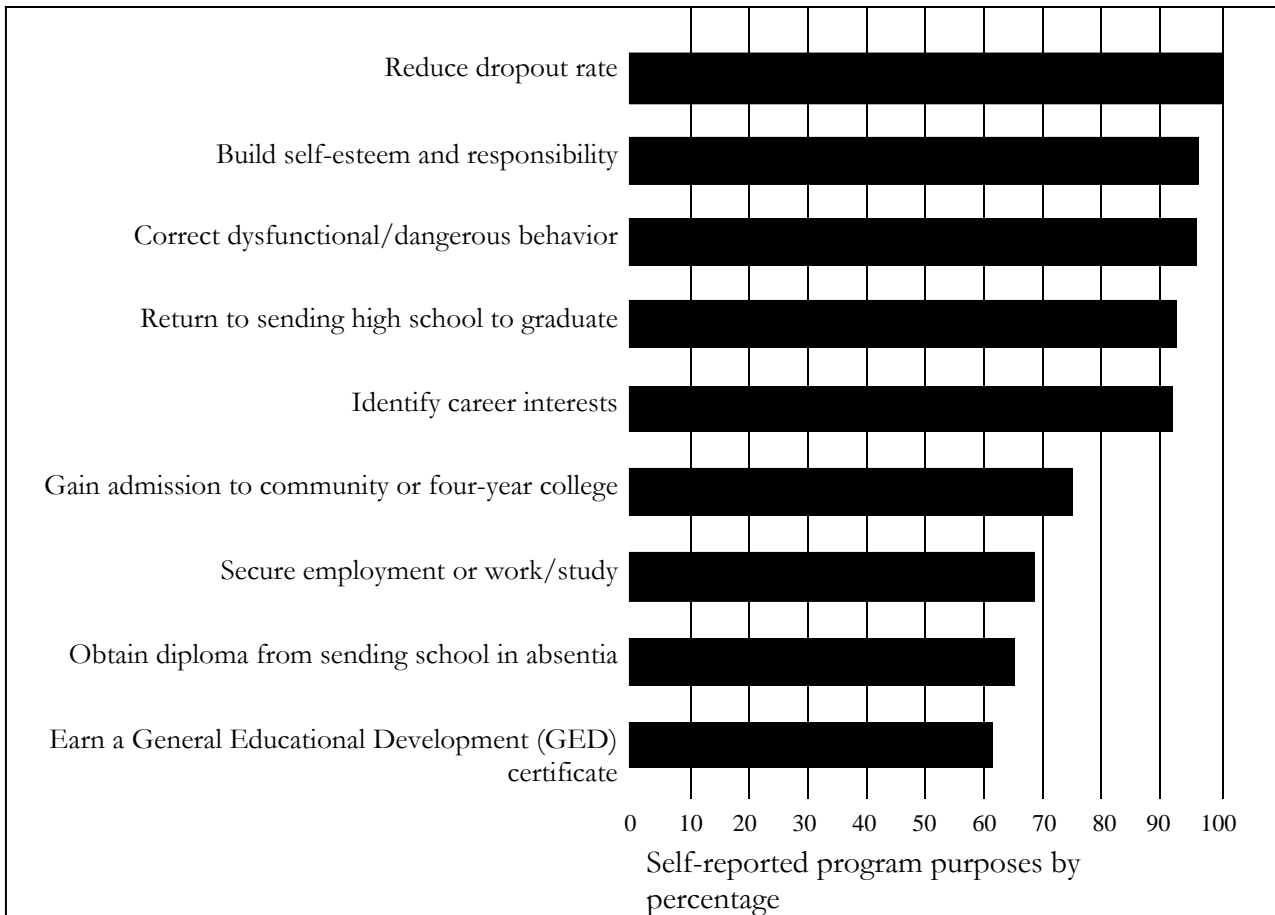
Note [2]: Federal funds were used to supplement state funds to expand the program during the 1994-1995 and 1995-1996 school years.

**Program Purpose** – The regional alternative education programs are designed to meet the specific individual needs of students assigned to the programs. These needs dictate a different set of “program purposes,” or objectives than would be encountered in the traditional school system. As part of the 2006-2007 data collection effort for the evaluation, administrators were asked to identify the objectives most appropriate for the various sites operating within their programs. The “program purposes” reported by the majority of programs are to:

- reduce the dropout rate;
- build self-esteem and responsibility;
- correct dysfunctional and/or dangerous behavior;
- return students to sending high school to graduate; and
- identify career interests.

The list of program purposes, as reported by the responding program administrators, is portrayed in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.**  
**Purpose of Program**



**Program Organization and Innovative Practices** – The programs included in this evaluation reflect a wide variety of educational, operational models, and processes. Most programs report operating between 9 and 10 months a year, but the range is 9 to 12 months. Over 30 percent of the programs offer morning and evening classes. Over 80 percent organize classes by subject or course, and 50 percent organize classes by grade level. Over 80 percent of the programs report that students work independently on computer-based curricula.

Program administrators were asked to identify innovative practices they believe to have been most effective in their program. Their responses included: 1) differentiated or individualized instruction; 2) anger management counseling; 3) computer-assisted instruction; 4) small group learning; 5) small student-to-teacher ratio; 6) psychological counseling; 7) support of parents, guardians, and resource officers; and 8) service learning activities.



**Reasons for Student Enrollment and Student Selection Process** – Students are typically assigned to regional alternative education programs because they have received long-term suspensions, are returning from juvenile correctional centers, or are otherwise identified by the school divisions to be best served by these programs. Consequently, these programs are structured to address the special needs of these students. Table 2 provides insight as to the primary reasons leading to student enrollments for the 2006-2007 school year.

**Table 2.**  
**Reasons for Enrollment in Regional Alternative Education Programs 2006-2007**

Reasons for Enrollment	Total	Percent
Suspensions for violation of School Board Policy [2]	4,102	97.6 [1]
Chronic Disruptive Behavior	781	19.0 [3]
Drugs or alcohol	502	12.2 [3]
Intentional Injury	310	7.6 [3]
Weapons	243	5.9 [3]
Theft	36	0.9 [3]
Combination of above	502	12.2 [3]
Other [4]	2,374	57.9 [3]
Released from youth correctional centers	93	2.2 [1]
<b>Total Suspensions and Released from Youth Correctional Centers</b>	<b>4,205</b>	<b>100</b>

Note [1]: Percentage of 4,205 (the total number of students served).

Note [2]: Included pending violations.

Note [3]: Percentage of 4,102 (the total number of students suspended for violation of policy).

