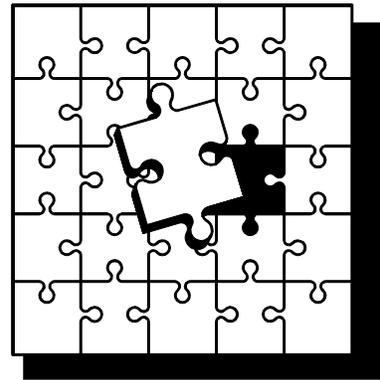


Tennessee s Alternative Schools: Serving Disruptive Students



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Executive Summary

The Education Improvement Acts (EIA) of 1992 requires local boards of education to establish alternative schools for students in grades 7 through 12 who have been suspended or expelled. The State Board of Education defines an alternative school as a short term intervention program designed to develop academic and behavioral skills for students who have been suspended or expelled from the regular school program. In Tennessee, the term “alternative school” can refer to many different scenarios: a separate facility with its own teaching staff and administration, a portable building located on school grounds, a classroom set aside for disruptive students, even students sitting in the local board of education’s office “doing their time.”

The Office of Education Accountability (OEA) reviewed the extent to which alternative schools have been put into place, students served, cost of programs, and effectiveness of schools. To obtain the most current information on alternative schools, OEA staff surveyed all 139 superintendents in the state in November 1994—101 returned the survey.¹ The report concludes:

- 1. Superintendents indicate that the need for alternative schools exceeds available capacity in some districts.** Forty-four of the 93 superintendents responding to the OEA survey stated that the need for alternative placements is greater than the available capacity. The State Board of Education, through its School Safety Advisory Council, has also noted a widespread need for more alternative placement options for disruptive students. According to information from the Department of Education, in school year 1993-94: 108,695 students were served by in-school suspension; 63,595 students received out-of-school suspension; and 9,476 students were served by an alternative school. (Note that one student may be included in two or more categories.) (See page 6.)
- 2. The State Board of Education and the Department of Education have made efforts to address school violence in Tennessee.** The Department of Education conducted a survey of superintendents in April 1994 regarding perceptions of violence in schools. Most of the metropolitan and urban districts responding to the survey agreed that there was a perception of violence, while rural districts did not see student violence as a problem. The systems that did not perceive violence as a problem noted preventive measures that proved effective in reducing and eliminating violence in the district, such as school board policies, community involvement, and conflict resolution training. The State Board of Education has established a School Safety Advisory Council, the School Safety Ad Hoc Committee for Alternative Placements, and the Department of Education has established a School Safety Center. The board and the department are attempting to gather information on school violence and develop policies and programs to address violence in schools. (See pages 6-8.)
- 3. Some alternative schools in Tennessee appear to be used as in-school suspension.** Based on the length of time students were assigned to alternative schools, it appears

¹ Because some superintendents who returned the survey did not have an alternative school, their responses were not counted in each response and total. Similarly, some superintendents did not answer every survey question. This accounts for the different denominators used in calculating percentages throughout the report.

that some school systems in the state have used their alternative school more as an in-school suspension program than an alternative program. A Department of Education March 1994 survey showed that in many school districts the length of stay for students was 10 days or less. Twenty-eight of 82 superintendents responding to the OEA survey noted that their students stay in the alternative school 10 days or less—with some students staying as little as three days or less. (See pages 8-9.)

- 4. Most school systems have established alternative schools; however, some do not serve all grade levels the law requires.** Only five of the 101 superintendents responding to the survey had not established an alternative school as required. Four additional systems were not serving grades 7 and 8 with an alternative school, although they are required to by law. In addition, some systems with established alternative schools serve some students in grades K-6, although not required to do so by law. (See page 9.)
- 5. School systems should develop a working relationship with juvenile court.** In 1994 the Tennessee General Assembly passed Senate Joint Resolution 298, which encourages local school systems to work with juvenile courts. Sixty-six (71%) of the 92 respondents stated they had a working relationship with juvenile court. Juvenile court judges interviewed stated the only way to deal effectively with increased violence in schools is to foster a close working relationship between the courts and the school systems. The State Board of Education, through its School Safety Policy, is encouraging the development of working relationships and information sharing between educational agencies and the justice system. (See page 9.)
- 6. The Department of Education and the State Board of Education should review the authority to assign students to alternative schools.** Most of the superintendents responding to the OEA's survey reported the use of a combination of individuals who have the authority to assign students to the alternative school. Those include teachers, principals, disciplinary board members, and juvenile court judges. However, some systems give the principal the sole responsibility for assigning students to the alternative school. (See page 10.)
- 7. Some school systems report a lack of adequate access to guidance counselors.** Thirty-one of 90 superintendents responding to the survey stated they do not have adequate access to guidance counselors, and most believe they need more counselors. While most report a need for more counselors, some said they need counselors trained to work with "at-risk" students. Other systems reported a need for guidance counselors to work with families as well as the disruptive student. At full funding the BEP would generate funding for one elementary guidance counselor per 500 Average Daily Membership (ADM) for Kindergarten through 6th grade and one guidance counselor per 350 ADM for grades 7 through 12. Based on the State Board of Education's *BEP 94/95 Systems Report*, at full funding the BEP would generate 1,972.5 guidance counselor positions: 942 elementary and 1030.5 secondary. This estimate is based on an ADM of 851,948. According to Department of Education staff, there were approximately 1,400 guidance counselors in the state as of December 1994: 742 elementary, 616 secondary, and 42 that serve both elementary and secondary students. (See page 10.)

- 8. The cost and programmatic effectiveness of alternative schools in Tennessee is unknown.** The Department of Education does not maintain or collect information on alternative schools in the state. Accountability audits are conducted by the department, but they do not focus on program effectiveness. The focus of these audits is to determine whether school systems are complying with state law and the State Board of Education's *Rules and Regulations, and Minimum Standards*. There is little information collected by which to measure program effectiveness or cost effectiveness of alternative schools. Eighty of the 94 superintendents responding to the survey believe their alternative schools are effective. (See pages 10-11.)
- 9. The role of the Department of Education concerning alternative schools is unclear.** The department has established a section for auxiliary programs that works with alternative schools; however, this section was not involved in developing guidelines for alternative schools that have been issued by the department. The section also does not routinely conduct site visits to schools or collect information regarding their operations. (See pages 11-12.)
- 10. All systems should provide support to students after they return to their home school.** Most survey respondents reported following-up with students during their transition from alternative school back to regular school; however, some did not. Sometimes students make considerable improvements in alternative schools, but encounter negative reactions from former teachers and classmates when returning to regular classes. (See pages 12-13.)
- 11. There is a lack of coordination between alternative schools and regular schools.** Problems noted by alternative schools and Department of Education staff include home school teachers not wanting to accept grades assigned by alternative school staff and lack of transportation for students assigned to an alternative school. (See page 13.)

