

SOLUTIONS OF HOPE: STUDY OF PUBLIC CHOICE  
ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

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(ABSTRACT)

The purpose of this paper is to examine findings related to the problems that school systems confront in educating all students and the approaches used in solving those problems through the use of alternative educational curricula and settings. It considers that schools foster public engagement, not simply public relations, in order to bring the communities they serve into conversation, which calls for listening, responding, and educating. Findings indicate that concerns about poor performance on standardized tests, academic standards, and the numbers of students dropping out of schools are among the problems many public schools unfortunately have in common in both rural and urban areas. These deficiencies exist in populations represented in public schools throughout this country. This study reveals that even though these seemingly insurmountable problems are an on-going cause for public concerns of American schools, school leaders are addressing these issues through policies and practices in alternative education programs. The category of educational alternative option studied will be that of public choice alternative education. Public choice options are open to all students in their localities who meet the placement criteria. The chosen school studied, the Virginia Randolph Community High School, was identified by the Virginia State Department of Education as having an established public choice alternative education program. This alternative high school has been fully accredited by Virginia standards. This investigation will also examine the influence of a historical figure, Miss Virginia Estelle Randolph, on the present alternative educational program at Virginia Randolph Community High School.

## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother and to the memory of my father. My parents taught me the value of hard work and education. Their unselfish love, sacrifice and dedication to our family are the examples of courage and persistence that have been an inspiration at every stage of my life.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                                                                                                               |           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION .....</b>                                                                                           | <b>1</b>  |
| PURPOSE OF THE STUDY .....                                                                                                    | 1         |
| STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.....                                                                                                 | 2         |
| ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION DEFINED.....                                                                                            | 6         |
| TYPES OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS .....                                                                               | 6         |
| STUDENT PROFILE .....                                                                                                         | 8         |
| STUDENT SCREENING .....                                                                                                       | 11        |
| SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY .....                                                                                                   | 13        |
| THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....                                                                                                    | 14        |
| LIMITATIONS .....                                                                                                             | 16        |
| DEFINITION OF TERMS.....                                                                                                      | 16        |
| ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY.....                                                                                                | 19        |
| <b>CHAPTER II ARTICLE 1: THREE ARTICLE DISSERTATION (TAD) .....</b>                                                           | <b>21</b> |
| THE TEACHER WHO TOOK HER STOVE TO SCHOOL .....                                                                                | 21        |
| WITH LITTLE FUNDING: SHE CARRIED HER STOVE TO SCHOOL.....                                                                     | 24        |
| WORK INCLUDED IN RANDOLPH’S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY.....                                                                       | 25        |
| <b>CHAPTER III ARTICLE 2: THREE ARTICLE DISSERTATION (TAD).....</b>                                                           | <b>28</b> |
| THE HENRICO PLAN: BEST PRACTICES FROM THE PAST .....                                                                          | 28        |
| THE PRESENT INTERSECTS WITH THE PAST.....                                                                                     | 29        |
| MODEL FOR ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION .....                                                                                         | 33        |
| WORK INCLUDED IN RANDOLPH’S PHILOSOPHY.....                                                                                   | 34        |
| SUCCESSES FOR TODAY .....                                                                                                     | 36        |
| SHE CARRIED HER STOVE TO SCHOOL.....                                                                                          | 37        |
| <b>CHAPTER IV ARTICLE 3: THREE ARTICLE DISSERTATION (TAD).....</b>                                                            | <b>40</b> |
| MISS VIRGINIA ESTELLE RANDOLPH.....                                                                                           | 40        |
| MODEL FOR PUBLIC CHOICE ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION .....                                                                           | 40        |
| MISS RANDOLPH CARRIED HER STOVE TO SCHOOL .....                                                                               | 46        |
| RANDOLPH’S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY .....                                                                                       | 47        |
| A VISIT TO THE MUSEUM IN HER HONOR.....                                                                                       | 48        |
| <b>CHAPTER V CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY OF<br/>PUBLIC CHOICE ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION.....</b> | <b>50</b> |
| CONCLUSIONS .....                                                                                                             | 51        |
| IMPLICATIONS.....                                                                                                             | 54        |
| SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH .....                                                                                        | 54        |
| <b>REFERENCES .....</b>                                                                                                       | <b>56</b> |

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate public choice alternative education programs, policies, and practices and the historical significance and influence of one such program, the Virginia Randolph Community High School. Public choice alternative educational programs are open to all students in localities who meet the placement criteria. This investigation also included a compilation and description of the different types of alternative education programs as well as the different groups of learners they serve. Because this research provides insight about the educational mainstream, it allows the reader to read beyond the printed page. It permits the reader to listen for the voices of the students in concert behind these printed words as well, for therein lies the major intended purpose of this work.

Even though alternative education grows out of the true mainstream, it continues to expand and serve more and more students today. The number of such students being served will continue to increase with the present requirements for verified high school credit and Standards of Learning requirements for graduation in Virginia (Cross, 1999). Other pervasive factors which can be detrimental to a student's success at school include, but not limited to, the following: poverty, perceived lack of opportunity, being bullied including *cyberbullying* (Youth, 2007), violence in the home or community, lack of friends at school, not being engaged in extracurricular or co-curricular activities, having a history of academic failure, sickness or death of family member or friend, limited English proficiency, lack of parental support for education, poor anger management, alcoholic or drug-addicted parents, and poor health (McGee, 2001). School success can be prohibited yet by another social economic trend which confronts schools today and is a result of poverty or the poor social structure of the family. This problem is the financial instability and problems students must overcome if they become transient during the school year. This results in a lack of the sense of belonging at any one school when students must continuously move from one school to another (p. 589). Repeated family relocation adversely affects student achievement as students must constantly adjust to new surroundings as parents seek work or stay with first one relative and then another. In some cases the family

becomes homeless. The need for alternative programs and curriculum options to provide educational opportunities for these at-risk youth has become apparent in school divisions across the country, not just Virginia (Perkins, 2005).

A public choice alternative education program at Virginia Randolph Community High School in Glen Allen, Virginia, just outside of Richmond, is emerging as a highly successful model for student achievement of this population. It was the first such high school in the state to be accredited and is considered public choice because any students of appropriate high school age in the district may apply to enroll. It is located on the same site which is known for its historic *hands-on* educational practices put in place by Miss Virginia Estelle Randolph during the post-Reconstruction era. Her teaching methods were coined the *Henrico Plan* by then superintendent, Dr. Jackson Davis. These methods gained national, as well as international attention and recognition in the area of the beginnings of vocational training. As this study evolved, it became apparent that historical research was in order to determine what influences Miss Randolph's methods had on the educational program in place at the school today. Miss Randolph's wisdom and vision are still an influence on student success today at the public option alternative education program named in her honor, the Virginia Randolph Community High School (Pincham, 2005).

#### Statement of the Problem

The Virginia Department of Education 2005-2006 Dropout Statistics reports that a total of 10,608 students dropped out of school that year in the Commonwealth. This number represents a great loss of human potential, human resources, and disenfranchisement for many from the *American Dream*. Virginia is not the only state faced with this problem. Many students nationwide become disengaged in the educational opportunities offered in their schools. The trend is that many of these students drop out of school without any job training or career plans if intervention does not reconnect them to some type of appropriate alternative educational setting. At an American Association of School Administrators' National Conference on Education, one focus group of superintendents considered their role and the role of the school systems in preventing teen pregnancy and other risk behaviors that create barriers to learning and to successful and productive adulthood. These school leaders viewed the school system as a catalyst for action and the school superintendent as a facilitator of community-wide efforts and changes,

especially when planning programs to meet the needs of all students (Adams-Taylor, 1998). The difficulties many at-risk youth face during their school years and mistakes teenagers make can deny them a satisfying life and prevent them from obtaining lucrative and successful careers. Some of these students may eventually end up in the court system. Students who do not complete their education are at greater risk for becoming prison statistics. More and more prisons are under construction today to accommodate the masses of unsuccessful students as they enter society and adulthood unprepared to be good citizens or contributors to the world of work. Since 1990, Virginia has approved 21,000 new prison beds at a cost of more than \$1 billion to accommodate the predicted rise in crime and tougher sentencing. By 2013, Virginia's prison population is expected to grow at such a rate that it will cost roughly \$300 million for the six major prison projects planned or recently completed already. It is estimated that the prison population will grow by 6,700 men and women to 44,700 also by 2013 (Green, 2008).