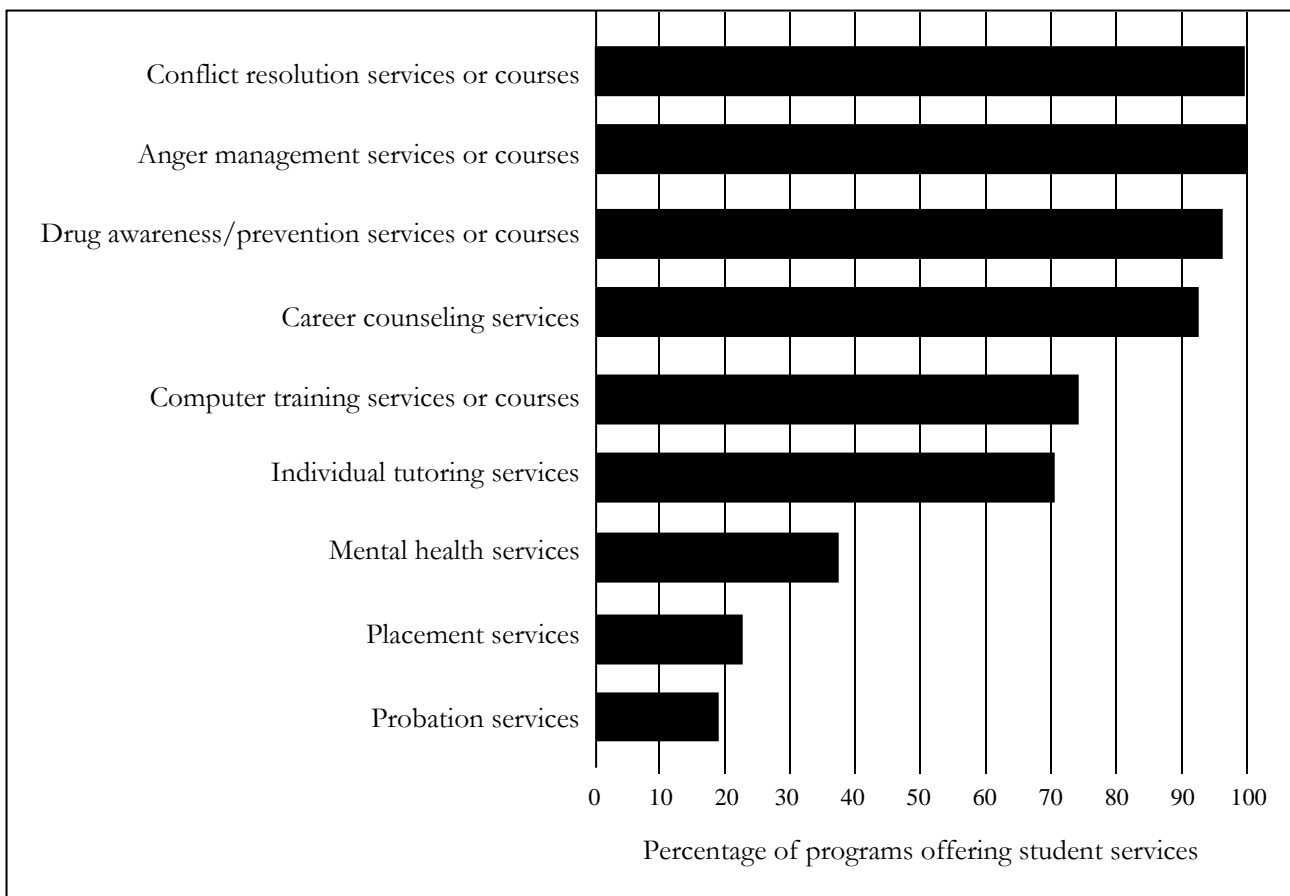
Note [4]: Verbal threats, malicious mischief, bomb threats, destruction of property, chronic truancy, vandalism, and other serious offenses.

There is no standardized student selection process. The student selection process includes guidelines and criteria for admittance, and denial of admission varies from program-to-program. Most of the programs report that students were assigned to them “as a last chance option.” All of the program administrators report that parents and students are required to participate in an interview prior to an admission decision. About 83 percent of the administrators indicate that they have the option to deny admission, and almost 80 percent state that students and parents have to sign a contract (e.g., commit to the program) before admission.

**Academic Offerings and Student Services** – An intense, accelerated instructional program with rigorous standards for academic achievement and student behavior is a legislative requirement of the regional alternative education programs. The range of students served (e.g., K-12 grade levels, a wide variety of behavioral issues, a wide range of cognitive capabilities) and academic approaches used produce a wide spectrum of courses offered,

academic initiatives, and student services. At a general level, there are many core academic offerings and student services common to these regional alternative education programs. All 28 programs that serve high school students offer standard diploma courses. About 72 percent of these programs also offer GED preparatory courses, 55 percent offer vocational coursework, 55 percent offer independent study, and 30 percent offer work study components. Administrators indicated a need for more career and technical courses, more electives, a greater focus on literacy, and additional teachers to teach electives and assist special education students. Figure 2 provides an overview of student services offered in the regional alternative education programs.

**Figure 2.**  
**Student Services Offered**



**Student Assessments** – Other legislative requirements for these programs include a set of measurable goals and objectives and an evaluation component to determine student performance and program effectiveness. In this context, over 85 percent of the programs report employing traditional assessments (e.g., an A, B, C, D, F letter grading systems, end-of-year examinations) for all students enrolled. Over 60 percent use nontraditional assessments (e.g., oral presentations, portfolios, self-assessments, grading rubrics shared in advance, behavior) for all students. About 70 percent of the programs use combinations of traditional and nontraditional approaches to assessing their students.

**General Policies** – General policies vary among programs. Administrators report that the following policies are employed by their programs. Since most of these policies apply only to high schools, percentages are for programs serving grades 9-12.

- Specific criteria must be met before a student can return to a regular high school. (90 percent of programs).
- Students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) are allowed to enroll in the alternative programs (90 percent of the programs).
- Students are limited to a certain number of academic credits earned while attending the alternative program (52 percent of programs).
- Students are allowed to take needed courses at a regular high school that cannot be provided by the alternative program (52 percent of programs).
- Students are required to return to their sending high school if they want to graduate with a standard diploma (35 percent of programs).

**Discipline Policies** – Discipline policies vary among programs.

- Eighty-six (86) percent of the programs state that students are subject to the rules of the sending high schools and/or have their own discipline system.
- Forty-eight (48) percent have a zero tolerance policy for misbehavior.
- Seventy-six (76) percent use behavioral contracts.
- Most programs report use of behavioral evaluation sheets daily or weekly.

## B. Staff

**Program Staffing** – Administrators of the 29 programs reported a total of 293 teachers (in full-time equivalents). Of that number, 95 percent are licensed. Additionally, programs reported 85.5 counselors and 51.25 school psychologists. A low pupil-to-teacher ratio is a legislative requirement for these programs. In 2006-2007, the programs reported student-to-teacher ratios between 4:1 and 15:1.

**Professional Development** – A current program of staff development and training is another legislative requirement for this program. The extensive and diverse special needs and challenges of the students assigned to the regional alternative education programs present additional needs for staff development.

Improving and expanding staff development is frequently mentioned as a primary concern of program administrators. These needs include a broad spectrum of professional development related to content areas, use of technology, programmatic and administrative issues, as well as an even broader spectrum of areas that relate to the behavioral problems common to the students served. Table 3 provides information regarding the extent to which the needs for staff professional development in the regional alternative education programs were addressed during the 2006-2007 school year.

**Table 3.**  
**Professional Development**

Staff Development Programs	Percentage of Teachers in Program
Technology	97.6
Content work	94.5
Discipline	91.4
Alternative education practices	87.1
Conflict management	80.0
Alcohol and drug abuse	78.7
Violence	77.1
Counseling	62.6

**C. Program Resources and Support**

**General Resources** – The regional alternative education programs report that their program resources are generally satisfactory. Approximately 80 percent of all responses from the program administrators, across all categories, indicate that they perceived their program resources as either “excellent” or “good” and only three percent of the responses reflect a “poor” ranking.

**External Program Support** – A program for community outreach to build school, business, and community partnerships is a legislative component of the regional alternative education programs. All programs report extensive efforts to build external support, and the program administrators report that they generally receive very good external support.

Administrators report that their school boards, localities, and area agencies generally provide excellent support. Over 80 percent of the responses regarding these sources indicate “excellent” or “good” support.

**D. Parental and Community Involvement**

A procedure for obtaining the participation and support from parents is a legislative requirement of the regional alternative education program. Each program reports initiatives addressing these objectives. Of the responding administrators, 24.1 percent report that parental involvement in their program is “excellent”; 62.1 percent report “good” parental involvement; 13.8 percent report “fair” parental involvement; and zero percent reported that the parental involvement in their program was “poor.”