Alternatives

This report proposes alternatives that could help improve the operation and oversight of alternative schools in Tennessee.

- The General Assembly may wish to define the extent to which the department should monitor and collect information on alternative schools.

Local boards of education, the Department of Education, and the State Board of Education should consider:

- establishing criteria to determine the programmatic and cost effectiveness of alternative schools;
- ensuring that alternative schools are established and serving grade levels as required, and that school safety policies are developed as required;
- clearly defining the roles of the Department of Education and the Tennessee School Safety Center; and
- developing rules and regulations regarding alternative schools that could provide guidance for operations. This includes, but is not limited to the minimum length of time students should attend an alternative school, goals of alternative programs, method of assigning students and the degree to which juvenile court and school systems should cooperate.

Tennessee's Alternative Schools

For a complete list of alternatives see pages 14-16.

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Introduction

Over the past 10 years, school systems in Tennessee have used alternative schools as a placement for students who have been suspended or expelled. In Tennessee, the term “alternative school” can refer to many different scenarios: a separate facility with its own teaching staff and administration, a portable building located on school grounds, a classroom set aside for disruptive students, even students sitting in the local board of education’s office “doing their time.” The need for alternative placements also varies across the state. Some systems do not suspend or expel students, but instead use other methods to resolve discipline problems. *Tennessee Code Annotated* §49-6-3402 mandates alternative schools for grades 7 through 12, but each local system has the flexibility to shape the school and program to fit its specific needs.

The Tennessee General Assembly first authorized the use of alternative schools in 1984. The Education Improvement Act of 1992 required local boards of education to establish at least one alternative school for students in grades 7 through 12 who had been suspended or expelled. The act gave local boards of education the discretion to establish alternative schools for students in grades 1 through 6.

This report provides information on the types of alternative schools that have been established in Tennessee; students served; goals of these schools; funding for alternative schools; perceived effectiveness of these schools by superintendents; advantages and disadvantages of alternative schools; and information on how other states fund alternative schools.

Methodology

The conclusions reached and recommendations made in this report are based on the following sources:

1. A review of applicable statutes and Tennessee State Attorney General opinions.
2. A review of relevant literature pertaining to alternative schools for disruptive youth.
3. Interviews with alternative school staff and administrators.
4. Interviews with superintendents.
5. Interviews with appropriate Department of Education and State Board of Education personnel.
6. Interviews with juvenile court judges.
7. A review of reports and audits from other states.
8. A November 1994 survey of school superintendents in the state conducted by the Office of Education Accountability. Of the 139 superintendents surveyed, 101 responded (73%). Of the 101 superintendents responding to the survey: five systems had not established an alternative school as required by law; one system was not required to establish an alternative school since it only served grades K-6; and two superintendents responded that they had not established an alternative school but used other systems’ alternative schools. There were other superintendents responding to the survey who jointly operate their alternative schools with other systems. (See Appendix 1 for a copy of the survey and Appendix 2 for a list of survey respondents.)¹

¹ Because some respondents to the survey did not have alternative schools, their responses are not included in the totals. In addition, some superintendents did not answer every survey question. This accounts for the

9. A review of survey results from a March 1994 Department of Education survey of superintendents regarding alternative schools. As a result of that survey, the Department of Education developed "Revised Alternative School Requirements and Guidelines." (See Appendix 3 for a copy of the guidelines.)
10. A review of survey results from an April 1994 Department of Education survey of superintendents regarding perceptions of school violence.
11. Site visits to alternative schools.
12. A review of Department of Education internal audits of alternative schools.
13. A review of Department of Education guidelines regarding alternative schools.
14. A review of the State Board of Education's rules and regulations.

Background and Overview of Alternative Schools in Tennessee

Because of concerns in the 1980s regarding dropout rates and special needs of at-risk children and youth, Tennessee legislators, educators, and community leaders began a push for the establishment of special schools and programs to curb the problems of disruptive behavior of students. In 1984 the legislature passed Public Chapter 5, which authorized the placement of students with disciplinary problems in alternative school settings and provided for the operation of such schools. In 1986 the legislature amended this statute and stated that alternative schools "shall be available for students in grades seven through twelve who have been suspended or expelled."

Department of Education staff stated that the purpose of the first alternative schools was to remove the disruptive students from their regular classes to help the other students, not necessarily the disruptive student. Schools already had in-school suspension available to them to help handle disruptive students, but after the passage of the Better Schools Program in 1984, approximately 50 alternative schools were put into place the first year. Some systems worked together to offer alternative schools.

Department of Education staff, alternative school staff, and respondents to the Office of Education Accountability survey believe there are many advantages to alternative schools:

- disruptive students are removed from the regular classroom so it enables the other students to learn,
- students attending the alternative schools typically improve academically,
- attendance rates are better,
- students' self-esteem improves, and
- some students stay in school who may have otherwise dropped out or been expelled.

For many students the alternative school setting is the first time they have ever received individual attention. The majority of the Office of Education Accountability survey respondents stated they use their alternative school proactively to serve students prior to suspension or expulsion.

Staff of alternative schools in Tennessee indicate that many children who attend alternative schools ask not to be sent back to their home school. Parents have requested

different denominators used in calculating percentages throughout the report. Reported percentages are based on the number of superintendents who answered each question. For example, if only 90 superintendents answered a question, then 90 instead of 101 would be used as the denominator in calculating percentages.

that their child be placed in an alternative program—even if the student has not been suspended or expelled. The State Board of Education has established the School Safety Ad Hoc Committee for Alternative Placements. The committee has noted that students may desire the alternative placement and incentives will be needed to return to the regular classroom. While some may view a student's placement in an alternative program as punishment, clearly it is serving an unmet need in Tennessee's educational system when the student or parent requests this placement. School personnel stated that assigning students to an alternative school sends a message to students and the community that disruptive behavior will not be tolerated by the school system.

Currently, *Tennessee Code Annotated* §49-6-3402 requires the establishment of at least one alternative school for students in grades 7 through 12 who have been suspended or expelled, with an alternative school for younger grades being optional. Statute allows systems to join together to offer alternative schools and states that attendance in an alternative school will be voluntary unless attendance is made mandatory by the local board of education. The state board of education is required to develop rules and regulations for the operation of alternative schools and must require that documentation be maintained as to the reasons students attend alternative schools. While attending an alternative school students continue to earn state education funds in their home school system and are counted for all school purposes by that system. State Board of Education rules do not allow local boards of education to contract or otherwise affiliate with an alternative school program which requires an order of a court as a precondition to placement.