The following statistics, reported in the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance – United States, were cited in *We Care . . . We Act*, published by Sharon Adams-Taylor in 1998 as a statement of resolve by the superintendents at the American Association of School Administrators' National Conference on Education. These statistics do not sugarcoat what growing up today is like for millions of disadvantaged young people: more than four out of ten teenage girls in the United States become pregnant at least once before the age of 20; each year, three million teens contract a sexually transmitted disease; over 30 percent of high school students report that they engage in regular binge drinking; 20 percent of high school students regularly carry some type of weapon; more than 45 percent of boys ages 12 – 17 say they have been a victim of a violent crime such as assault, rape or robbery; fully 20 percent of high school students report that they have seriously considered suicide (Adams-Taylor, 1998). These disturbing statistics are reflected in many school districts in the country, and Virginia has addressed these issues which are roadblocks to academic success by the increase of alternative educational programs in the Commonwealth. Dropout prevention is the key focus of many such programs and the state funding has increased from \$1,200,000 in 1993 – 1994, the year of the first pilot programs for the regional alternative educational programs, to \$6,220,518 allocated in 2006 – 2007 (Jay, 2007). The Commonwealth promoted regional alternative programs to establish the first cost effective solutions for counties to share a site for placement of students who were not successful in their regular schools due to behavioral issues.



Virginia has acknowledged that the above mentioned risk factors for student failure are not peripheral to the function of the school. The Commonwealth also helps students in special ways in smaller school settings instead of arguing that school systems agendas are full and other community agencies should take the leadership in finding solutions to the problems described above. Interagency cooperation also helps districts provide vocational and applied technology education instruction and services to learners, and local advisory committees assist with planning, implementing, and maintaining programs. School systems in Virginia are attempting to provide ways for all students to have a chance to graduate and to learn a trade or go on to college by offering an assortment of alternative programs. In her 2007 report to the Governor and the General Assembly on the effectiveness of Regional Alternative Education Programs, Diane L. Jay, Specialist, Office of Program Administration and Accountability, Virginia Department of Education, reported that the majority of programs in Virginia are regional and transitional in nature with the intent of transferring students who have behavioral problems or chronic truancy issues back into the regular schools. In the first four years of Virginia's regional alternative education program, the number of students increased from 217 students in four regional programs in 1993-1994 to 4,205 in 2006-2007. The programs report having 2,424 assigned slots while serving the 4,205 students (This number accounts for students transferring back into the regular high school) during the 2006-2007 school year. There are now 29 regional programs statewide involving 114 school divisions. These programs provide academic services and behavioral services. Overall, the students who attended these centers tended to score below the regional mean of their counterparts in the regular settings in the region (Jay, 2007). On the other hand, the report of 2004 showed that their percentage of behavioral incidents dropped a greater percentage (83 percent) with the length of time at the center. Students stayed at these centers from one to two weeks up to 24 weeks. This 83 percent indicates that the length of time allows students to make the academic and behavioral adjustments and benefit from being there for longer periods of time (Jay, 2004). In contrast, the Virginia Randolph Community High School is not a regional site but a public choice alternative educational high school where students enroll and can stay until they graduate. Parents may enroll their child when they realize the regular school program is not meeting their child's needs and that he or she is not being successful.

Public support for school systems that help students emerge academically and vocationally fit, even when they arrive from undesirable environments, is often evident by strong

alternative programs within districts like Henrico County. The National Center for Education Statistics and the Office of Educational Research and Improvement captured the attention of school leaders with the first *Youth Indicators* by investigating the lives of students beyond the schoolhouse doors. According to the author, Jeanne E. Griffith, students learn in many different settings. It is true that early childhood experiences, family relationships, and home environments affect school performance from kindergarten to college. In turn, the key for success in school may be directly related to the school setting and proper placement within that setting. In this case, the screening process for such placement in an alternative education setting can be twofold. It can offer educational and vocational options and help plan strategies that suit the student's needs as well as recognize needed psychological or social resources. Policymakers and school leaders rely on reports such as *Youth Indicators* to glean information and statistical reporting on children's lives across varied settings. Educational leaders consult data on family composition, demographics, economic factors, jobs and family income, student health issues, citizenship and values, extracurricular activities, and other elements that comprise the world of youth when considering appropriate educational options for the community being served (Griffith, 1996).

As the schools seek to understand students, their families, and communities, it is a sobering thought to consider that schools today bear a major burden in raising children. Educators are fond of the African proverb; *it takes a whole village to raise a child*, (Houston, 1996). Through time, the task of raising children has been so complicated and demanding that it does take everyone's help. With deteriorating conditions in many of our families and communities, one may ask, *if it takes a village to raise a child, what does it take to raise a village?* Some argue that public schools put into practice the original purpose of the common school: to find common goals and common ground and create common meeting places where we learn to live together in peace and collaborative harmony. Keeping in mind that learning is recognized as an activity without boundaries, the school continues to be the primary place for learning. School systems provide the goals of educating all students which sometimes means that the meeting place includes an alternative school setting. As part of this setting in Henrico County, the community has opened its doors for work study opportunities including job shadowing and on-the-job training. The Virginia Randolph Community High School in turn offers an assortment of ways parents and school patrons can become involved with students. Workshops are offered to parents and patrons during the year which have included the following:

Resolving Family Conflict, Internet Safety and Cyber Bullying, Staying Connected to Teens, Helping Your Child with Tough Choices, Gang Prevention, and Keeping Kids Safe Over the Summer (VRCAH, 2008).

### Alternative Education Defined

The Commonwealth of Virginia has more than 150 public or private choices for alternative education. In the recent report draft of the Study of Alternative Education Options by the Virginia Commission on Youth, 2007 Legislative Studies and Initiatives, the State Board of Education Regulations defined alternative education in Virginia as a learning experience that offers educational choices that meet the needs of students with varying interest and abilities. Such choices include: time (day or night), location, staffing, and programs. Alternative education may include programs for drop-out prevention, vocational exploration, vocational training, employment under the regular supervision of designated school personnel, and the reduction of illiteracy (Study, 2007). Regular programs of general, vocational or college preparatory education, and required educational programs for gifted or handicapped students are not programs of alternative education.

### Types of Alternative Educational Programs

In addition to the regional programs previously mentioned, some other programs are housed within a regular high school and operate almost as elective class selections. Students can take vocational components which are offered to the entire student body in this case at the regular high school and take General Education Diploma (GED) classes instead of regular core academic classes. Other school districts may have a separate building for the GED alternative education program located away from the high school and elect to bus the students back to the regular high school to take elective vocational classes. Students who are placed in an alternative setting because of behavior problems are referred to alternative education programs away from the regular school campus or, most likely, enrolled in night school programs. As stated previously, their schools may be regional or include some type of computer based option. Alternative education administrator, Jay McGee, has stated that the students at an alternative education program are *always*, for whatever the reason, not successful in the traditional school setting. Their needs can best be met in a school specifically designed to assist them in

overcoming difficulties. But however disheartening their situations may seem, he has found students to be very resilient and quite capable of achieving success when presented with an appropriate educational environment (McGee, 2001).