Perceptions regarding community involvement in the regional alternative education programs are mixed. Of the responding administrators, 6.9 percent report that community involvement in their program is “excellent”; 58.6 percent report “good” community involvement; 31 percent report “fair” community involvement; and 3.5 percent reported that the community involvement in their program was “poor.”

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Program and Student Performance

Defining and measuring performance are different for the alternative education population than it would be in the traditional school systems.

#### A. Considerations for Evaluating Regional Alternative Education Program and Student Performance

The student populations in the regional alternative education programs present challenges because the assigned students often have histories of behavioral problems, low self-esteem, and academic failure. Since these are generally students who have been suspended, these programs are deemed as the only remaining academic option. Almost 97 percent of programs report that students are placed or assigned to their program as “a last chance option.”

The student body of any given program has less continuity from year-to-year (often from month-to-month) than a traditional school. Programs are generally small and address an array of needs. The combination of these needs and the operational constraints of the programs dictate different policies, administrative procedures, and academic approaches. They also dictate a different approach to evaluating both program and student performance. One approach for assessing program and student performance is the programs’ self-reported “program purposes” as presented in Figure 1. These include:

- reduce the dropout rate;
- build self-esteem and responsibility;
- correct dysfunctional and/or dangerous behavior;
- return students to high school to graduate;
- identify career interests;
- gain admission to an institution of higher education;
- secure employment or work/study;
- obtain diploma from sending school in absentia; and
- earn a General Educational Development (GED) certificate through an Individual Student Alternative Education Plan (ISAEP).

#### B. Measures of Achievement

It is difficult to consider standard measurements such as Standards of Learning (SOL) tests, attendance, and dropout rates in the same way as they would be considered for traditional schools because the student populations, educational models, and operational models are different.

**Standards of Learning** – The ability to report SOL test results for students that were served in a regional alternative education program was available for the first time in the 2005-2006 school year. The figures for 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 are reported in Table 4. There were 1,916 alternative education students who took the Standards of Learning tests in English and mathematics in 2006-2007. These students achieved a 48 percent pass rate on the English SOL, and a 33 percent pass rate on the mathematics SOL for 2006-2007, however the data below do not represent cohort data because students move in and out of these programs. It is difficult to know if these same students would have performed better or worse in their home schools.

**Table 4.**  
**Standards of Learning Assessment Results in English and Mathematics [1]**

Year	Students Taking SOL Tests	English Pass Rate Percentage	Mathematics Pass Rate Percentage
2005-2006	1,762	32	19
2006-2007	1,916	48	33

Note [1]: These assessment results reflect students who were in the regional alternative program during test administration.

**Dropout/Dismissal Rates** –The total 2006-2007 dropouts reported by the program administrators for this evaluation was 4.9 percent (i.e., 207 dropouts). The state average for dropouts for traditional schools was 1.88 percent. Most regional alternative education students are considered dropout risks prior to being assigned to these programs. The dismissal/expulsion rate for 2006-2007 was 7.6 percent, and 321 students were dismissed or expelled from the alternative programs.

**Perceptions of Changes in Student Academic Performance** – Administrators were asked to provide their perceptions of changes in their students’ academic performance. The administrators perceive somewhat or substantial improvement in approximately 80 percent of students served.

**Table 5.**  
**Reported Perceptions of Change in Academic Performance**

Reported Change During Assignment to Alternative Education	Substantially Improved	Somewhat Improved	Somewhat Decreased	Substantially Decreased	No Apparent Change	Total Responses
Middle Grades – Mathematics	11.5%	53.8%	3.8%	0.0%	30.8%	26
Middle Grades – English	15.4%	61.5%	0.0%	0.0%	23.1%	26
High School – Mathematics	25.0%	60.7%	0.0%	0.0%	14.3%	28
High School – English	25.0%	71.4%	0.0%	0.0%	3.6%	28

**Perceptions of Changes in Student Disciplinary Incidences** – Correcting behavior is a primary goal of regional alternative education programs. Over 70 percent of the administrators reported decreases in physical violence. Slightly over 60 percent reported decreases in firearms violations. Over 70 percent reported decreases in possession of other weapons. Decreases in substance abuse use were reported by 62 percent, and 24 percent reported no change in substance abuse use. Sixty-two (62) percent reported decreases in offenses against property, while 31 percent reported no change in offenses against property.

**End-of-Year Status of 2006-2007 Students** – Data discussed previously in this report suggest that many of the students that the programs served in 2006-2007 were assigned as a final alternative. Most of these students were at-risk of dropping out, being expelled permanently, or failing academically. Some had already been incarcerated, and the violations that led to their enrollment in the alternative education program (see Table 2) suggest many others were candidates for future incarceration. Table A3 in Attachment A3 summarizes the status of the 2006-2007 students served by the regional alternative education programs based on data provided by the programs as of June 2007. Based on these data, approximately 70 percent of students served in the 2006-2007 regional alternative education programs remain in school, either returning to the regional alternative program for 2007-2008 (21.3 percent), or returning to their sending school for 2007-2008 (48.9 percent). For this population, remaining in school is an accomplishment and a stated goal of the regional alternative education programs.

**ATTACHMENTS**

**Attachment A1**

**Listing of Regional Alternative Education Programs – 2006-2007**

**Table A1.**

**Regional Alternative Education Programs – 2006-2007**

<b>School Division-Fiscal Agent</b>	<b>Other Participating Divisions</b>	<b>Program Name</b>
<b>Bristol City Public Schools</b>	Washington County Public Schools	Crossroads Alternative Education Program
<b>Brunswick County Public Schools</b>	Greensville and Mecklenburg County Public Schools	Southside LINK
<b>Carroll County Public Schools</b>	Galax City Public Schools	Carroll-Galax Regional Alternative Education Program (The RAE Center)
<b>Fairfax County Public Schools</b>	Alexandria City Public Schools	Transition Support Resource Center
<b>Fauquier County Public Schools</b>	Rappahannock County Public Schools	The Regional Continuum of Alternative Education Services
<b>Fluvanna County Public Schools</b>	Alleghany, Bath, Botetourt, Charles City, Clarke, Craig, Culpeper, Floyd, Franklin, Giles, Grayson, Greene, Halifax, Highland, Lancaster, Madison, Orange, Shenandoah, and Smyth County Public Schools, Radford City Public Schools	Project RETURN
<b>Henry County Public Schools</b>	Martinsville City and Patrick County Public Schools	Breaking Barriers
<b>King William County Public Schools</b>	Gloucester, Mathews, Middlesex, Essex, King and Queen, and New Kent County Public Schools, Town of West Point Public Schools	Middle Peninsula Regional Alternative Education Program
<b>Lynchburg City Public Schools</b>	Appomattox, Amherst, Bedford, and Nelson County Public Schools	Regional Alternative Education Project



<b>School Division-Fiscal Agent</b>	<b>Other Participating Divisions</b>	<b>Program Name</b>
<b>Montgomery County Public Schools</b>	Pulaski County Public Schools	Regional Program for Behaviorally Disturbed Youths
<b>Newport News City Public Schools</b>	Hampton City Public Schools	Enterprise Academy
<b>Norfolk City Public Schools</b>	Chesapeake, Franklin, Portsmouth, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach City Public Schools, Isle of Wight and Southampton County Public Schools	Southeastern Cooperative Education Program
<b>Northampton County Public Schools</b>	Accomack County Public Schools	Project Renew
<b>Nottoway County Public Schools</b>	Amelia, Buckingham, Charlotte, Cumberland, Lunenburg, and Prince Edward County Public Schools	Piedmont Regional Alternative School
<b>Petersburg City Public Schools</b>	Dinwiddie, Prince George, and Sussex County Public Schools, Colonial Heights and Hopewell City Public Schools	Bermuda Run Educational Center Regional Alternative Program
<b>Pittsylvania County Public Schools</b>	Danville City Public Schools	Pittsylvania County/Danville City Regional Alternative School
<b>Powhatan County Public Schools</b>	Goochland and Louisa County Public Schools	Project Return Regional Alternative Education Program
<b>Prince William County Public Schools</b>	Manassas and Manassas Park City Public Schools	New Dominion Alternative School
<b>Richmond City Public Schools</b>	Hanover and Henrico County Public Schools	Metro-Richmond Alternative Education Program
<b>Roanoke City Public Schools</b>	Salem City Public Schools	Roanoke/Salem Regional
<b>Roanoke County Public Schools</b>	Bedford County Public Schools	R. E. Cook Regional Alternative School