State Board of Education Rule 0520-1-2-.09 defines an alternative school as “a short term intervention program designed to develop academic and behavioral skills for students who have been suspended or expelled from the regular school program.” Alternative schools in Tennessee have taken many different forms and are actually alternative placements for disruptive students. In Tennessee, the term “alternative school” can refer to many different scenarios: a separate facility with its own teaching staff and administration, a portable building located on school grounds, a classroom set aside for disruptive students, even students sitting in the local board of education's office “doing their time.” The State Board's School Safety Ad Hoc Committee for Alternative Placements is in the process of developing a range of placement options needed by school systems.

Few respondents to the Office of Education Accountability survey reported operating their alternative schools in conjunction with other school systems. Most respondents stated the goal of their alternative school is to keep disruptive students in school. This allows students to continue their academic progress while being placed in a more restrictive environment, which seems preferable to out-of-school suspension or expulsion where students may not be supervised and could fall behind academically. Respondents stated that they attempt to modify disruptive behavior of students so they can learn to function in the regular school setting. In school year 1993-94 there were 9,476 students placed in an alternative school with 7,470 returning to their home school. Department staff cannot account for the 2,006 students who did not return to their home school. They stated the students could have transferred to another school or dropped out, but the department does not collect this information.

Funding for Alternative Schools

In 1984, when the use of alternative schools was first authorized, funding for alternative schools was provided through grants from the Department of Education. Funding for alternative schools is now generated through the Better Education Program (BEP) at a rate of \$2.14 per total average daily membership (ADM) for grades K-12 plus \$17.94 per ADM for grades 7 through 12 (including vocational education). The Department of Education does not determine the amount of money spent by school systems to operate alternative schools. Without this information there is no way to determine the cost effectiveness of programs or compare costs among systems.

Systems use various sources to supplement their funding for alternative schools. Forty-four (49%) of the 89 superintendents responding to the survey indicated that their alternative school is funded through the BEP only, while 23 (26%) reported additional funding. Other sources for funding include fees paid from other systems for use of the alternative schools; special education funding; and funding received through the Office of Children's Services Administration.² According to staff of that office, their program is actually a combined effort with juvenile court judges to reduce the number of children committed to state custody. Money is sometimes used by the court to establish, or help fund, existing alternative schools.

Respondents were also asked about their expenditures for alternative schools. Total expenditures varied widely across the state. In school year 1993-94, for example, the Hollow-Rock/Bruceton school system reported spending \$1,400 for its alternative school; Lexington City spent \$14,000; Robertson County spent \$120,000; Bradley County spent \$135,000; and Warren County had no budget established for its alternative school. Some systems reported their only expenditures to be the salary for a teacher, while others reported funding teachers, supplies, and rent for a building to house the program.

The Southern Regional Education Board has compiled information on how some other states fund alternative educational programs. A summary is provided below:

- Arkansas: Alternative programs are funded through a competitive grant process. For the 1993-95 biennium, \$1.1 million is available each year for grants.
- Florida: Alternative programs are funded as part of dropout prevention. Funds allocated are based on the Florida Education Finance Program funding formula. Dropout prevention has an additional program weight applied to the base student allocation in the early stages of the formula calculation.
- Georgia: School districts are authorized to establish alternative programs for disruptive youth; however, there has been no additional assistance from the state until the current school year. The budget for 1994-95 includes \$16 million in general funds and lottery proceeds to support these grants.
- Maryland: The state has provided \$1.8 million to establish a non-residential middle school for disruptive students in 1994-95. An additional \$400,000 is available for other alternative education programs.

²The Office of Children's Services Administration, a division of the Department of Finance and Administration, is responsible for overseeing and directing the operations of the Children's Plan.

Tennessee's Alternative Schools

- Mississippi: School districts receive funds for alternative education based on a formula calculation. Students in these programs are not counted as part of the regular average daily attendance in the minimum finance program.
- Virginia: Alternative services are provided in two ways. First, districts with approved programs receive the basic level of funding for students in the alternative settings. Second, pilot programs for alternative education have been established in four sites for 1993-94. The 1994 legislature authorized pilots to expand to nine sites with \$1.2 million to be matched by districts based on local wealth.³

³Southern Regional Education Board paper titled "Notes on Funding Alternative Educational Programs," dated September 1994.

Analysis and Conclusions

Need for Alternative Schools

Need For Alternative Schools Exceeds Available Capacity

Forty-four of the 93 superintendents responding to the November 1994 OEA survey stated that the need for alternative school placement is greater than the available capacity. With the rising number of students suspended and/or expelled from school, and the increased focus on disruptive behavior and school violence, it is important that systems serve disruptive students through an alternative placement whenever possible. Systems should also ensure that students are sent to an alternative program rather than receiving out-of-school suspension/expulsion whenever possible so students can continue their education.

According to information from the Department of Education, in school year 1993-94, 108,695 students were served by in-school suspension; 63,595 students received out-of-school suspension; and 9,476 students were served by an alternative school. (Note that one student may be included in two or more categories.) Sixty (71%) of the 85 superintendents responding reported they were currently (as of November 1994) serving repeat offenders.

Truancy was the major reason for suspensions in school year 1993-94, representing 19 percent of all suspensions. (See Exhibit 1. The “other” category is larger at 23 percent, but this is because it is a catchall for more minor offenses that don’t merit a category of their own.) Other common reasons for suspensions included fighting among students and use of vulgar, profane language. The highest percentage of suspensions by grade level occurred in the ninth grade. From school years 1992-93 to 1993-94 the total incidents of suspension increased by 13 percent and the number of students suspended from school increased by 11 percent.

In school year 1993-94 there were 875 students expelled from school, with the most common reason being possession or use of a firearm or other dangerous weapon. According to information from the state Department of Education, this represents a 23 percent increase in the number of students expelled during the previous school year; however, the increase is due in part to policy changes within various school systems. According to Department of Education staff, some systems had not suspended or expelled students in the past. Exhibit 1 on page 7 illustrates the number of incidents of suspension and expulsion by category.

Efforts To Address School Violence In Tennessee

Although there are many actions that can cause a student to be assigned to an alternative school, none concerns parents and educators more than violence. While the Department of Education collects information regarding suspensions and expulsions the information is not reported uniformly. State Board of Education staff stated that systems categorize and report disruptive behavior in various ways so it is difficult to compare the data. According to the Department of Education, in school year 1993-94 there were 2,018 incidents of possession or use of firearms or other dangerous weapons; 423 involved firearms. During this same year there were 7,619 reported incidents of violence or threats of violence. There were also 22,174 reported incidents of fighting among students.