Another option for alternative education is the public choice alternative school. Virginia Randolph Community High School is one of only three such schools in the Commonwealth. It has a well-established vocational training component to offer. Since it has high school status, students take the Standards of Learning test just like as their peers do in other high schools. Students may also take part in extracurricular activities as the school has its own basketball team. Virginia Randolph Community High School was the first fully accredited alternative high school in the Commonwealth of Virginia accredited under the Virginia Standards for Accrediting Schools that employ the Standards of Learning testing results as a primary determinant rather than the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Unlike the regional alternative programs, Virginia Randolph Community High School students attend until graduation and can complete two year trade certificate programs or prepare to attend college. “Students want to stay with us,” reports Mr. Robert Lowerre, principal. According to the school profile, the students who stay and complete their educations at Virginia Randolph Community High School list their post secondary plans as follows: 20% of the students go on to four year colleges or universities; 20% attend community colleges, 5% enroll in technical schools and 55% go to work/other which may include the military (R. Lowerre, personal communication, October 16, 2007).

To assist students and parents with the decision for a change to an alternative setting, counselors from the sending school as well as the receiving alternative school, Virginia Randolph Community High School, help families with those life-altering decisions. The application process and placement procedures similar to those discussed above are discussed for the best results in choosing the courses of study for each student. Virginia Randolph Community High School offers a variety of *hands-on* courses of study to choose from including, but not limited to, the following: auto body; auto repair and servicing; business and information technology; brick masonry, carpentry; culinary arts; cosmetology; electricity; horticulture; nurse aide; graphic communications/printing; and vending machine repair (VRCAHS, 2008).

Jerry Mintz, a leading advocate for the alternative school movement for over thirty years, reports programs being offered today range from those that include some vocational training components, night General Education Diploma preparation programs, home-study with

telecommunication instruction, being given by telecommunications, magnet school programs, and programs for internationally diverse students. Alternative schools also exist in countries around the world, including England, France, Denmark, Holland, Japan, Germany, India, Austria, Russia, and New Zealand to name a few. Mintz founded several alternative schools and became the first executive director of the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools. He also founded the Alternative Education Resource Organization, known as AERO, which has information available on-line for parents and educators on the topic of educational alternative options. Educational needs have been recognized for different types of students worldwide. In the United States, some alternative school programs have also been created to comply with laws regarding some of these student needs (Mintz, 2008). Some of these alternative options account for schools-within-schools that districts in Virginia now offer to comply with the 2004 Amendments to the Individuals Disability Education Act (IDEA) (PL 105-17). Other schools-within-schools approaches may be structured as an academy model that is organized around a career theme or committed to closer teacher-student relationships (Vol., 1996). Localities design the programs to fit the systems' needs and no two programs are exactly alike, although they do have some similarities.

What educational alternatives generally have in common with each other is an approach that is more individualized, more experiential, and interest-based. Most programs are small, democratic, and flexible. They generally fall into the four major categories: public choice, public at-risk, independent (or private), and home-based. Mintz indicates that options in educational programs today are the result of democracy at work. School divisions may launch an alternative school to produce skilled or technical workers who are needed to satisfy the demand of workers in the community. These programs may also represent schools for students who have been expelled or who are placed on long-term suspension. Alternative programs may also target older high school students with too few credits to graduate. A program of studies leading to a GED, with perhaps some specialized trade training, may be the answer in this case (Mintz, 2008).

### Student Profile

The most recent *Annual Report of Virginia's Regional Alternative Education Projects, 1998-1999*, documents that 52% of the students enrolled were Caucasian, 45% African-American, and the remaining 3% were Asian, Hispanic, or Native-American. Of the 3,255

students enrolled in these 29 Regional Alternative Education Projects studied that year, 504 qualified for special education services, an increase of 61 students from the previous school year. Thirty-six percent of the students were reported to reside in a two-parent home (including stepparents and adoptive parents), 42% reside in homes headed by a single mother, and the remaining 23% reside in homes headed by a single father, foster parents, grandparents, or group home staff members (Gerges & Hrabe, 1999). With all of the different types of programs and the array of student characteristics represented in these reported demographics, Virginia strives to meet the growing demands for programs to educate students who are not successful in a regular academic school program because of behavioral issues. At times there is a ripple effect associated within the regional alternative schools, and subsets of students are identified who cannot adapt to the original alternative environment. These students are seen as requiring their own alternative school. Often a night program or home-based alternative setting is available for these *different drummers* and is evidence of this phenomenon.

There are numerous ways of categorizing the nontraditional student in addition to their recognizable interests, work habits or special abilities. We can recognize that some students become disinterested in school for various reasons. They may be suffering academically due to certain aspects of their personal lives and cannot fully partake of the array of choices and information set before them in the regular education program. Unfortunately, much of a child's capacity for learning is fixed long before he or she arrives for the first day of kindergarten. Reports such as *Hidden Casualties: The Relationship Between Violence and Learning* suggest that children living with danger develop defenses against fears. Energy spent on these defenses is not available for learning (Prothrow-Stith & Quaday, 1994). Chronic exposure to violence, poverty, homelessness, and the influences of drug and alcohol abuse can be so consuming for children that their natural curiosity is dampened. Children whose teachers notice them *zoning out* in class may actually be experiencing a normal reaction to trauma or an adjustment disorder. These children can also experience specific health problems such as sleep disorders, headaches, intestinal problems, and asthma attacks that inhibit their ability to learn and be successful in regular education programs. Many of these students are unable to stay on grade level with their peers and soon are so far behind they become discouraged and drop out of school. As noted earlier, the *Virginia Department of Education 2005-2006 Dropout Statistics Report* indicates that a total of 10,608 students dropped out of school that year in the state. This large number of

young people have begun their adult lives with little hope of ever being able to manage much above the poverty level, if even that be the case. Virginia is not the only state faced with this problem. Many students nationwide drop out of school each year without any job training or career plans.

Legislators, businesses, school boards, and parents emphasize and demand excellence and higher standards. The primary beneficiaries of these demands though have been the college-bound youth and others who respond well to the current structure of public education. Overlooked in most of these recommendations for higher standards are the non-college-bound youth who struggle with traditional school organization already (Leone & Drakeford, 1999). With the increasing emphasis on standards, accountability and excellence, there will continue to be significant numbers of students either seeking alternatives to the regular school program or dropping out of school all together.

Consistent with their peers, students with disabilities are served by alternative education school programs. Traditionally, alternative schools have focused on students who are at risk of dropping out. Rutherford and Guinn state, “With the 1997 Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the mission of alternative programs has expanded. In certain circumstances, students with disabilities may be placed in an appropriate interim alternative setting for no more than forty-five days” (p. 79). These settings vary due to an array of reasons. Some localities have only one alternative program that may have limited numbers of certified special education teachers employed there. In this case, students with disabilities may be provided with limited appropriate special education services and may find themselves different drummers in an environment designed for students who were a poor fit in the regular education program. Often these disabled students who do not feel that they belong are the ones who will stop coming to school and are serious truant problems for localities. The National Center for School Engagement reported in 2006 that ten years worth of research has identified truancy and school engagement as the centerpiece of NCSE’s work to improve outcomes for youth who are at the greatest risk of failure and delinquency. Their effort is to help communities prevent and reduce truancy.

In a recent report, *The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts*, which was written for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, blame was laid on the nation’s 30 percent dropout rate on a host of problems which included classes that are not connected to student

interests (Wolfe, 2007). One more group of students who may not be a good *fit* for the regular education program are those students who are not able to prepare for the career of their choice and vocational interest in the regular school setting. Virginia Randolph Community High School offers more choices for vocational training than many regular high schools. Some students desire the opportunities available at this alternative setting and appreciate the option of applying to this type of school (R. Lowerre, personal communication, January 15, 2008). This type of student group may be compatible workers in local business and industry for on-the-job training. They may be good candidates for apprentice positions provided through an alternative education school in partnership with trade or technical businesses. Often school divisions relate to these partners through vocational personnel who can help students assimilate and transition into the world of work. Some districts are offering unique classes within their alternative settings.