<b>School Division-Fiscal Agent</b>	<b>Other Participating Divisions</b>	<b>Program Name</b>
<b>Russell County Public Schools</b>	Tazewell County Public Schools	Project BRIDGE
<b>Scott County Public Schools</b>	Lee County Public Schools	Renaissance Program
<b>Stafford County Public Schools</b>	Caroline, King George, and Spotsylvania County Public Schools, and Fredericksburg City Public Schools	Regional Alternative Education Program
<b>Staunton City Public Schools</b>	Harrisonburg and Waynesboro City Public Schools, and Augusta County Public Schools	Genesis Alternative School
<b>Westmoreland County Public Schools</b>	Northumberland and Richmond County Public Schools	Northern Neck Regional Alternative Education Program
<b>Wise County Public Schools</b>	Dickenson County Public Schools and Norton City Public Schools	Regional Learning Academy
<b>Wythe County Public Schools</b>	Bland County Public Schools	Wythe/Bland Alternative Education Program
<b>York County Public Schools</b>	Poquoson City and Williamsburg-James City County Public Schools	Three Rivers Project-Enterprise Academy

Attachment A2

Profile of Regional Alternative Education Programs – 2006-2007

Table A2.

Profile of Available Slots, Students Served, and Grades Served – 2006-2007

School Division Fiscal Agent	Grades Served by Each of the Regional Alternative Education Programs												Number of Students Served*	Number of State Slots Available*	Number of Grades Served	
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11				12
Bristol City										x	x	x	x	59	26	4
Brunswick County							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	83	87	7
Carroll County								x	x	x	x	x	x	59	32	6
Fairfax County								x	x	x	x	x	x	63	44	6
Fauquier County								x	x	x	x	x	x	119	65	6
Fluvanna County	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	578	63	13
Henry County							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	44	31	7
King William County							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	185	110	7
Lynchburg City							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	85	67	7
Montgomery County							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	405	61	7
Newport News City							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	474	166	7
Norfolk City							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	433	116	7
Northampton County										x	x	x	x	65	22	4
Nottoway County							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	90	77	7
Petersburg City							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	54	28	7
Pittsylvania County							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	55	36	7
Powhatan County							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	55	55	7
Prince William County							x	x	x					176	64	3
Richmond City							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	57	41	7
Roanoke City							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	224	54	7
Roanoke County				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	47	26	10
Russell County	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	252	162	13
Scott County							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	78	61	7
Stafford County										x	x	x	x	165	55	4
Staunton City							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	107	99	7
Westmoreland County							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	71	41	7
Wise County										x	x	x	x	54	59	4
Wythe County									x	x	x	x	x	20	25	5
York County							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	48	46	7
<b>Totals =</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>4,205</b>	<b>1,819</b>	

\*Since students are assigned for short periods of time in some programs, multiple students can be served per slot.

**Attachment A3**

**Profile of Regional Alternative Education Program Student Status  
End of School Year – 2006-2007**

**Table A3.**

**Status of Students at the End of the 2006-2007 School Year [1]**

School Division Fiscal Agent	Number of Students Served	Total Number of Students Who...			
		Remain in the Program for 2007-2008 [2]	Returned to Sending School for 2007-2008 [2]	Dropped out in 2006-2007 [2]	Were Expelled/Dismissed in 2006-2007 [2]
Bristol City Public Schools	59	15 (25.4%)	13 (22.0%)	5 (8.4%)	4 (6.8%)
Brunswick County Public Schools	83	47 (56.6%)	6 (7.2%)	1 (1.2%)	16 (19.3%)
Carroll County Public Schools	59	17 (28.8%)	5 (8.5%)	3 (5.1%)	2 (3.4%)
Fairfax County Public Schools	63	8 (12.7%)	40 (63.5%)	1 (1.6%)	1 (1.6%)
Fauquier County Public Schools	119	55 (46.2%)	29 (24.4%)	2 (1.7%)	0 (0.0%)
Fluvanna County Public Schools	578	68 (11.8%)	200 (34.6%)	20 (3.5%)	36 (6.2%)
Henry County Public Schools	44	8 (18.2%)	16 (36.4%)	8 (18.1%)	6 (13.6%)
King William County Public Schools	185	24 (13.0%)	113 (61.2%)	2 (1.1%)	8 (4.3%)
Lynchburg City Public Schools	85	20 (23.5%)	40 (47.1%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (2.4%)
Montgomery County Public Schools	405	36 (8.9%)	368 (90.9%)	2 (0.5%)	38 (9.4%)
Newport News City Public Schools	474	57 (12.0%)	417 (88.0%)	15 (3.2%)	79 (16.7%)
Norfolk City Public Schools	433	136 (31.4%)	151 (34.9%)	66 (15.2%)	8 (1.8%)
Northampton County Public Schools	65	25 (38.5%)	4 (6.2%)	1 (1.5%)	0 (0.0%)
Nottoway County Public Schools	90	0 (0.0%)	90 (100.0%)	5 (5.6%)	7 (7.8%)
Petersburg City Public Schools	54	2 (3.7%)	22 (40.7%)	4 (7.4%)	27 (50.0%)
Pittsylvania County Public Schools	55	2 (3.6%)	27 (49.1%)	0 (0.0%)	13 (23.6%)
Powhatan County Public Schools	55	10 (18.2%)	30 (54.6%)	2 (3.6%)	1 (1.8%)
Prince William County Public Schools	176	89 (50.6%)	52 (29.6%)	7 (4.0%)	28 (15.9%)
Richmond City Public Schools	57	3 (5.3%)	53 (93.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.8%)
Roanoke City Public Schools	224	89 (39.7%)	76 (33.9%)	17 (7.6%)	1 (0.4%)
Roanoke County Public Schools	47	16 (34.0%)	10 (21.3%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (12.8%)
Russell County Public Schools	252	60 (23.8%)	62 (24.6%)	24 (9.5%)	2 (0.8%)
Scott County Public Schools	78	19 (24.4%)	23 (29.5%)	7 (9.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Stafford County Public Schools	165	11 (6.7%)	133 (80.6%)	8 (4.8%)	13 (7.9%)
Staunton City Public Schools	107	50 (46.7%)	6 (5.6%)	2 (1.9%)	10 (9.3%)
Westmoreland County Public Schools	71	7 (9.9%)	30 (42.3%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.4%)
Wise County Public Schools	54	15 (27.8%)	12 (22.2%)	5 (9.3%)	0 (0.0%)
Wythe County Public Schools	20	4 (20.0%)	3 (15.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (5.0%)
York County Public Schools	48	2 (4.2%)	27 (56.3%)	0 (0.0%)	10 (20.8%)
Totals =	4,205	895 (21.3%)	2,058 (48.9%)	207 (4.9%)	321 (7.6%)

Note [1]: Data collection regarding the number of graduates or GED recipients and students who otherwise left the program was incomplete at the time of this report and those numbers are not reflected in this chart; therefore, percentages do not total 100 percent.

Note [2]: Estimates based on data reported by the programs and follow-up communications.

**Attachment A4*****Code of Virginia Citation for Alternative Education Programs for Certain Students***

§ 22.1-209.1:2. Alternative education programs for certain students.