EXHIBIT 1: Analysis of Suspensions and Expulsions (1993-94)

Type of Incident	Incidence of Suspension	Percent of Total Suspensions	Students Expelled
Other conduct prejudicial to good order & discipline in any public school (includes any suspensions/expulsions for reasons not listed below).	28,175	23%	179
Attendance related, absenteeism, tardiness, & truancy.	23,125	19%	76
Fighting among students.	22,174	18%	106
Immoral, disreputable conduct: vulgar, profane language.	21,895	18%	101
Use or possession of tobacco products on school property.	9,457	8%	27
Violence or threatened violence.	7,619	6%	68
Possession, use or sale of any barbitol or drugs as defined by statute.	2,151	2%	58
Possession or use of any type of firearm or any other dangerous weapon as defined by statute.	2,018	2%	221
Theft, extortion, or gambling on school property.	1,593	1%	18
Willful damage to real personal property.	1,064	1%	13
Drinking, possession, or distributing alcohol.	930	1%	8
TOTAL	120,201	100%	875

Source: Department of Education, Research and Information Services, Comparative Analysis of 1992 and 1993-94 Suspension and Expulsion Report.

In response to this data, the Department of Education in April 1994 conducted a survey of selected superintendents to determine their perceptions about student violence in their school districts. Most of the metropolitan and urban districts responding to the survey agreed that there was a perception of violence, while rural districts did not see student violence as a problem.

The systems that did not see violence as a problem noted preventive measures that proved to be effective in reducing and eliminating violence in the district. These include effective school board policies on discipline with parent and community support; support from juvenile court and local law enforcement; conflict resolution training; concerted effort of guidance staff; and demerit systems in conjunction with in-school suspension and the alternative school program.

The districts also reported ways that the state Department of Education could assist districts in providing safer learning environments in schools, including: providing conflict resolution training; providing information and technical assistance in violence and weapon reduction programs; developing incident reporting, tracking, and assessment programs; and providing information regarding innovative and challenging programs.

Given the growing concern regarding school violence, and the lack of uniform, statewide data on school violence in Tennessee, the State Board of Education established a School Safety Committee to review the extent of school violence in systems across the state, to identify barriers to achieving safe schools, and to determine the amount of resources needed to reverse trends of increasing violence in schools. The committee conducted a series of hearings across the state and listened to educators and community representatives about the problems they face daily with school violence. A major topic at

these meetings was alternative school placement for students. The State Board of Education reported a widespread need for more alternative placement options for disruptive students.

The State Board of Education adopted a school safety policy in September 1994. The Board's policy states that for Tennessee's schools to be safe, three general objectives must be achieved:

- schools must initiate violence prevention programs and be prepared to respond properly;
- schools must accept responsibility for instructing children and school personnel in the importance of mutual respect and the avoidance of violent actions and reactions; and
- schools must establish a working relationship with other community agencies, especially the juvenile justice system, in order to properly respond to individual students exhibiting violent or threatening behaviors.

The school safety policy also requires each school system to develop and adopt a school safety plan by July 1, 1995, and to ensure that a code of conduct is distributed to all faculty members, students, and parents. The State Board of Education's School Safety Policy required that the Department of Education establish a School Safety Center and that by January 1995 the Center would assist school systems in developing school safety plans and emergency preparedness plans. As of April 1995, the state Department of Education had just started its School Safety Center. According to the State Board of Education policy, the Center is to develop and coordinate activities and provide information to schools. The Center will be responsible for developing a statewide data collection system. The State Board of Education is to establish a School Safety Advisory Council to assist with the analysis of school safety needs and the development of policies, programs, and legislative proposals. The Board will also review and recommend to the General Assembly appropriate legislation to ensure safe schools.

Establishment of Alternative Schools in Tennessee

Some Alternative Schools Appear to be Used As In-school Suspension

Based on the length of time students were assigned to alternative schools, it appears that some school systems in the state have used their alternative school more as an in-school suspension program than an alternative program. The department suggested in its "Revised Alternative School Requirements and Guidelines" that a student's assignment to an alternative program should be for a term of no less than six weeks but no more than two school semesters. The Department of Education's March 1994 survey showed that in many school districts the length of stay for students was 10 days or less. Twenty-eight of 82 superintendents responding to the November 1994 OEA survey noted the average length of stay for students in their alternative school is 10 days or less, with some students staying for three days or less.

Superintendents were asked in OEA's November 1994 survey whether their systems had made any changes in the length of time students are required to attend alternative schools. Fifty-six (60%) of the 93 respondents said that there is a minimum amount of time students are required to attend alternative school, but requirements vary widely among systems, and some systems still appear to use the alternative school more as in-school suspension. The minimum amount of time students are required to stay in the

alternative school varied from one-half day to nine weeks. Most of those with a minimum stay require students to attend the school for at least six weeks.

Thirty-seven (40%) of the 93 superintendents responded that there is no minimum amount of time that students are required to attend the alternative school. Most respondents indicated that a combination of individuals decide student length of stay, including staff of the alternative school, principal of the home school, disciplinary board, and a multi-disciplinary team. By using alternative schools more as in-school suspension, school systems cannot develop necessary academic and behavioral changes necessary for the student to succeed in school.

Most School Systems Have Established Alternative Schools But Some Do Not Serve All Grade Levels The Law Requires

The majority of the 101 Office of Education Accountability survey respondents stated they had established an alternative school; only five systems required to establish an alternative school had not.⁴ Reasons included lack of funds and handling behavior problems through other methods. Thirty-six superintendents did not respond to the OEA survey. Staff was able to determine that 34 non-respondents have established an alternative school and two have not established an alternative school, but are not required to.

The BEP generates \$2.14 per total ADM for grades K-12 plus \$17.94 per ADM for grades 7-12 (including vocational education) for the establishment of alternative schools. The Department of Education may wish to consider what action, if any, should be taken against systems that have not established an alternative school as required by law and cannot demonstrate that their system is serving the needs of disruptive students.

Eighty-eight of the 94 respondents' school systems serve grades K-12. Of those, one-half serve only grades 7 through 12 with an alternative school and only 12 serve all grades with an alternative school. Four additional systems were not serving grades 7 and 8 even though the law requires it. Twenty-six of the 94 systems provide alternative schools for some students in grades K-6.

School Systems Should Develop A Working Relationship With Juvenile Court

In 1994 the Tennessee General Assembly passed Senate Joint Resolution 298, which encourages local school systems to work with juvenile courts where possible to implement alternative school programs. Sixty-six (71%) of the 92 respondents stated they had a working relationship with juvenile court. Where there is a working relationship, respondents stated typically that the court recommends students to the alternative school, but the school system makes the final decision regarding placement. Others stated they referred students to juvenile court.

Juvenile court judges interviewed stated that by working together, the school system and juvenile court can have a dramatic impact on student behavior. They believe that the two entities working together can send a message of deterrence to students.

⁴Systems that had not established alternative schools included Giles County Schools, Etowah City Schools, Richard City Schools, Rhea County Schools, and Kingsport City Schools. Two of these, Etowah and Richard City are one-school systems serving about 300 students each.

Judges stated the only way to deal effectively with increased violence in schools is for juvenile court and the school systems to work closely together. The State Board of Education, through its School Safety Policy, is encouraging the development of working relationships and information sharing between educational agencies and the justice system.