In 2007, Northampton County, Virginia's teacher of the year was Doug Coburn who teaches at the Northampton T.E.C.H. Center. Coburn, who taught Social Studies for more than thirty years, had retired five years earlier and was enjoying traveling. Former superintendent, Dawn Goldstine, asked him to come back, this time as an alternative teacher. "You really need to have your best teachers working with kids that have problems. These gifted teachers can inspire troubled kids" (p. 3). Coburn is also a teacher who believes in teaching students by the *old hand* method of teaching. During his teaching career, he was part of a group who requested and received a grant to work with students on a boat-building project. Students not only enjoyed building the boats, but also using them on the river (Vaughan, 2006). A regular educational setting cannot accommodate this type of hands-on learning experience. Just as important as the offerings within alternative settings is the proper placement of the students within these programs.

### Student Screening

The typical alternative education program in Virginia is designed for the student 13 – 18 years old who is referred to the program by school principals, guidance counselors, teachers, child study teams, or by their own parents (Jay, 2006). Ideally, a screening committee, the school administration, or guidance department interviews the student as the initial procedure for placement. The student and his or her parents most often are invited to this initial meeting. Depending upon the tools available for assessment at this point, information is gathered and



recommendations are made for the transition into the alternative setting. Some tools which may be used at this point might include a situational assessment to identify work characteristics and training needs in relation to actual job requirements or a job analysis that will provide information about how a job is done and why it is necessary. Another tool used may be the curriculum-based vocational assessment which helps determine student interest, instructional needs, and skill development based on on-going performance within a career or vocational curriculum sequence. Sometimes alternative schools rely on the Education for Employment (EFE) program for help. This is a state-initiated program designed to increase standards in preparation for career pathways used in alternative educational settings to create school-to-work linkages. Functional assessments are also made to give an assessment of basic survival competencies necessary for students to function in an independent work setting, and job coaching is offered for students who are doing on-the-job training after a job match has been made.

To determine a student's vocational aptitude, a vocational assessment is conducted over a period of time as the basis for planning an individual's program of studies. An individualized vocational education plan (IVEP) which is similar to an individual education plan (IEP for students with disabilities) is developed specifically for students from special populations who are enrolled in vocational and applied technology education programs. A student's present level of performance is very important to observe and discuss as it summarizes both strengths and limitations a student may have. Without proper assessment, proper placement may not be guaranteed, and the student might not then be successful or might not be able to gain the desired skills and training for fulfillment of vocational career goals. For example, the benefits of individualized instruction, hands-on experiences, computer-based instruction, and small groups will be of no avail if the student cannot read on the required level of instruction or operate equipment if they possess no operational functioning skills. It is very important for students to have one-on-one guidance to insure that they are properly placed within educational settings (Wolfe, 2007). After this one-on-one guidance and proper assessment from the tools mentioned above, the student is then ready to be directed toward a program that will properly meet his or her needs and desires.

Students may start the application process at a public choice alternative program themselves if they are of age 18 and desire the standard diploma or wish to take the GED instead

of seeking a regular high school diploma. If students are younger than 18, they can fall under the approval of the American Council on Education to be allowed to take the GED exam at age 16 if they meet the requirements of the Individual Student Alternative Education Plan (ISAEP) which is a Virginia option. The required components of the ISAEP must include:

- (1) career guidance counseling;
- (2) mandatory enrollment in a GED testing program or an alternative education program approved by the local school board;
- (3) counseling on the economic impact of failing to complete high school; and
- (4) provisions for re-enrollment in school.

A student who fails to comply with an ISAEP shall be deemed to be in violation of compulsory attendance requirements (Adult, 2000).

### Significance of Study

When interests and abilities intersect at career choice time, a lifetime of personal and job satisfaction can be enjoyed. Student interest often will align itself with ability in some special area. At times these special abilities, talents, and interests may not correlate with subject matter offered in the regular curriculum. Some of these *different drummers* are very aware that their step may not be with the directed beat, but are confident that their choice of music is in harmony with their very own goals and career choices. Their choices may not be in tune with the current standards movement that emphasizes college preparatory programs but instead may be oriented in goals that desire specialized trade or technical training. If given an opportunity to pursue these career routes, this type of nontraditional student can become a productive and successful member of society.

With more options available to students who are not planning to go on to a four-year college, for instance, alternative education programs can fill the gap for technical and skilled trades training. General Education Diploma (GED) preparation is often offered for those who would not be able to get a diploma otherwise. Some systems include co-op partnerships with local businesses for on-the-job training. These experiences may be as volunteer workers or as paid wages. The benefits for nontraditional students who may be unsuccessful in a regular education program are enormous since these students will soon be of age for the job market. Appropriate placement of students in the alternative programs is the key component of success

for the student. John Kellmayer directly outlined the process through which students should be admitted to alternative education programs: Step 1 involves screening and recommendations by the traditional school staff; Step 2 involves the interview by the alternative school staff; and Step 3 involves the review and recommendation by the selection committee (Kellmayer, 1995).

Just as there are many different alternative education program models to compare, the ways students eventually wind up in these programs often vary from school to school. The student selection process may be as simple as an open door self-referral policy or practices of assessment geared toward disengaged students. Many of these students were not experiencing success in traditional secondary public schools. If assessment is not being done as part of the placement process, the fit of student to the alternative school program may not be a good one; and the student will not have a chance to be successful in that setting either. In turn, success at the school setting has a pervasive effect on the aspirations for the student for the future and their success in the job market. Virginia Randolph Community High School administrators, teachers, and counselors strive to help students find their place within their curriculum. They believe that without proper assessment for placement within the alternative program, students may not have an opportunity to exhibit their strengths in areas not available in the regular high school program (R. Lowerre, personal communication, October 16, 2007).

### Theoretical Framework

Dr. John Goodlad defines education as a process through which behavior – ways of thinking, feeling, and acting – changes or is modified over time. He indicates that definitions almost invariably stress that growth processes requiring time. Goodlad is an advocate of Progressive Education, and his research deals with school culture, school climate, and the attitude of the students toward education in today's schools. Dr. Goodlad's work reflects an understanding of students who may require alternatives to the regular school programs because of hardships. He too experienced hardship growing up as his father died when he was 16, and his family faced continuous financial adversity (Goodlad, 1995). The demand for alternatives seem to heighten as society suffers from what appears to be excessive concern for individual choice and welfare on one hand and group welfare on the other. In proposing this study, the protection of the expression of the individual choice is questioned with regard to placement procedures in

alternative education programs. Public choice alternatives to education provide choices for persons to achieve goals that are not being met in regular school programs.

There are similarities to consider from Goodlad's comments about others who choose educational paths for students and what this study addresses. "To exert intentional influence on the course of student's development is to determine, in part, what kinds of people they turn out to be. It is to create human beings. It is, therefore, to play God," Bereiter announced (p.22). When is it appropriate for educators to intervene in order to guarantee that students, such as those investigated in this study, can benefit from alternative educational programs? The time to intervene is determined by individual student needs and the availability of the appropriate alternative educational programs that can meet those needs. Such a program may be like the current one in place at the Virginia Randolph Community High School, which is very similar to the one described as Miss Randolph's *Henrico Plan* of long ago. These types of academic, vocational, educational programs allow students to think with his or her head and work with his or her hands for a brighter future. Following is one student's perspective:

When people ask where I go to high school, and I tell them the alternative high school they almost always ask, "What's an alternative high school?" My parents asked the same question when I started getting into trouble back at the regular high school, and the principal recommended that I go to the alternative school. It's difficult to define what an alternative high school really is . . . but there's such a different feeling at the alternative school, I feel like I'm important, that the teachers really care about me as a person, and that I'm the focus of my own learning experiences. That last part about me being responsible for my own learning experiences can be both kind of scary but kind of cool at the same time. At first I didn't want to attend the alternative school. A lot of people think we're all a bunch of delinquents. But they are so wrong. Sure, some of us have made mistakes, but we're all teenagers. And don't teenagers make mistakes sometimes? Here, we have as strong an academic program as back in the regular high school. But we also have a lot more freedom. That's not to say we're not held responsible for doing the work. It's just how we get the work done can be different. I'm going away to college next year. I think I'll be better prepared because I went to the alternative school . . . more mature and able to handle living on my own. At first, I didn't want to come. But things weren't working out in the regular school. I was getting suspended a lot, cutting classes and

failing, and telling off my teachers. Now that I think back, though, with graduation only a couple of months away, the alternative school has been one of the best things that ever happened to me.