A. With such funds as may be appropriated for this purpose, the Board of Education shall establish a program consisting of alternative education options for elementary, middle, and high school students in compliance with subdivision D 6 of § 22.1-253.13:1 who (i) have committed an offense in violation of school board policies relating to weapons, alcohol or drugs, or intentional injury to another person, or against whom a petition or warrant has been filed alleging such acts or school board charges alleging such policy violations are pending; (ii) have been expelled from school attendance or have received one suspension for an entire semester, or have received two or more long-term suspensions within one school year; or (iii) have been released from a juvenile correctional center and have been identified by the Superintendent of the Department of Correctional Education and the relevant division superintendent as requiring an alternative education program. However, no child shall be assigned to any alternative education program described in this section for more than one school year without an annual assessment of the placement to determine the appropriateness of transitioning the child into the school division's regular program. On and after July 1, 1994, the program shall consist of up to 10 regional pilot projects; any additional pilot projects shall be located in regions throughout the state to provide greater geographical distribution of such projects. All such projects shall be awarded on a competitive basis to applicants responding to requests for proposals, giving priority in awarding any new sites, to the extent practicable, to applicants in areas with high student suspension and expulsion rates that meet the requirements in subsection B of this section. The Board of Education shall promulgate regulations for the implementation of the program.

B. Upon the appropriation of funds for the purposes of this section, the Department of Education shall issue a request for proposals for regional projects to pilot selected alternative education options by July 1, 1993. The first such grants shall be awarded by August 20, 1993.

In the 2001 fiscal year, and upon the appropriation of funds for these purposes, the Department of Education shall issue a request for proposals for regional pilot projects for selected alternative education options for elementary school students. The first such grants shall be awarded by September 1, 2001.

Applications for grants shall include the following components:

1. An agreement executed by two or more school divisions and approval of their respective governing bodies to pilot an alternative education option as provided in subsection A, and a plan for the apportionment of responsibilities for the administration, management, and support of the program, including, but not limited to, the facilities and location for the program, daily operation and oversight, staffing, instructional materials and resources, transportation, funding and in-kind services, and the program of instruction.

2. A procedure for obtaining the participation in or support for the program, as may be determined, of the parents, guardian or other person having charge or control of a child placed in the program.
  3. An interagency agreement for cooperation executed by the local departments of health and social services or welfare; the juvenile and domestic relations district court; law-enforcement agencies; institutions of higher education and other postsecondary training programs; professional and community organizations; the business and religious communities; dropout prevention and substance abuse prevention programs; community services boards located in the applicants' respective jurisdictions; and the Department of Correctional Education.
  4. A curriculum developed for intensive, accelerated instruction designed to establish high standards and academic achievement for participating students.
  5. An emphasis on building self-esteem and the promotion of personal and social responsibility.
  6. A low pupil teacher ratio to promote a high level of interaction between the students and the teacher.
  7. An extended day program, where appropriate, to facilitate remediation; tutoring; counseling; organized, age-appropriate, developmental education for elementary and middle school children; and opportunities that enhance acculturation and permit students to improve their social and interpersonal relationship skills.
  8. Community outreach to build strong school, business, and community partnerships, and to promote parental involvement in the educational process of participating children.
  9. Specific, measurable goals and objectives and an evaluation component to determine the program's effectiveness in reducing acts of crime and violence by students, the dropout rate, the number of youth committed to juvenile correctional centers, and recidivism; and in increasing the academic achievement levels and rehabilitative success of participating students, admission to institutions of higher education and other postsecondary education and training programs, and improving staff retention rates.
  10. The number of children who may be assigned to the regional pilot alternative education program during the school year.
  11. A plan for transitioning the enrolled students into the relevant school division's regular program.
  12. A current program of staff development and training.
- C. Beginning with the first year of program implementation, the Department of Education shall be entitled to deduct annually from the locality's share for the education of its students a sum equal to the actual local expenditure per pupil for the support of those students placed by the relevant school division in any such pilot program. The amount of the actual transfers shall be based on data accumulated during the prior school year.

D. A school board shall require written notification to the pupil's parent, guardian, or other person having charge or control, when a pupil commits an offense in violation of school board policies, which school officials determine was committed without the willful intent to violate such policies, or when the offense did not endanger the health and safety of the individual or other persons, of the nature of the offense no later than two school days following its occurrence. A school board shall require the principal of the school where the child is in attendance or other appropriate school personnel to develop appropriate measures, in conjunction with the pupil's parent or guardian, for correcting such behavior.

E. The Board shall require submission of interim evaluation reports of each pilot program biannually and shall compile these reports and other program materials and report the status of such programs on a periodic basis, as may be established, during the 1993 legislative interim to the Special Joint Subcommittee on School Crime and Violence. The Board shall report the effectiveness of such programs and their components annually to the Governor and the General Assembly beginning by December 1, 1994.

F. For the purposes of this section, "regional pilot program" means a program supported and implemented by two or more school divisions which are either geographically contiguous or have a community of interest.

G. For the purposes of this section, "one school year" means no more than 180 teaching days.

(1993, cc. 819, 856; 1994, c. 762; 1995, c. 533; 1996, cc. 755, 914; 2000, c. 739; 2004, cc. 939, 955.)



## VIRGINIA COMMISSION ON YOUTH

### Survey of Alternative Education Programs Relating to Suspended and Expelled Youth

The Virginia Commission on Youth, a bipartisan commission of the Virginia General Assembly, is studying alternative education options available within the Commonwealth. This study addresses the various challenges facing school divisions in their use of **expulsion or suspensions** and the availability of **alternative education options** currently available.

The purpose of this survey is to increase knowledge on alternative education programs in Virginia for students who have been suspended or expelled. A complete picture of alternative education programs, as supported by data, is important for collecting and sharing information on: 1) existing programs and promising practices throughout the state and 2) unmet service needs.

For purposes of this survey, alternative education programs serve students when any of the following circumstances exist:

- a violation of school board policy related to weapons, drug and substance abuse or intentional injury to another,
- an expulsion or suspension, and/or release from a correctional/detention center, if placement is thought to be appropriate,
- an expulsion or suspension imposed by a school division in response to any disciplinary infraction outlined in school board policy,
- a placement in lieu of suspension or expulsion.

When completing this survey, include:

- only alternative schools or programs for at-risk students or those students who have been suspended, expelled, or released from a juvenile correctional center,
- only alternative schools or programs administered by your division,
- privately-run sites contracted by your division,
- homebound instruction tailored specifically for students who have been suspended, expelled, or released from a juvenile correctional/detention center, and/or
- alternative schools or programs that operate during weekday evenings or weekends.

A staff person knowledgeable about the alternative education programs/schools in your division should complete this survey. We encourage you to complete this survey online at <http://coy.state.va.us>.

#### **PLEASE PRINT.**

Name of Person Completing Survey \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

School Division \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

**This survey can be completed online. Please visit <http://coy.state.va.us>.**



## Section I – Basic Information

1. During 2005-2006, in your school division, what is the total number of suspended or expelled youth who were offered educational services during the time of their suspension or expulsion? \_\_\_\_\_
2. During 2005-2006, in your school division, what is the total number of suspended or expelled youth who were not offered educational services during the time of their suspension or expulsion? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Does your division have an Alternative Education school/program for youth who have been suspended, expelled or utilized in lieu of suspension or expulsion?  
 Yes  
 No ***If NO, please proceed to Question 28.***
4. How many Alternative Education schools/programs are there in your division? \_\_\_\_\_

*Please list separately each Alternative Education school or program name/title with the accompanying information. Please photocopy this survey in order to list all of the Alternative Education schools/programs in your school division. You will be prompted at the end of this survey to provide information on additional Alternative Education programs not listed below.*

School Division

Alternative Education Program/School

Contact Name/Title

Address/City Zip Code

Contact Phone

Contact Email

What year did this program/school open or begin? \_\_\_\_\_

Does this school/program serve: *(Check all that apply.)*

- Suspended/Expelled Youth
- Youth in danger of being suspended or expelled
- Other *Please specify.* \_\_\_\_\_

Have you had difficulty placing students in this program?