Authority To Assign Students To Alternative Schools Should Be Reviewed

Most of the survey respondents reported the use of a combination of individuals to assign students to the alternative school. These usually include teachers, principal of the home school, disciplinary board members, juvenile court judge, attendance supervisor, and parents who request that their child be sent to the alternative school.

Nine (9%) of the 94 respondents, however, stated that the principal of the home school has the sole responsibility of assigning students to the alternative school. According to alternative school staff and Department of Education staff, the principal should not have the sole authority to assign students to alternative schools. Department of Education staff stated that in the past it was a requirement that assignments to alternative schools be made by a team consisting of the principal, alternative school director, and the guidance counselor, at a minimum. Some believe that it can become too easy for a principal to assign students to the alternative school and that the alternative school can become a dumping ground for students the principal does not want to deal with.

Some Systems Report A Lack Of Adequate Access To Guidance Counselors

Thirty-one (34%) of the 90 respondents stated they do not have adequate access to guidance counselors. While most believe they need more counselors, some said they need counselors trained specifically to work with troubled youth and the “at-risk” population. Other systems reported a need for counselors to work with families as well as the disruptive student. At full funding the BEP would generate funding for one elementary guidance counselor per 500 ADM for kindergarten through 6th grade, and one guidance counselor per 350 ADM for grades 7 through 12. Based on the State Board of Education’s *BEP 94/95 Systems Report*, at full funding the BEP would generate 1,972.5 guidance counselor positions: 942 elementary and 1030.5 secondary. This estimate is based on an ADM of 851,948. According to Department of Education staff, there were approximately 1,400 guidance counselors in the state as of December 1994: 742 elementary, 616 secondary, and 42 that served elementary and secondary students. These numbers appear to indicate a need for more guidance counselors in the state’s secondary schools.

Without adequate access to counselors, systems may not have a complete program with which to assist disruptive students. Counselors would be particularly key in behavior modification for students and in transitioning students back to their home schools. The guidelines issued by the Department of Education include a component for school and community support services and the State Board of Education’s School Safety Ad Hoc Committee for Alternative Placements has noted a need for more counseling of students and teacher and counselor training. The guidelines state that without the opportunities to work with students, parents, and staff within the context of a counseling model, it is unlikely that the student’s behavior problems will be successfully treated.

Cost and Programmatic Effectiveness of Alternative Schools is Unknown

The Tennessee Department of Education does not collect or maintain cost or programmatic information on alternative schools in the state. Department staff did conduct a survey of superintendents in March 1994, and as a result, established administrative requirements and guidelines for alternative schools. These, however, are only recommendations and are not enforced by the department. One of the conclusions from the department's survey was that most districts were not able to evaluate the extent of their programs' success. Department staff noted a need to establish specific criteria for determining students' adjustment and progress in the program, and some directions for evaluating the effectiveness of the alternative program to determine improvements.

State Board of Education Rule 0520-1-2-.13(1)(c) requires Annual Public School Financial Reports to, at a minimum, contain account codes identifiable as BEP program components. However, according to Department of Education staff, no budget information is gathered regarding the alternative school component of the BEP. Without obtaining cost information, there is no way to determine how much alternative schools cost.

It would also be desirable to maintain information on the effectiveness of alternative schools; however, Tennessee is not alone in the lack of information on alternative programs. Most studies on alternative education have focused primarily on the organizational development of programs rather than their effectiveness. As noted in a 1988 National School Safety Center Resource Paper entitled "Alternative Schools for Disruptive Youth," lack of performance data may result, in part, from the fragile nature of alternative programs.⁵ Many programs, especially for at-risk youth, are often short-lived. Alternative education seems to be particularly sensitive to the ebb and flow of resources, public opinion, and internal stresses. For these reasons, long-term studies of alternative programs are sparse. In the article "A New Breed of School for Troubled Youths," Jessica Portner states that "although alternative schools overall have received high marks for reducing dropout rates, no authoritative research documents how well those for disruptive students fare in comparison. There simply are not enough of them that have been in existence long enough to generate a representative sample."⁶

Eighty (85%) of the 94 Office of Education Accountability survey respondents believe their alternative schools are effective. Superintendents noted the alternative school helps correct discipline problems without loss of instruction, helps with behavior modification and academics, and helps keep students in school who may otherwise drop out.

Role of the Department of Education is Unclear

The role of the Department of Education in directing and monitoring alternative schools is unclear. The Department has established a section for auxiliary programs. Staff in this section indicate that their responsibility is to provide technical assistance as needed.

⁵Ronald D. Stephens, *Alternative Schools for Disruptive Youth*, National School Safety Center Resource Paper, May 1988, p.2.

⁶Jessica Portner, "A New Breed of School For Troubled Youths," *Education Week*, June 8, 1994, p.30.

They do not routinely gather information regarding alternative schools or conduct site visits to determine if programs are operating appropriately; however, according to Department of Education staff, site visits are made when requested by local school system personnel.

Department of Education staff stated that before the Education Improvement Act, when money for alternative schools was obtained through a grant process, they conducted more site visits to schools. After passage of the Education Improvement Act, the responsibility for monitoring alternative schools for compliance became the responsibility of the internal audit section. Staff in the Office of Education Accountability reviewed five of these accountability audits. They focus on management and internal controls over alternative schools, but did not address program effectiveness.

In August 1994 the Department of Education issued "Revised Alternative School Requirements and Guidelines." These guidelines were developed by a consultant the department hired to work with the commissioner on issues pertaining to Tennessee's schools, including school violence and positive alternative school settings. The guidelines, developed as a result of the department's March 1994 survey, are not part of the Department's rules and regulations and are not enforced. Staff in the Department of Education directly responsible for alternative schools stated they were not involved in either the survey or in developing the guidelines.

Seventy-two (79%) of the 91 respondents stated they had made no changes to their programs based on the guidelines issued by the department. Some responded that they had not received copies of the guidelines.

The General Assembly, the State Board of Education, and the Department of Education should review and clearly define the role of the department in regard to alternative schools. The department should maintain contact with school systems on a regular basis to monitor both the effectiveness of the school and the progress of the students. It seems appropriate that department staff responsible for alternative programs and with the knowledge regarding these types of programs should monitor alternative schools. Without this information, neither the department nor the State Board of Education can determine whether changes are needed in board policies or statute.

All Systems Should Provide Support to Students After They Return to Their Home Schools

According to survey results, most survey respondents follow-up with students during their transition from alternative school back to regular school, but some do not. Follow-up procedures include counseling for the student; alternative school staff maintaining contact with the student; students periodically reporting to counselors; and meeting with the students and their parents to review the situation and explain the expectations of the students in order for them to remain in school. The State Board of Education's School Safety Ad Hoc Committee for Alternative Placements has noted that there must be a nurturing environment for students when they return to the home school or it may be difficult for the student to fit in. Without this type of transitional help and support from school personnel, students may have difficulties as they return to their home school.