– Bob, an 18 year old senior at an alternative program (Kellmayer, p.1).

### Limitations

The results of this study are limited to describing the procedures used presently at one school, the Virginia Randolph Community High School, which is one of only three of its kind in the state, rather than comparing several different alternative educational settings. Therefore, caution is provided against generalizing the findings and observations to other alternative education settings.

Another limitation relates to legislative control over student attendance in alternative programs if a student has been expelled from school. Unless the student qualifies for special education or is in the custody of the Department of Juvenile Justice, the student forfeits his or her right to an education when expelled. As a result, there is an entire sub-group not represented in this study of alternative educational choices.

### Definition of Terms

The operational definitions for my study include:

*Adjustment disorder*: Inability or maladaptive reaction to an identifiable stressful life event.

*CTE*: Career and technical education activities.

*Curriculum-based Vocational Assessment*: A rating procedure designed to determine the interest, aptitudes, instructional needs, and skill development of students based on their ongoing performance within a career/vocational curriculum sequence.

*Curriculum Options*: The tailoring of experiences and activities encountered in pursuit of academic vocational/technical preparation to meet the unique needs of the individual student.

*Cyberbullying*: The use of information and communication technologies to facilitate, deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual toward another.

*Disability:* A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of an individual's major life activities.

*Disadvantaged:* Individuals (other than those with disabilities) who have economic or academic disadvantages and who require special services and assistance in order to succeed in educational programs. The term includes members of economically disadvantaged families, migrants, individuals of limited English proficiency, and dropouts (or those identified as potential dropouts) from secondary schools.

*Education for Employment (EFE):* A state-initiated program designed to increase standards in preparation for career pathways, employment, and further education to develop different approaches to gaining technical skills and to provide multiple program entry and exit points; and to create school-to-work link.

*Employability Skills/Work-Related Skills:* Those skills necessary to seek and keep a job.

*Functional Assessment:* Assessment made of basic survival competencies necessary to function in an independent living or work setting.

*GED:* General Education Diploma.

*IEP:* Individualized Education Program for students with disabilities. IEPs are cooperatively planned by a team of educators, support personnel, and family members.

*IVEP:* An individualized vocational education plan developed specifically for individuals from special populations who are enrolled in vocational and applied technology education programs.

*Individuals Disability Education Act (IDEA):* This 2004 act ensures all children with disabilities the right to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

*Interagency cooperation:* The coordination of available resources from both public and private agencies whose objectives are to provide vocational and applied technology education instruction and services to learners from special populations.

*Job analysis:* A procedure providing information on what a worker or student worker does, how the job is done, and why it is necessary.

*Job coaching:* The provision of a job trainer (school-to-work coordinator) who provides on-site support necessary for a student to perform the tasks of the job.

*Job placement:* The process of gathering information about jobs, job leads, and job openings; preparing individuals with job-seeking skills and information; and helping individuals obtain initial employment.

*Job shadowing:* A program that allows students to become aware of the daily tasks involved in a job of their interest by following a person employed in that area for a period of time (usually part of a work day).

*Learning Disability:* A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using spoken or written language which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. It does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, mental retardation, or environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

*Limited English Proficient (LEP):* Individuals who were not born in the United States or whose native language is not English.

*Local advisory committees:* Groups of individuals from the community who advise vocational and applied technology educators about planning, implementing, and maintaining programs.

*On-the-job training:* Educational and training experiences provided at a job site, with or without pay.

*Present level of performance:* Information from formal and informal assessment, observation, and discussion processes that summarize both the strengths and limitations of the student.

*Public Choice Alternative Education Program:* Alternative educational program which parents and/or students (if they are 18 years of age) may apply for enrollment in order to attend.

*Regional Alternative Programs:* Alternative educational sites for several counties for the placement of students who were not successful in their home schools due to behavior problems.

*Situational assessment:* Identification of the individual's work characteristics and training needs in relation to actual job requirements.

*Special education:* Specifically designed instruction for students with disabilities in all settings, including the workplace and training centers.

*Strategy:* A planned, deliberate activity used to acquire knowledge.

*Transition:* A carefully planned process, which may be initiated either by school personnel or adult service providers, to establish and implement a plan for either employment or additional vocational training of a student who will return to the regular education program or leave school to go into the workforce.

*Vocational aptitude:* The capacity and capability to acquire competencies with a given amount of formal or informal training.

*Vocational assessment:* A comprehensive process conducted over a period of time, involving a multidisciplinary team with the purpose of identifying individual characteristics, education, training, and placement needs, which provides educators with the basis for planning an individual's program.

*Vocational exploration:* A component that exposes students briefly to a variety of work settings to help them make decisions about future career directions or occupations.

The exploration process involves investigating interests, values, beliefs, strengths, and weaknesses in relation to the demands and other characteristics of work environments.

*Vocational training:* A component that places the student in various employment settings for work experiences.

*Vocational interests:* Occupational interests expressed by an individual through interviews, exploratory activities, or interest inventories.

*Work habits:* The attitudinal, problem-solving, and interpersonal behaviors that are thought to be critical for student success in classroom settings and in employment situations.

### Organization of the Study

This study is comprised of five chapters, with Chapter 2, 3, and 4 as prepared article publications. This option is approved by the Virginia Tech Graduate School and follows the suggested guidelines of the Educational Leadership Program Area. Chapter 1 serves as a traditional introduction chapter and includes the purpose and significance of the study along with definition of terms and limitations.

Chapter 2 presents a *local* publication for the Charlotte Gazette which is published weekly. Chapter 3 is a proposed *state* publication for the Virginia Educational Leadership, a journal sponsored by the Virginia Association of Curriculum Development. Chapter 4 is a



prepared *national* publication, Phi Delta Kappan. Chapter 5 is a traditional chapter containing a discussion of conclusions, implications, and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER II  
ARTICLE 1: THREE ARTICLE DISSERTATION (TAD)

The Teacher Who Took Her Stove to School

Note: This article was prepared for submission to the Charlotte Gazette which is published weekly and the Gazette Virginian for consideration of publication. The style follows the specified guidelines of the publications and is consistent with the Virginia Tech Educational Leadership Program Area requirements.

Historical research awakens sleeping giants and often brings them alive to walk with us for awhile. Miss Virginia Estelle Randolph is one such giant whose story must be told and retold so that others may share in the awe and amazement of what this educator accomplished and become inspired by her methods of getting things done!

Long before the phrase *No Child Left Behind* became commonplace, Virginia Randolph set out to make sure that as many children as possible would have the opportunity to go to school and not be left behind during the post-Reconstruction era of our country. At this time there was literally no transportation available for these children to attend school, very few school facilities existed, and even fewer supplies were accessible for their instruction. In fact, the setting of this story occurs in a time and place in history that could have had a very different ending had it not been for the efforts of this lone woman who literally started an educational movement in her area which was recognized, and her methods adopted internationally as well. Henrico County, Virginia, still benefits from her vision and leadership today through a high school named in her honor, Virginia Randolph Community High School (Registry, 2007).

*Sometimes our light goes out but is blown into flame by  
another human being. Each of us owes deepest thanks to  
those who have rekindled this light.*

Albert Schweitzer

Miss Virginia Randolph has been an inspiration to many throughout the years. Her humble manner is not to be mistaken for lack of enormity of leadership. There are times anyone can feel overwhelmed facing a huge project at work. It's not unusual for a person to ponder well into the night searching for the innermost strength to meet the demands of the task at hand. One may question his/her physical reserve and countenance, his/her fortitude, tenacity, and ability to

motivate others and even ones own self at times like this when the undertaking is daunting that must be tackled. A project may seem impossible to take on without many resources at our fingertips or without others to offer additional help and support.