- Yes
- No

In the past two years, how many students in your division have had to wait to be placed, based on lack of available slots?

- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- Greater than 20

Please estimate the average length of any placement delay, if applicable.

1. Under one week
2. 1 to 2 weeks
3. 2 to 4 weeks
4. More than 4 weeks

Is this a Regional Alternative Education program/school?

- Yes      ***If YES, please proceed to Question 29.***  
 No        ***If NO, please proceed to Question 5.***

5. Which operational setting best describes this Alternative Education program? (*Please check the appropriate response.*)

- Solely operated by this division  
 Jointly operated with other division  
 Jointly operated with other organizations or agencies  
 Privately operated  
 Other – *Please explain.*

6. If this program is affiliated with multiple schools and/or divisions, please name all of these below.

7. Please list the fiscal agent/program administrator for this program.

8. Which of these categories does the Alternative Education program/school best fit? (*Please check all that apply.*)

- High School program/school (Grades 9-12)  
 Middle School (Grades 6-8)  
 Elementary School (Grades K-5)  
 Other – *Please explain.*

9. What is the capacity for the program/school? (maximum number of students who can be served at one time)?

10. What was the total number of students served in the 2005-06 school year? (unduplicated count)

11. What is the estimated total number of students to be served in the 2006-07 school year?

12. Is there currently a waiting list for this program/school?  
 Yes Approximately how many students are on the list from your school division? \_\_\_\_\_  
 No
13. What are the student eligibility criteria for participation in the Alternative Education program/school? *Please check all that apply.*  
 Expelled  
 Short-term Suspended (for 10 days or less)  
 Long-term Suspended (more than 10 days but less than 365 days)  
 Released from Juvenile Correctional/Detention Center  
 In lieu of suspension or expulsion  
 Pending disposition of community charges  
 Other – *Please describe.*
14. How are students enrolled in the program/school? *Please check all that apply.*  
 Outside service provider referral  
 Parent/family referral  
 Required by school division or school board policy  
 Self-referral  
 Teacher or staff referral  
 Other – *Please describe.*
15. What are the goals for this program/school? *Please check all that apply.*  
 Transition students to regular academic setting  
 Other – *Please describe.*
16. What are the components of the program/school? *Please check all that apply.*  
 Academic remediation or tutoring  
 Behavior management training  
 Community service  
 Conflict resolution training  
 Core academic classes  
 Crisis intervention  
 Drug/substance abuse prevention training  
 Elective classes  
 In-house counseling  
 Life skills training  
 Parent/family involvement  
 Peer mediation  
 Referrals to external counseling  
 Services provided through a partnership with a community-based organization  
 Social skills training  
 Technology-based instruction  
 Work participation – not school-based  
 Student assistance program  
 Restorative justice/practices  
 Mediation  
 Other – *Please describe.*
17. What is the approximate percentage of students in the program who have an Individual Education Plan (IEP)?

- 0-10 percent
- 11-20 percent
- 21-30 percent
- 31-40 percent
- 41-50 percent
- 51-75 percent
- More than 75 percent

18. When does the Alternative Education program/school operate? *Please check all that apply.*
- Before school
  - Regular school hours
  - After school – afternoon
  - After school – evening
  - Weekend
  - Summer
  - Other – *Please describe.*
19. How many hours does this school/program operate per week?
- 0-10 hours
  - 11-20 hours
  - 21-30 hours
  - More than 30 hours
20. What is the student/teacher ratio?
21. What is the approximate per pupil cost?
22. What is the approximate percentage of the per pupil cost that is provided with local funds?
23. What is the approximate percentage of the per pupil cost that is provided with federal funds?
24. Do students have the opportunity to earn verified credits while participating in the program/school?
- Yes
  - No
25. What are the most significant strengths of the program/school?

26. What are the most significant challenges for the program/school?
27. Please include any additional comments or concerns not addressed in previous questions or information on other initiatives that address alternative education issues in your division. Use additional sheets if necessary.

**Survey is complete. Thank you!**

**Please make sure you have completed Question 4 through 27 for every Alternative Education programs in your school division. You may photocopy this survey in order to list each Alternative Education program/school.**

**Please continue to the end of the survey for directions on submitting the survey to Commission on Youth.**

**Section II — If your division does NOT have an Alternative Education program or school**

If your division does NOT have an Alternative Education program or school

28. Please identify the reasons why your division does not currently having an alternative education program/school. Please check all reasons that may apply.

- Lack of financial resources
- Lack of information on alternative education models
- Lack of time and staff resources available to create program
- Not consistent with other division initiatives
- Other initiatives have higher priority
- Other — *Please specify.*

29. Please include any additional comments, concerns not addressed previously, or information on other initiatives that address alternative education issues in your division.

**Survey is complete. Thank you!**

**PLEASE RETURN BY WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2006  
VIA FAX OR ELECTRONICALLY TO**

**Leah Hamaker  
Legislative Analyst  
Virginia Commission on Youth  
517B General Assembly Building  
Richmond, Virginia 23219  
Email [lhamaker@leg.state.va.us](mailto:lhamaker@leg.state.va.us)  
Fax 804-371-0574**

**If questions, please email them to the address above or telephone 804-371-2481.**

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
P.O. BOX 2120  
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA 23218-2120

SUPTS. MEMO NO. 244  
November 9, 2006

INFORMATIONAL

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Billy K. Cannaday, Jr.  
Superintendent of Public Instruction

SUBJECT: Survey of Alternative Education Programs  
Related to Suspended and Expelled Youth

The Virginia Commission on Youth, a bipartisan commission of the Virginia General Assembly, is studying alternative education options available within the Commonwealth. This study will investigate and report on the availability of regional and local alternative education programs that provide educational services for expelled and suspended students who cannot be served in traditional public school settings.

The study's purpose also includes identifying various challenges facing school divisions in serving these students, and collecting information about alternative education options available within the Commonwealth. In order to accomplish this goal, the Commission on Youth is conducting a survey which focuses on alternative education programs currently being operated during the 2006-07 school year. School divisions are being requested to complete the survey.

"The Survey of Alternative Education Programs Relating to Suspended and Expelled Youth" may be accessed at <http://coy.state.va.us>. The Commission on Youth will be sending each division superintendent an explanatory letter and a hard copy of the survey. If preferred, the hard copy of the survey may be returned. Regardless of the method selected, the survey should be returned by November 27, 2006, to Leah Hamaker, Legislative Policy Analyst, Virginia Commission on Youth, Suite 517 B, General Assembly Building, Richmond, VA 23219-0406, fax 804-371-0574.

An individual survey should be completed for each alternative education program/school for suspended or expelled youth in the division. The school division that serves as fiscal agent for the regional alternative education program should complete the survey.

Questions regarding the survey content should be directed to Leah Hamaker, legislative policy analyst at 804-371-2481, [lhamaker@leg.state.va.us](mailto:lhamaker@leg.state.va.us). Other questions may be directed to Cynthia A. Cave, director, office of student services at 804-225-2818, or by e-mail at [Cynthia.Cave@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Cynthia.Cave@doe.virginia.gov).

BKCJr/ADC/fta



## Study of Alternative Education Options for Suspended/Expelled Students

Second Year

April 3, 2007

Leah D. Hamaker



### Presentation Outline

- Study Mandate
- Virginia's Regional Alternative Education Programs
- Survey of Virginia's Alternative Education Programs
- Upcoming Study Activities



## Study Mandate

- The Commission on Youth will continue to study alternative education program options and report findings to the Commission on Youth prior to the 2008 General Assembly Session.
  