The Department of Education's guidelines for alternative schools recommend follow-up and transitional support for students moving from alternative school to regular school. A report from alternative school staff to home school staff describing experiences completed by the students and the progress made in correcting behavior problems is recommended.

Alternative school staff interviewed stated that home school staff sometimes make the transition for the student more difficult than necessary because of the students' previous reputations. Staff stated that even though students may have overcome the difficulties that led to their assignment to the alternative school, the home school staff may still treat them as "troublemakers." Without adequate follow-up procedures, systems cannot determine the effectiveness of their alternative programs or what the needs of students are as they return to their regular school.

Lack of Coordination with Regular Schools

One of the common weaknesses cited by alternative school teachers regarding alternative schools was the lack of coordination between the home school and the alternative school. Some of the specific concerns are described below:

- Assigning grades—Some alternative schools act more as a study hall than a regular classroom. Students in these alternative schools are required to bring their books from their home school and home school teachers provide alternative school staff with homework to be completed. In these schools, the staff acts as a resource for students rather than as instructional personnel. Alternative school staff grade students' homework, and in some cases, home school teachers have been unwilling to accept the grades assigned by alternative school staff. This appears to be primarily because students typically perform better academically at alternative schools than they do in their regular schools.
- Transportation of Students to the Alternative School—Some school systems do not provide transportation for students assigned to alternative school. This position is endorsed by staff of the state Department of Education. The rationale by those interviewed was that "these students have already gotten into trouble and they are not going to receive any more breaks." The problem with this stance is that some parents are unable to transport their children to school either because of a lack of funds for public transportation or the distance they are required to travel to reach the school. The State Board of Education's School Safety Ad Hoc Committee for Alternative Placements has also suggested that transportation should not be provided for students attending an alternative school.
- Some school systems operate their alternative schools on a different schedule than the regular school. Because of this, some students do not earn the same number of class credits. Some teachers believe this is unfair to the students because they are already being punished by being removed from their regular classrooms.
- Some alternative school teachers believe it is detrimental for disruptive students to be separated from the rest of the student body, that it places too much focus on the bad behavior, and that the alternative students are labeled. These teachers believe it is

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important for alternative schools to have a separate facility so students can have a sense of belonging to that school.

- Alternative school staff indicate that for systems that give the principal sole authority to assign students it becomes too easy to send the students to the alternative school.

Alternatives

The Office of Education Accountability identified the following recommendation requiring legislative action.

- The General Assembly may wish to consider reviewing the role of the Department of Education in regard to alternative schools. The General Assembly may wish to define the extent to which the department should monitor and collect information on alternative schools.

The following are administrative alternatives that local boards of education, the state Department of Education, and/or the State Board of Education may wish to adopt to improve alternative schools for disruptive youth in Tennessee.

- The Department of Education should monitor trends in problems with students, such as the current trend of suspensions and expulsions in the ninth grade, and determine if specific programs should be developed for identified groups. This could be incorporated into the State Board of Education's work in the area of developing a range of placement options for students.
- The Department of Education and the State Board of Education should ensure that school systems develop school safety policies as required. Local boards of education should also consider whether their alternative schools should serve students before students are suspended or expelled, and develop a proactive approach to dealing with problem students.
- The Department of Education should clearly define the role and mission of the School Safety Center. It should be determined if department staff will be reviewing and/or approving school safety plans prepared by school systems.
- Local boards of education, the Department of Education, and the State Board of Education should determine if there is a standard, minimum length of time students should be required to attend the schools to have positive, long-term effects on the students. This would help to ensure that alternative schools are used to encourage necessary academic and behavioral changes in students rather than being used as in-school suspension.
- All local boards of education should establish alternative schools as required by law, and the Department of Education should ensure that these schools are established and operate according to state law. This includes providing an alternative school for grades 7 through 12. Respondents who stated they have not established an alternative school because of a lack of funds should consider contracting with another school system that has an alternative school. The department may also wish to consider what action, if any, should be taken against systems that have not established an alternative school as required by law or have not otherwise provided a means to serve disruptive students.
- Local boards of education should encourage more interaction between alternative schools and juvenile court. Not only could they design mutually beneficial programs, but resources could be shared and potentially more students could be served.

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- Local boards of education should review their procedures for assigning students to alternative schools. Where possible, systems should attempt to use a team approach to ensure fair and consistent treatment of students.
- Local boards of education should review the access to guidance counselors for students in alternative programs and should review the need for counselors trained to deal with at-risk students.
- Local boards of education should develop a system to work with students after they return to their home schools to help ease the transition and as a means of determining the effectiveness of the alternative school.
- Local boards of education and the state Department of Education should develop criteria for determining the effectiveness of alternative schools at both the state and local level. Measuring the effectiveness of these schools should include tracking students who have attended alternative school to determine the long-term impact of the program on their academic success. Because of the lack of educational research regarding alternative schools for disruptive youth, it is even more important that both local systems and the department monitor the progress of these schools and students. By maintaining this information, local boards, the Department of Education, and the State Board of Education can evaluate the effectiveness of alternative schools and make any necessary changes in their operations or in the rules governing them.
- The Department of Education should gather cost information from school systems. This information could be used to determine the amount necessary to operate an alternative school. By comparing systems, programs, and costs the department could determine whether state funds are being used efficiently and effectively.
- Local boards of education and the State Board of Education should ensure that each alternative school establishes clear goals for its program. The Department of Education should review programs to ensure the schools are achieving their goals.
- The State Board of Education and the Department of Education should establish more specific criteria for the operation of alternative classrooms and alternative schools. They should monitor each and determine which, if either, is a more effective approach. If one is clearly more effective than the other, this should be communicated to school systems.
- Local boards of education and the Department of Education should reconsider their position of not providing transportation to students who have been suspended or expelled. If the ultimate goal of alternative schools is to help students remain in school by developing more appropriate academic and behavioral skills, it may defeat the purpose of the program if students cannot attend school. Perhaps transportation needs should be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- Local boards of education, the Department of Education, and the State Board of Education should review the relationship between home schools and alternative schools and suggest ways in which the two can improve coordination to better serve students and ease the transition back into each student's home school.
- Department staff should monitor alternative schools to determine the effectiveness of the programs and the progress of students.

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- The State Board of Education should consider developing rules and regulations regarding alternative schools rather than guidelines. These rules and regulations could be general in nature but could address common areas of concern, such as length of time a student should attend an alternative school and/or which personnel should be responsible for assigning students to alternative schools.