Such were the thoughts perhaps of Miss Randolph, although this modest woman seemed to face the insurmountable odds with such a calm confidence it causes the majority of readers of her biographical sketches to wonder what made this woman have such persistence and determination during this difficult time for a leader in the field of education, especially a black woman who was the daughter of former slaves in the home of a professor at Richmond College (now the University of Richmond) (Houseman, 1942).

Miss Randolph was born in Richmond, Virginia, in 1874. Not much is written about her youth, but records show she received her education in Richmond and started teaching by the age of sixteen. She was the second oldest of four children, and her father died when her youngest sister was only a month old. She learned to sew, knit, and crochet from her mother at a young age and helped her run the household (Wright, 1936). Perhaps these environmental factors of her upbringing instilled in her the desire to help others attain an education and gave her persistence in that endeavor.

A visit to the Virginia Randolph Museum next to the site where she taught and started many community programs reveals much about the career path Miss Randolph took. She began teaching actually a year before she was of legal age to do so. She began teaching in Goochland County in 1890 and taught there for only two years before she returned to Henrico County to teach in the one-room Mountain Road School which is the present site of the current school that bears her name (H. Cosby, personal communication, October 20, 2006).

The Superintendent of Henrico County Public Schools, Dr. Jackson Davis, stopped by her school to ask for directions and noticed her innovated *hands-on* teaching methods. He encouraged her to continue with this industrial training as well as the academics. She is considered the first vocational teacher and the *Henrico Plan*, as Dr. Davis coined her techniques and philosophy, was used in as many as 23 schools Miss Randolph supervised. These methods were later adopted in southern states where Miss Randolph would travel to give in-service training to teachers (Brown, 1990). The methods also have been used in Britain's East, West, South, and Central African colonies (Buck, 1952).

In order to obtain funding for the supervision position of Miss Randolph, Dr. Davis sought to obtain money from the Anna T. Jeanes Fund. The year before in 1907, Miss Ann Thomas Jeanes, a Quakeress of Philadelphia gave money to be used for rural schools. Two years before her death, Dr. Hollis B. Frissell, the Principal of Hampton Institute, and Dr. Booker T. Washington, of Tuskegee, visited her with hopes of getting donations to their institutions. Even though Miss Jeanes was interested in their schools, she felt others had given to the large schools so she desired to donate \$10,000 to Dr. Frissell to be used for teacher salaries (Brown, 121). She also gave Dr. Washington a similar amount to be used for the building of rural schools. The money was then turned over to Mr. George Foster Peabody, treasurer of the General Education Board. He wrote Miss Jeanes a letter explaining that the Board was in a position to assume responsibility for any donations she may like to make. She contacted Dr. Frissell instead and donated a sum of \$200,000 to the Board. In 1907, Miss Jeanes donated a considerable amount of money, one million dollars, to be used for furthering education in the small black rural schools. She stipulated William Howard Taft (not yet President of the United States), Andrew Carnegie, Hollis B. Frissell, George Foster Peabody, and Booker T. Washington as the first members of the Board of Trustees of the Anna T. Jeanes Fund (p. 122).

Many county superintendents sent the board letters asking for aid for their schools. One of the letters was from Dr. Jackson Davis. He requested the money to be used to have an industrial supervisor, Miss Virginia Randolph, to work in every rural school in the entire county of Henrico. He wanted the other county schools to become well kept with landscaped lawn projects like Miss Randolph had done. She had gotten the community patrons involved with these school projects, and she also taught her student needed life skills such as sewing and woodworking as well as the academics. His desire was that all schools were more in touch with the conditions of life in the communities (p. 224).

Her novel teaching methods brought opposition from within her community at times though. Parents wanted their children to learn academics from books, not such skills as sewing, gardening or woodworking which one would consider manual labor. But the superintendent stood behind her, and she was appointed the first Jeanes Supervisor Industrial Teacher in the South (Link, 1986). She would now travel to 23 different schools to supervise other teachers, and this was the first formal in-service teacher training anywhere in Virginia for rural African-

American teachers. She traveled up to three hours one way on often rough country roads hiring a buggy and driver, an expense she covered with her meager salary.

She also used her own money to put gravel on the muddy school yard when she began teaching at the Mountain Road School. This took \$7.50 of her first month's salary of \$25.00. Miss Randolph believed it was important to improve the appearance of the school and grounds with trees also. She organized and conducted the first Arbor Day program in Virginia in 1908 at her school (Randolph, 1946). She enlisted help from the neighborhood and twelve trees were donated for this occasion. She named the trees after the twelve disciples. Later in 1915 when the Anna T. Jeanes Memorial Dormitory was built a tree had to be removed. It is reported that Miss Randolph thought it was fitting that this tree was the one named Judas (Houseman, 8)

#### With Little Funding: She Carried Her Stove to School

Anyone who starts to complain about lack of funds for a project or how to get community involvement or financial support should take notice of Miss Randolph's example. She organized what she called a Patrons Improvement League that focused on the physical improvements of the school and its surrounding grounds. Most of this group consisted of the men from the community. Another group she established was the League of Willing Workers. This group was made up of women who focused on fundraising and providing for the basic needs of the students. Finally, she created the School Improvement Club, which comprised of students and parents. This group also maintained the school and took care of the general upkeep of the grounds. She set aside a time each week for this work to be accomplished. She was involved with the local churches in her community as well (Lowerre, 2005).

It is known that she was a deeply religious woman who started a Sunday school herself in addition to the school. At one time she even felt that she could do more good in religious work. With the help of her pastor and students from Virginia Union University, she organized an evening Sunday school which was held at the Old Mountain Road School. That Sunday school ran every Sunday of the year, and Miss Randolph walked a distance of eight miles, during all kinds of weather to keep it going in addition to all of her other duties as a teacher and supervisor of teachers (Brown, 116).

Although Miss Randolph never married or had any children of her own, she managed on her meager salary to open her home to house students who lived a good distance from the school

and did not have any transportation to attend. It is said that at times she had as many as 17 students living with her. Mrs. Hilda Cosby, curator of the Virginia Randolph Museum, reports that Miss Randolph indicated she didn't remember how many total students stayed with her; but she thought it there were around 49 who needed to stay there. "This was during segregation times," Cosby said. "We had to board children as there was no transportation available for them." Students came to Miss Randolph's school from as far away as New York. Eventually, money was given to build dormitories at the school site. One was for teachers and one for students. Stories handed down from former students or parents of students told of how early Miss Randolph got up in the mornings to cook a good breakfast for her charges. She was a leader who led by example. She was even known to disassemble her still warm wood stove, and it was not uncommon to see her carrying it to school on a wagon pulled by a horse in order to teach students how to cook. She firmly believed that students needed academic knowledge along with the knowledge of how to use their hands to do the work of life such as cooking (H. Cosby, personal communication, October 20, 2006).

#### Work Included in Randolph's Educational Philosophy

There is a scholarship named for Miss Virginia Randolph that is still awarded to a deserving student in Henrico County, Virginia each year (Foundation, 2007). A museum sits quietly and unassumingly beside the school that bears her name, and her body was reinterred at the site in 1970 (Kollatz, 1993). The gatherings of simple items that portray the sum of a life given for others speak volumes about *true grit* and persistence in the face of insurmountable odds. Not only will visitors come away with a better understanding of a most crucial time in the history of our country and its educational system, but also with very personal glimpses of this educator's struggles and successes as she pioneered into uncharted courses of establishing curriculum, securing funding for facilities, and enrolling community support and involvement. How did she accomplish all of this? How did she physically have the energy to continue year after year to gracefully, and she was a graceful lady in every sense of the word, and wholeheartedly keep focused on the educational mission at hand without getting distracted by all the everyday problems associated with teaching? She was first and foremost an example to her students, and then she became a supervisor and advocate for students and education. She would never have admitted to having any "philosophy" when she began to teach in 1893. What were

the fundamental characteristics involved in her practices, policies, and leadership? Boiled down to the essentials, they included:

- (1) Each day's program of school activities included some activity that might come under the humble heading of work, such as gardening, woodworking, sewing, laundering, or cooking, thus creating a genuine respect for work on the part of the students. They mixed this work with reading, writing, history, geography, and other academics.
- (2) They also used everyday things of life found at one's door to be resourceful instead of waiting until funds were secured to purchase articles. An example of this was the baskets they made from honeysuckle vines.
- (3) Finally, she made sure to interest parents in the school and involve them in the work of their children. She also used whatever means necessary to foster good-will and support from the patrons of the school and the entire community. For example, there were many programs of entertainment held at the school for the enjoyment of all (Kollatz, p. 1).