- Issues to be studied include:
  - existing prevention programs for at-risk youth;
  - available funding for school-based prevention programs; and
  - funding for a second tier of regional alternative education programs.

3



## Virginia's Regional Alternative Education Programs

- The General Assembly provides funding to establish and maintain Virginia's 29 regional alternative education programs.
  
- During the 2005-2006 school year, state funding was slightly over \$5.5 million.

Source: Virginia Board of Education Report on Regional Alternative Education Programs, 2006.

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## Virginia's Regional Alternative Education Programs

- Regional Alternative Education programs are designed to establish options for students who have violated school board policy, have been expelled or suspended on a long-term basis, or are returning from correctional centers.
- Program goals are:
  - reduce the dropout rate;
  - build self-esteem and responsibility;
  - return students to the sending high school to graduate; and
  - correct dysfunctional or dangerous behavior.

Source: Virginia Board of Education Report on Regional Alternative Education Programs, 2006.

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## Virginia's Regional Alternative Education Programs

- Section 22.1-209.12 of the *Code of Virginia* requires an annual evaluation of the effectiveness of these programs.
- Conclusions related to the programs are:
  - Over 70 percent of program administrators perceived changes in student academic performances.
  - Observed decreases in violence, firearms, and weapon violations.
  - Ratings of good or excellent were noted for parental involvement, discipline policies, student assessments, and academics.

Source: Virginia Board of Education Report on Regional Alternative Education Programs, 2006.

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## Survey of Alternative Education Programs

- There is little information regarding the availability of local programs that provide educational services to suspended and expelled students.
- A complete picture of alternative education programs, supported by data, is important for collecting and sharing information on:
  - unmet service needs; and
  - existing programs and promising practices throughout the Commonwealth.
- A survey of school divisions regarding alternative education programs would demonstrate whether there was a need for additional programs.

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## Survey of Alternative Education Programs

- Survey forms were mailed to each school division in November 2006 to collect information from 2005-2006 school year on existing programs serving students who were:
  - *long-term suspended;*
  - *expelled;*
  - *released from a correctional/detention center into alternative education; or*
  - *placed in alternative education in lieu of long-term suspension or expulsion.*
- Information was also requested on:
  - *local alternative education programs created and utilized by school divisions;*
  - *funding and structure of these programs; and*
  - *per pupil cost.*
- Survey responses were returned in late 2006.

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## Survey of Alternative Education Programs

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### Initial Results

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## Survey Response

- Responses included information on:
  - *Virginia's 29 regional alternative education programs;*
  - *school divisions' practices for offering alternative educational services to suspended/expelled students*
- The response rate from school divisions was 95% (126 of 132).
- Responses reflect activity during the 2005-2006 academic year.

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## Survey – Students Served

- Superintendents reported 15,602 students were served by local alternative education programs during the 2005-2006 academic year.
- Regional programs accounted for 4,155 additional students being served during 2005-2006.\*
- Alternatives included online courses, career training, court educational services, and the opportunity to make up assignments for short-term suspensions.

\*Source: Virginia Board of Education Report on Regional Alternative Education Programs, 2006.

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## Survey – Students Served

- 92 school divisions provided detailed information regarding the number of students offered educational services.
- The majority of school divisions offered some form of educational service to suspended/expelled students.\*
  - More than half of the reporting divisions offered all disciplined students some form of educational service.
  - 8,820 students were offered alternative education services.

\*Note: Fairfax, Hampton, and Clarke Counties offer all students some form of educational services.

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## Survey – Students not Offered Services

- 57 of those responding reported occurrences where suspended/expelled students were not offered educational services.
  - The total number of students not offered services was 6,268.
  - The average number of youth not offered any form of educational service was 68 per division.
  - This may include those suspended for 10 days or less.
- Other divisions indicated their school board policies supported the concept of discipline for inappropriate misconduct.

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## Survey – Availability of Alternative Education

- 29 regional programs
- 124 locally-administered programs
- 10 not categorized as either regional or local.

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## Survey – Availability of Alternative Education

- Regional programs accounted for the largest proportion of programs available to local divisions.
  - ◆ 65 school divisions have access to regional programs.
  - ◆ 54 have both local and regional programs.
  - ◆ 16 school divisions have local division programs only.
  - ◆ 4 have no access to alternative education programs.
- The average number of programs per locality is 2.5 and more than half the divisions reported access to at least one program.

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## Survey – Availability of Alternative Education

- 188 responses describing alternative education placements.\*
  - 88% (166) indicated no difficulty placing students in alternative education programs.
  - 9% (17) indicated difficulty.
    - ✓ This happened slightly more frequently in regional programs.
  - 5% (5) did not respond to this question.
- Majority of responses indicated no difficulty in locating a placement; however, school divisions did note that students frequently had to wait.

\*Responses reflect divisions' utilization of both local and/or regional programs.

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## Survey – Placement Delay Local Programs 2005-2006

Placement Delay	Frequency
Under one week	55
1-2 weeks	16
2 weeks	8
3-4 weeks	2
More than 4 weeks	20
N/A	7

113 instances of a placement delay for 124 local programs

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## Survey – Placement Delay Regional Programs 2005-2006

Placement Delay	Frequency
Under one week	16
1-2 weeks	6
2 weeks	6
3-4 weeks	3
More than 4 weeks	11
N/A	1

43 instances of a placement delay for 54 regional programs described.\*

\*Regional programs were described multiple times throughout the survey.

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## Survey – Students Served by Local Alternative Education Programs

- 75% expelled/long-term suspended
- 72% in danger of being suspended/expelled
- 10% academic reasons
- 7% in danger of dropping out
- 6% required non-traditional classroom setting
- 6% misbehavior/mental health or medical issues
- 5% GED Prep/ISAEP (Individual Student Alternative Education Plan)
- 3% released from a juvenile correctional/detention center

\*Responses from 124 local alternative education programs identified in the survey.

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## Survey Results – % Students with an Individual Education Program (IEP)

### Local Programs\*

Students w/IEP	# Programs	% Programs
0-10%	60	48
11-20%	21	17
21-30%	18	15
31-40%	8	6
41-50%	9	7
51-75%	3	2
More than 75%	3	2
Did not respond	2	1
Total	124	100

\*Responses from 124 local alternative education programs identified in the survey.

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Survey Results –  
Student/Teacher  
Ratio Local  
Programs\*

Ratio	Frequency	Percent
1 to 1	9	7.26%
2 to 1	3	2.42%
3 to 1	5	4.03%
4 to 1	3	2.42%
5 to 1	7	5.65%
6 to 1	2	1.61%
7 to 1	6	4.84%
8 to 1	11	8.87%
9 to 1	2	1.61%
10 to 1	37	29.84%
12 to 1	13	10.48%
14 to 1	1	0.81%
15 to 1	14	11.29%
15 to 2	1	0.81%
18 to 1 HS		
10 to 1 MS	1	0.81%
20 to 1	3	2.42%
40 to 1	1	0.81%
20 to 1 - non behavior programs, 10 to 1 behavior programs	1	0.81%
HS 10 to 1, MS 5 to 1, ES 5 to 1 -	1	0.81%
One teacher services the program; add'l staff as necessary	1	0.81%
N/A	2	1.61%
Total	124	100.00%

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\*Responses from 124 local alternative education programs identified in the survey.