APPENDIX 1

Survey sent to Tennessee school superintendents



STATE OF TENNESSEE
COMPTROLLER OF THE TREASURY
OFFICE OF EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY
Andrew Jackson Building
Deaderick Street
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0268
Phone 615/532-1111
Fax 615/532-9237

DIRECTIONS: Please respond to the following questions regarding alternative schools. All responses will remain confidential. Please return the completed questionnaire by December 2, 1994. If you have any questions, please contact Melissa Brown, Senior Research Analyst, at (615) 532-1111.

School System _____ Address _____
Name of Respondent _____
Telephone _____

1. What grade levels are served by your school system? _____
2. Has your school board established an alternative school for students who have been suspended or expelled? _____ Yes _____ No
3. If yes, what grades does the alternative school(s) serve? _____
If no, why not? (Skip to the end of the questionnaire.) _____

4. How long has your school system operated an alternative school? _____
5. Is the alternative school operated in conjunction with another school system?
_____ Yes _____ No
6. If the alternative school is operated in conjunction with another school system, how many students can each system send to the school and how is each system's share of the cost determined? _____

7. Does the school serve students other than those who have been suspended or expelled? For example, students who have exhibited problem behavior?
_____ Yes _____ No If yes, please explain. _____

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8. Where is the alternative school located:
- separate facility? _____
 - with a regular school? _____
 - other (please explain) _____
9. Who has the authority to assign students to the alternative school? (Check all that apply.)
- teacher? _____
 - principal? _____
 - superintendent? _____
 - disciplinary board? _____
 - other (please explain) _____
10. Is there a minimum amount of time that students are required to attend the alternative school? _____ Yes _____ No
11. If yes, how long are students required to attend the alternative school? _____
12. If there is no minimum length of stay for students, who decides how long the student must attend the alternative school?
- principal of home school? _____
 - disciplinary board? _____
 - other? (please explain) _____
13. What has been the average length of stay in the alternative school?
- 1992-93? _____
 - 1993-94? _____
 - 1994-95? _____
14. Has your school board made any revisions to its policies and procedures and/or operation of its alternative school(s) based on the revised alternative school guidelines issued by the state Department of Education in August 1994?
_____ Yes _____ No
15. If yes, please describe the changes. _____

16. How many students in your system were suspended or expelled during the 1992-93 school year? (Please provide a breakdown by grade level if possible.) _____

17. During the 1993-94 school year? (Please provide a breakdown by grade level if possible.) _____
18. During the 1994-95 school year? (through October 31, 1994—please provide a breakdown by grade level if possible.) _____

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19. Of the students suspended/expelled, how many attended:
- In-school suspension? 1993-94? _____ 1994-95? (through 10-31-94)? _____
 - Alternative school? 1993-94? _____ 1994-95? (through 10-31-94)? _____
 - Neither? 1993-94? _____ 1994-95? (through 10-31-94)? _____
20. How many of the students successfully completed their time at the alternative school and returned to their home school? _____

21. Is any follow-up conducted by either guidance counselors or teachers with the student once the student has returned to his home school? _____ Yes _____ No If yes, please explain who conducts the follow-up and the nature of the follow-up.

22. What have been the primary reasons for suspension/expulsion, e.g., bringing a weapons to school, truancy, fighting, etc.? _____

23. Do you believe students have adequate access to guidance counselors?
_____ Yes _____ No
24. If no, what resources are needed? _____

25. How many repeat offenders are currently attending the alternative school. (i.e. this is at least their second time to attend the alternative school) _____
26. What is the capacity of the alternative school? (i.e. how many students can be served at any given time?) _____

27. Is the need for alternative school placement greater than the available capacity?
_____ Yes _____ No If yes, what is the total population that could be served by the alternative school if space were available? _____
28. Has the capacity of the school increased since last year? _____ Yes _____ No If yes, what has been the change in capacity? _____

29. During school year 1993-94, what were the school system's total expenditures for its alternative school(s)? _____
30. What is the budget for the alternative school(s) for school year 1994-95? _____

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31. How is the alternative school(s) funded?

- through the Better Education Program? _____
 - other? (please list funding sources) _____
-

Thank you for completing our questionnaire. Please return it in the enclosed envelope to the Office of Education Accountability. If you would like to receive a copy of our report on Tennessee's alternative schools please check the space below .
Please send me a copy of the report. _____

APPENDIX 2

List of Office of Education Accountability Survey Respondents

Alamo City Schools	Houston County Schools	South Carroll Schools
Alcoa City Schools	Humboldt City Schools	Stewart County Schools
Anderson County Schools	Humphreys County Schools	Sullivan County Schools
Athens City Schools	Huntingdon SSD	Sumner County Schools
Bedford County Schools	Jackson County Schools ⁶	Sweetwater Schools
Benton County Schools	Jackson-Madison Schools	Trousdale County Schools
Bledsoe County Schools	Johnson City Schools	Tullahoma Schools
Blount County Schools	Kingsport City Schools	Unicoi County Schools
Bradford City Schools	Knox County Schools	Union City Schools
Bradley County Schools	Lauderdale County Schools	Union County Schools
Bristol City Schools	Lawrence County Schools	Warren County Schools
Cannon County Schools	Lebanon City Schools	Washington County
Cheatham County Schools	Lewis County Schools	Wayne County Schools
Clay County Schools ⁶	Lexington City Schools	Weakley County Schools
Cleveland City Schools	Lincoln County Schools	West Carroll SSD
Clinton City Schools	Loudon County Schools	White County Schools
Cocke County Schools	Macon County Schools ⁶	Williamson County Schools
Covington City Schools	Marion County Schools	
Davidson County Schools	Marshall County Schools	
Dayton City Schools	Maury County Schools	
Decatur County Schools	McKenzie City Schools	
DeKalb County Schools	McNairy County Schools	
Dickson County Schools	Meigs County Schools	
Dyer County Schools	Memphis City Schools	
Dyersburg City Schools	Montgomery County	
Elizabethton City Schools	Moore County Schools	
Etowah City Schools	Morgan County Schools	
Fayette County Schools	Oak Ridge City Schools	
Franklin City Schools	Obion County Schools	
Giles County Schools	Overton County Schools	
Grainger County Schools	Paris City Schools	
Greene County Schools	Pickett County Schools	
Greeneville City Schools	Polk County Schools	
Grundy County Schools	Putnam County Schools	
Hamblen County Schools	Rhea County	
Hamilton County Schools	Richard City Schools	
Hancock County Schools	Roane County Schools	
Hardeman County Schools	Robertson County Schools	
Hardin County Schools	Rogersville City Schools	
Hawkins County	Scott County Schools	
Harriman City Schools	Sequatchie County Schools	
Henry County Schools	Shelby County Schools	
Hollow Rock/Bruceton	Smith County Schools	

⁶ The Tri-County Alternative School serves Macon, Jackson, and Clay Counties; therefore, this was counted as one response.