These practices are still in place at the Virginia Randolph Community High School today, and it is evident in the success of many of the approximately 350 students who attend this school daily (R. Lowerre, personal communication, October 16, 2007).

Miss Randolph was honored for her outstanding accomplishments. She was awarded the Harmon Award for meritorious achievement in education by the Southern Education Foundation in 1926. She was the first black person to receive this award. She always wore the pennant on a chain around her neck but hidden beneath her blouse for fear someone might think she was vain. In 1976 the Virginia Randolph Museum was dedicated as a National Historic Landmark and the Virginia Randolph Sycamores as National Historic Trees in Virginia, and these are also registered as a Virginia Historic Landmark by the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission. In 1992 Miss Randolph was inducted into the Goochland County Educational Hall of Fame, and in 1993 she was inducted into the Virginia Women's Hall of Fame (Cosby, 2000).

In Howard Gardner's book, *Leading Minds, An Anatomy of Leadership*, the author stated that once in high office *leaders had to determine and depict what it meant to lead their respective organizations at a rapidly changing moment in history. They confirmed certain traditional norms and yet helped to redefine the nature of their institutions in their times.* (p. 25))

Indeed, this is what Miss Randolph accomplished. As we examine her outstanding motivational leadership style, it is easy to see why her memory lives on through history. The story of this great woman, so dedicated to her cause, continues to change lives today.

The Virginia Randolph Museum is open to the public for tours from 1:00 – 4:00 P. M. on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday. It is also open on Sunday from 3:00 – 5:00 P.M. Anyone who wishes to visit the museum may also call (804) 261-5029 or (804) 360-2071 to set up an appointment at other hours. Admission is free (Cosby, 2000).



## CHAPTER III

### ARTICLE 2: THREE ARTICLE DISSERTATION (TAD)

#### The Henrico Plan: Best Practices from the Past

Note: This article is prepared for consideration of publication in the Virginia Educational Leadership, the official publication of the Virginia Association of Supervision and Curriculum. The style follows the specified guidelines of the publication and is consistent with the Virginia Tech Educational Leadership Program Area requirements.

The Virginia Randolph Community High School is an ideal model for vocational, technical, and alternative education programs. It is one of only three public option alternative high schools in the state of Virginia, and it was the first to be fully accredited. It is located near Richmond at the original historic site of the Old Mountain Road School which was directed by a remarkable educator, Miss Virginia Estelle Randolph, during the post-Reconstruction era (G. Anderson, 2007). Remnants of her skilled leadership and sound internationally recognized educational practices are still evident today at the high school. In fact, the current curriculum approach for practical vocational training, under the leadership and direction of current principal, Mr. Robert Lowerre, reflects what was in 1908 coined the *Henrico Plan* by Dr. Jackson Davis, then Superintendent of Henrico County Public Schools. Mr. Lowerre reports that he has gleaned much insight and inspiration from his research of Miss Randolph's leadership philosophy and contributions to the field of education (R. Lowerre, personal communication, February 16, 2008). Research of the past frequently awakens sleeping giants and often brings them alive to walk with us for awhile. Miss Virginia Estelle Randolph is one such giant whose story of her influence must be told and retold so that others may share in the awe and amazement of what this educator accomplished and become inspired by her methods of leadership just as Bob Lowerre has been.

Is it possible that Mr. Lowerre's ideas for student achievement not only parallel with those of Miss Randolph's, or perhaps their visions of education have intersected to produce something truly contemporary out of old *tried and true* educational practices? In an article by Bill Bradley in the *Imagining the Possible* section of the Virginia Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (Bradley, 2005), he states that innovation has reached a point of diminishing returns; and there are no new paradigm-shifting ideas to change the way we think

about and approach our lives. All that is left is to refine and perfect old ideas, what author Frans Johansson refers to as *directional ideas*, meaning that discovery and advancement are linear and predictable (p. 8).

But, as Johansson states in his book entitled the *Medici Effect*, *intersectional* ideas have their roots in Florence, Italy where the wealthy Medici family summoned the great minds of that time to meet together. One can imagine such great artists, scientists, and architects such as Michelangelo, da Vinci, Botticelli, Raphael, Brunelleschi, Donatello, and Galileo exchanging ideas and breaking down barriers between fields, learning from others, and collectively transforming the way we view our world and our place within it (p. 8).

### The Present Intersects with the Past

To suggest an intersect between the leadership of Miss Randolph and Mr. Lowerre, which has produced a new approach to some old challenges in the field of education, is to predict that this can in fact happen. Sometimes it is difficult to properly record or describe a phenomenon, present or past, such as this. Words can be inadequate to conjure up appropriate associations with a particular idea or to invoke just the right connection when relating to a new circumstance. To describe the leadership-style intersect of a historic educational figure with that of a modern-day principal's on-going management may be an arduous task. If we begin by examining the historical aspects of changes taking place during the post-Reconstruction period, it may lead to a better understanding of what shaped the conception of Miss Randolph's ideals for the value she placed on the role of education in society. We can also get a better feel for the background of the historic *hands-on* approach called the *Henrico Plan* that Mr. Lowerre, in a sense, continues to make available for his students today.

To fully appreciate the significance of Miss Randolph's efforts, one needs to develop an understanding of what it was like in that era after the Civil War. African-Americans had long been denied educational opportunities. Now there was a great crusade to educate the 4,000,000 emancipated slaves and the 1,000,000 free men after the Civil War. This educational movement rose to a flood with 90,000 in school in 1866 and 150,000 in 1870. Twenty years later there were 1,250,000 attending school and in 1910 there were 1,600,000. By 1930 there were 2,500,000 enrolled (Provenzo, 2002). This astonishing educational movement accounts for the

funding that became available to assist Miss Randolph's efforts in building and improving school facilities, establishing new types of curriculum approaches, and to conducting teacher training.

The ideals and practices of order and industry that Miss Randolph adopted can be traced perhaps in part to environmental factors associated with her upbringing as a daughter of former slaves owned by a college professor at Richmond College (now University of Richmond). She grew up near what is now the Virginia Randolph Community High School in an environment where education was valued. She had an opportunity to witness people reading and experienced the joy of learning new things. One can imagine that scholarship was expected to be a part of her life from an early age. She also learned many useful life skills from her mother as a child. Her mother taught her by showing her how to sew and demonstrating how to cook foods. These influences in those early years most likely shaped Miss Randolph's desire to help children in their quest for knowledge along with being able to perform worthwhile tasks as of result of working with ones hands.

On the other hand, these ideals and practices may be attributed to the general advancements in higher education during that time which were being lead by Booker T. Washington (Registry, 2007). Washington, who graduated from Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute (now Hampton University), maintained strong ties to the Institute and Virginia. After graduation, he taught in the area at what is now Virginia Union University. He was later recommended to become the first leader of a new normal school (teacher's college) which later became Tuskegee University. He was known as an educational leader who believed in teaching students industrial trades, and he indicated that the students actually built the brick that was used to build the Tuskegee University. He was the formidable founder who took the steps necessary to teach students at Tuskegee to be self-sufficient and to be examples of strong character. Washington regularly visited every class to see students being instructed to become cooks, plumbers, nurses, carpenters, coopers, cobblers, blacksmith, millwrights, as well as young men and women who perfected their skills in agriculture (Boyd, 2000).