Survey Results – Hours Operated Per Week  
Local Programs\*

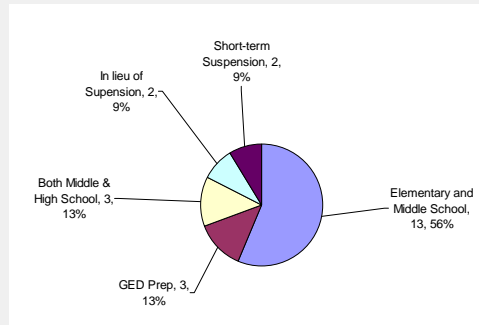
Hours/Week	Frequency	Percent
0-10 hours	16	13
11-20 hours	15	12
21-30 hours	77	62
More than 30 hours	6	5
N/A	10	8
Total	124	100

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\*Responses from 124 local alternative education programs identified in the survey.



## Survey Results – Ability to Earn Verified Credits Local Programs\*



- 89 programs allow for verified credits.
- 33 do not.
  - ✓ 23 of these serve students with different needs, as shown.
- 2 did not respond.

\*Responses from 124 local alternative education programs identified in the survey.

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Survey Results -  
Local Program  
Population\*

Elementary School	1
Elementary School & Middle School	3
Elementary, Middle & High School	8
Middle School	14
Middle & High School	48
High School	32
High School, Other - GED Prep	2
High School, Other -7th and 8th grade	1
Middle School, High School, Elementary School & GED Prep	1
Middle School, High School & GED Prep	1
Middle School, High School & Elementary School, Other - ungraded special education students	1
Middle School, High School & Returning from Incarceration	1
Other - GED Prep	2
Other - 16 - 18 years old and more than eight (8) credits behind	1
Other - All Special Education Students Grades K-12	2
Other - grades 6-7, 11-13 years old	1
Other - Grades 6-9	1
Other - Grades 7-12	2
Other - Grades 8-9 (14 to 17 years old)	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>124</b>

\*Responses from 124 local alternative education programs identified in the survey.

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Survey Results - Program Goals\*

Goals	Frequency	Percent
Transition students to regular academic setting	93	50.54%
Afford students the opportunity to acquire remediation in academic areas and to socially mature.	22	11.96%
Earn GED	19	10.33%
Keep students in program for remainder of their education	20	10.87%
Improve behavior, attendance, and academic progress	8	4.35%
Graduate with a diploma	6	3.26%
Continue student education while preventing interruption in the classroom	4	2.17%
Alternative to Suspension	5	2.72%
Provide core academics for period of suspension	4	2.17%
First-time violators related to drug and alcohol	1	0.54%
Hold until felony charges are cleared	1	0.54%
Community involvement & awareness through community service	1	0.54%
N/A	4	2.17%
Total	188	100

\*Responses from all programs identified in the survey.



Components of Local Programs

- Academic remediation or tutoring
- Behavior management training
- Community service
- Conflict resolution training
- Core academic classes
- Crisis intervention
- Drug/substance abuse prevention training
- Work participation – not school-based
- Student assistance program
- Restorative justice/practices
- Mediation
- Elective classes
- In-house counseling
- Life skills training
- Parent/family involvement
- Peer mediation
- Referrals to external counseling
- Services provided through a partnership with a community-based organization
- Social skills training
- Technology-based instruction
- GED Prep



### Survey – Local Program Per Pupil Cost\*

- The average cost per pupil was reported to be \$4,850.75.
- Per pupil program cost ranged from \$100 to \$22,702.
- Median cost was \$6,000.00.
- Half of all local programs were entirely locally funded.

Percent Local \$	Frequency	Percent
0	1	0.81%
20-25	13	10.48%
33-36	5	4.03%
40-48	5	4.03%
50-55	7	5.65%
60-62	2	1.61%
73-75	5	4.03%
80-85	7	5.65%
90-98	7	5.65%
100-110	61	49.19%
N/A	11	8.87%
Total	124	100.00%

\*Responses from 124 local alternative education programs identified in the survey.

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### Survey Results – Availability of Alternative Education

- Four school divisions do not have access to either a regional or local alternative education program.
- Several school divisions cited the following as reasons for not having a local alternative education program:
  - financial
  - lack of facility space
  - rare occurrence of suspensions and expulsions
  - use of homebound instruction for special instances
  - prefer use of creative methods to educate students in their home schools
  - school board policy supports the concept of student discipline

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### Survey – Majority of Students Served

- Expelled
- Suspended (primarily long-term suspensions but some short-term)
- In danger of being suspended or expelled
- Returning from detention-incarceration
- Truancy concerns
- This is the least restrictive environment in which they can be served due to behavioral issues.

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### ➤ Survey – Students Placed for Non-disciplinary Issues

- Required flexible schedules to work
- Were not successful in traditional classroom or at risk of dropping out
- Cannot attend school for documented medical/psychological reasons
- Needed additional credits to graduate
- Preparing for their GED
- Participating in the ISAEP

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## Survey Results – Benefits of Local Programs

- Students have opportunity to:
  - complete base school assignments;
  - keep up with their academics in a safe environment;
  - receive one-on-one help with assignments;
  - benefit from a structured, small environment; and
  - receive personal and social skill development.

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## Survey Results – Challenges

- Logistical challenges
  - Transportation
  - Space
  - Adherence to testing schedules
- Maintaining qualified teachers
- Lack of discipline from parents
- Basic needs of students not being met
- Students not working up to their potential/not motivated
- Insufficient “seat hours”
- Peer pressure once student transitions back to home school
- Students who experience success do not want to transition back to the regular school setting

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## Survey Results – Initial Findings

- School divisions have access to alternative education programs.
- School divisions offer educational services to suspended/expelled youth.
- Local programs offer a variety of program components tailored to meet the needs of their students.
- The majority of local programs serve youth in danger of being suspended or expelled.
- Students may have to wait to receive alternative education services. This is a more frequent occurrence for divisions utilizing regional programs.
- Identified program challenges include offering students more instructional time, lack of facility space, transportation concerns, and retaining qualified staff.
- Lack of family involvement/interest is the challenge most frequently identified.

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## Upcoming Study Activities

- Complete analysis of Alternative Education Survey
  - Determine whether there are issues that need to be addressed in serving students in alternative education programs.
  - Review various challenges facing school divisions in the Commonwealth regarding alternative education programs.
  - Identify best practices employed by school divisions.
- Compile best practices guide on Virginia's Alternative Education Approaches
  - Clarify existing alternative education policies and practices.
  - Review Virginia's activities in providing alternative education to students, using survey data and other sources.

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## Virginia Commission on Youth

### Upcoming Studying Activities

- Investigate funding opportunities for school-based prevention programs to supplant the Safe and Drug-Free School grants
  - Investigate availability of federal grants through the U.S. Department of Justice, Center for Disease Control, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, United States Department of Education, Safe and Drug-Free Schools program, and the Center for Mental Health Services.
  - Investigate availability of state grants such as funds available from the DCJS, VDH, and DMHRSAS.
  - Investigate programs offered through the state Student Assistance Programs.
  - Investigate availability of other funding sources such as the Tobacco Settlement fund. Some states offer grants to school divisions for prevention programs as well as alternative education programs.
  - Review other states' fundraising Initiatives for funding prevention programs, such as accessing independent resources and encouraging local collaboration among schools, agencies, and businesses.
  - Review feasibility of conducting a comprehensive statewide youth risk survey to access untapped federal funds.

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## Virginia Commission on Youth

### Upcoming Study Activities

- Investigate funding for a second tier of regional alternative education programs
  - Utilize survey results to ascertain need for second tier of regional alternative education programs.
  - Offer funding proposal, based on survey findings if appropriate, prior to the 2008 General Assembly Session.
- Review existing state programs that address prevention and discipline for at-risk youth
  - Review Virginia's Student Assistance programs to ascertain their role in prevention of at-risk behavior in students.
  - Review the Behavioral Intervention Plans for Virginia's Schools offered through Virginia's Training/Technical Assistance Center (T/TAC) to determine if it is effective in meeting the needs of at-risk students.
- Reconvene Advisory Group to assist in study effort and review proposed recommendations

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