APPENDIX 3

Revised Alternative School Requirements and Guidelines from the state Department of Education, August 1994

Administrative Requirements and Guidelines

With the expectation that all students served in an alternative program should receive quality of instruction comparable or superior to that they would otherwise receive at their home school, the following components must be considered:

A. Program Description

Alternative programs should reflect the composite educational, interventional, and disciplinary needs of all students. The program must have clear and achievable goals. It should be planned with the intent of accomplishing early and frequent success for students. The academic agenda should be developmental as well as substantive. It should provide opportunities for experiential learning with emphasis on learning by observing, as well as, by doing. All students should benefit from an integrated curriculum consisting of several subject areas. With these components students can better use what they learn and understand the connections between themselves and the world in which they will live.

1. Alternative School Placement of Special Education Students

When an eligible child is placed in an alternative school by the administrative staff, M-Team, etc. the IEP must be implemented by a certified special education teacher. These services may be provided: (1) in alternative school setting or (2) in the school setting providing the required hours designated in the IEP. The special education services provided in the school must be continued in the alternative school.

B. Student Eligibility, Selection and Length of Enrollment

Section 41 of the Education Improvement Act of 1992 requires that alternative schools be made available for students suspended or expelled from grades seven (7) through twelve (12). Further, it allows for alternative schools for students in grades one (1) through six (6), but it specifies that no student may graduate solely on attendance in alternative schools. Eligible students, then, are those in grades 1-12 who exhibit disruptive, aggressive behavior in a school setting. "Disruptive behavior means frequent, serious violations of the district's code of conduct and/or other indicators of troubling behavior." These students become eligible to attend the alternative school after a pre-determined screening process by the school district has been met. It is suggested that assignment to an alternative program should be for a term of no less than six weeks and no more than two school semesters.

The Disciplinary Hearing Authority

The Disciplinary Hearing Authority, in accordance with TCA 49-6-3401, is an optional provision for those school boards that wish to establish a policy which authorizes a disciplinary committee to conduct hearings on behalf of the board and make decisions about the placement of disruptive students.

Note: As a general rule a determination should be made by the district that the alternative program may not be designed to served adjudicated youth who have committed serious physical assaults or other related person to person offenses, youth in need of significant

inpatient or outpatient mental health treatment, or youth in need of treatment for addiction or substance abuse.

C. Staffing, Credentials, Training for Alternative Programs

Because of this challenging student population, alternative programs must be staffed by exceptionally qualified and dedicated personnel with a strong commitment to this type of educational experience and an attitude of caring and concern for all students. Attention should be given to preparation and orientation programs for administrators, teachers, and support staff to ensure a continuous development of their professional skills. Specific areas of training may include medication and conflict resolution techniques, understanding diversity in the school environment, strategies for managing disruptive students in the classroom, and techniques for building and maintaining a supportive school climate for all students.

D. Parent Involvement and Support

It is most essential to have meaningful parent participation and support in an effective alternative school program. Parents can participate in discussion sessions with the staff about their child's behavior and progress in the program. More formal opportunities should be planned for parents' participation in training activities under the leadership of the alternative school staff with emphasis on the child's success in the program. Parents should receive orientation on how to report to the staff about their child's progress at home, in the community, and at recreational and social events.

E. School and Community Support Services

The alternative school program must consider a component which includes individual and group counseling as a part of the daily school master schedule. Without the opportunities to work with students, parents and staff within the context of a counseling model, it is unlikely that the student's behavior problems will be successfully treated. Further, in developing the program attention must be given as to how other school district support personnel (psychologists, social workers special education consultants, etc.) and other community support staff, and volunteers can effectively assist the alternative program staff in working with students and their families. Efforts to involve juvenile court staff and law enforcement staff should also be considered.

F. Follow-up and Transitional Support

A process of follow-up between the alternative program and home school staff is essential to ensure a smooth and positive transition of students returning to the regular classrooms. A report from the alternative school staff to the home school staff should briefly describe the experiences completed by the students and the progress made in correcting behavior problems. Specific directions with suggested activities for follow-up and reinforcement would be helpful to the home school staff in their efforts to maintain student achievement and social behavior.

G. Program Evaluation and Outcomes

The alternative school staff should develop a plan for identifying and measuring progress toward specific performance objectives. This plan should include a process for monitoring progress at regular intervals throughout the school year to determine the extent to which students are achieving and the program reaching its intended purposes.

Some suggested questions for determining progress and success may include the following:

1. Using prior suspension data as a comparison, has the program resulted in a significant reduction in the number of out-of-school suspensions?
2. Have the students participating in the alternative program significantly increased their academic, social (coping, interpersonal) skills, and have they developed greater self-disciplined behaviors?
3. Have student attendance rates improved as a result of having participated in the alternative program?
4. Have more parents been positively involved in the disciplinary and support processes?
5. Have the support service personnel, both district and community, been effectively utilized in working with students, parents and staff in the program?
6. Has the alternative school program served a broad range of students (by race, gender, social-economic background, etc.) who have vaulted school rules, rather than the usual "discipline problems?"
7. Have the students' return to the regular school program resulted in a continuation of learning achievement and social behavior?

In evaluating and determining the progress and success of alternative programs, it is expected that some school districts may not have adequate resources to meet all of the suggested guidelines outlined above. However, a district giving its best efforts within its means to provide services to disruptive students, may help to document its needs and justify special requests for assistance in improving alternative programs.

APPENDIX 4

List of Individuals Interviewed

Department of Education Personnel

James Abernathy, Acting Assistant Commissioner, Division of Accountability

Lewis Butler, Alternative Programs Consultant

Joseph Fisher, Assistant Commissioner, Division of Special Education

Clifford Hendrix, Consultant

Mike Herrmann, Director of Safe and Drug Free Schools

Jim Jones, Fiscal Accountability

Chris Steppe, Audit Director

Nancy Stetten, Research Consultant

Deborah Thomas, Statistician

Doug Vickers, Homeless Program

Joel Walton, Director of Auxiliary Programs and Governor's Schools

State Board of Education Personnel

James DeMoss, Executive Assistant

Gary Nixon, Research Associate

Patrick Smith, Legal Counsel

Superintendents

Dr. Ron Hubbard, Sumner County Schools

Dr. J.V. Sailors, Anderson County Schools

Mr. Ronald Fults, Grundy County Schools

Juvenile Court Judges

Lee England, Juvenile Court Judge, Lawrence County

Carey Garrett, Juvenile Court Judge, Knox County

Andy Shookhoff, Juvenile Court Judge, Davidson County

Lonny Hoover, Juvenile Court Referee, Williamson County

Alternative School Staff Interviews

Michael Crist, Murphy Alternative Center, Davidson County

Steve Roach, Cheatham County

Ann Otes, Davidson County

Sandi Demonbreun, Davidson County

Bernice Peebles, Davidson County