In 1908, Miss Randolph was appointed the first black supervisor for teachers by funding made available by funds given for rural schools by Anna T. Jeanes, a Quaker philanthropist from Philadelphia. As part of her training and that of the other supervisors appointed later, she was sent from time to time for in-services at Hampton Institute to study the Booker T. Washington industrial methods (Botsch, 1998). His methods were similar to those of her youth and were

comparable to her way of learning as well. They served an instrument to help many students become proud learners.

When she began teaching at Old Mountain Road School (later named in her honor as Virginia E. Randolph Training School in 1915), she was confronted with conditions typical to most black schools of that time. Miss Randolph described her school in Henrico County, “It was old, bare within and without, and stood on a roughly cleared patch of ground by the side of a hilly road in which the visitor’s buggy would sink at times to the wheel hubs” (Brown, 1990). Miss Randolph began right away to make the school a more attractive place for her students to come to for their education. She used her own money to put gravel on the muddy school yard when she began teaching. This took \$7.50 of her first month’s salary of \$25.00. Miss Randolph believed it was important to improve the appearance of the school and grounds with trees also. Along with teaching the academic subjects, Miss Randolph enlisted her students help to transform the school into a much nicer facility complete with gardens established and tended as part of agricultural studies also. Parents became mobilized with the efforts of the school; and with their assistance and help from community patrons, Miss Randolph conducted the first Arbor Day program in Virginia in 1908 at her school and planted 12 sycamore trees that day (Randolph, 1946).

The Superintendent of Henrico County Public Schools, Dr. Jackson Davis, noticed Miss Randolph’s innovated *hands-on* teaching methods in instructing the students such skills as gardening woodworking, and sewing. He also liked the changes that had been made to the appearance of the school, inside and outside, including the grounds. He encouraged her to continue with this industrial training as well as the academics. Dr. Davis coined her techniques the *Henrico Plan* and wanted her to teach other teachers in the area her methods. She is considered the first vocational teacher and the *Henrico Plan* was subsequently used in as many as 23 schools that Miss Randolph supervised. This *hands-on* approach was later adopted in the southern states where Miss Randolph would travel to give in-service training to teachers also (Brown, 123). The methods of the *Henrico Plan* were also adopted in Britain’s East, West, South, and Central African colonies as well (Buck, 1952).

It is important to note more details of how the funds became available for the building of new educational facilities as well as the funding for the supervision position of Miss Randolph. As stated earlier, Dr. Davis obtained money from the Anna T. Jeanes Fund to promote his

*Henrico Plan*. Miss Anna Thomas Jeanes had provided funding to be used for rural schools like the Old Mountain Road School. Two years before her death, Dr. Hollis B. Frissell, the Principal of Hampton Institute, and Dr. Booker T. Washington, of Tuskegee, visited Jeanes with the hope of getting donations for their institutions. Even though Miss Jeanes was interested in their schools, she felt others had given to the large schools so she desired to donate \$10,000 to Dr. Frissell to be used for teacher salaries (Brown, 121). She also gave Dr. Washington a similar amount to be used for the building of rural schools. The money was then turned over to Mr. George Foster Peabody, treasurer of the General Education Board. He wrote Miss Jeanes a letter explaining that the Board was in a position to assume responsibility for any donations she may like to make. She contacted Dr. Frissell instead and donated a sum of \$200,000 to the Board. Then in 1907, Miss Jeanes donated a considerable amount of money, one million dollars, to be used for furthering education in the small black rural schools. She stipulated William Howard Taft (not yet President of the United States), Andrew Carnegie, Hollis B. Frissell, George Foster Peabody, and Booker T. Washington as the first members of the Board of Trustees of the Anna T. Jeanes Fund (p. 122).

As the many county superintendents sent the board letters asking for aid for their schools, one came in about an enthusiastic teacher and her methods in Henrico. The board liked the idea of the *Henrico Plan* and granted funding to Dr. Davis for its development and use and expansion. He requested the money to be used to pay the salary of an industrial supervisor, Miss Virginia Randolph, to work in every rural school in the entire county of Henrico. He wanted the other county schools to become well kept with landscaping and gardening being taught like Miss Randolph had instructed. Her enthusiasm spread into the community and parents and school patrons as well became involved with school projects as she taught her students needed life skills along with academics. The aspiration of Dr. Davis became a reality as Miss Randolph shared her hands-on approach, the *Henrico Plan*, and helped other teachers become more in touch with the conditions of life in their communities. She would now travel up to three hours one way on often rough country roads hiring a buggy and driver, an expense she covered with her meager salary, in order to supervise teachers at the other 23 different schools in Henrico (p. 224).

As with anything new and different, her novel teaching methods brought some opposition from within her community at times though. Parents wanted their children to learn academics from books, not such skills as sewing, gardening or woodworking which one would consider

manual labor. But the superintendent stood behind Randolph, and upheld her appointment as the first Jeanes Supervisor Industrial Teacher in the South (Link, 1986).

Long before the phrase *No Child Left Behind* became commonplace, Virginia Randolph set out to make sure that as many children as possible would have the opportunity to go to school to learn not just by seeing but by doing and not be left behind. Now Bob Lowerre oversees the delivery of a curriculum that appeals to all different types of students, especially students who like a hands-on approach to their educational endeavors. He enthusiastically works with their parents and conducts weekly teacher training in-service activities. One need only to examine the relationship of Miss Randolph's strong leadership and witness her influence as it parallels the leadership of Mr. Lowerre to understand the success of the Virginia Randolph Community High School because of the *intersect* of the approach of these two leaders, past and present.

#### Model for Alternative Education

In the fall of 2006, I had the opportunity to visit the Virginia Randolph Community High School which is on the original site of the Old Mountain Road School near Richmond. I had visited with an associate of the Virginia Department of Education earlier; and on his recommendation, decided to make a site visit to research this alternative education program. My investigation in connection with doctoral studies in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Virginia Tech had led me to other such visits; but when I heard that this school was the first public choice alternative high school (only three exist) to be fully accredited in the Commonwealth, I knew I had to make an on-site visit.

Multicolored leaves danced across the campus sidewalks that beautiful, crisp fall day. The sun was out and Mr. Robert Lowerre, principal, talked enthusiastically about the many opportunities the school had to offer students who would have probably quit school altogether if it had not been for a second chance at his school. Initially, I wondered if it was the gorgeous fall day that seemed to make the campus appear so special. At first I just enjoyed the atmosphere; but the longer I was there, the more I realized that my positive impressions were not just a result of lovely day, or the principal's presentation of school matters, or the well-kept facility, or Miss Randolph's sycamore trees in the courtyard, or even the solemnity of her grave nearby at Virginia Randolph Memorial Museum - this was indeed a special place!

There was a sense of this historic persona apparent visually but also a sense of pride within the student body which was displayed in the manner in which the students greeted us politely and with a sense of purpose. Everyone seemed to know exactly what business they were about and seemed to truly be enjoying their day at school. Many of these students, according to Mr. Lowerre, would have dropped out if they had not been placed at this school administratively or enrolled voluntarily. He indicated that the students will tell you that. “There would not have been any other place for them except the Virginia Randolph Community High School” (R. Lowerre, personal communication, October 16, 2006).

The Virginia Department of Education 2005-2006 Dropout Statistics reports a total of 10,608 students dropped out of school that year in the state (VDOE, 2007). This number is indicative of a great loss of human potential, human resources, and disenfranchisement of many from the American Dream. Virginia is not the only state faced with this problem. Many students nationwide drop out of school without any job training or career plans (Miline, 2005). Mr. Lowerre indicates that, like Miss Randolph, he sees his work at this school as a calling, and that he feels he is where he is meant to be. He agrees strongly that any number of dropouts is too many, and values hands-on approach of the *Henrico Plan* as being an avenue of success for his students. Mr. Lowerre spoke at length about Miss Randolph’s philosophy of education and how the program at the high school today coincides with her philosophy of teaching by “doing and not just showing” (R. Lowerre, personal communication, October 16, 2007).

#### Work Included in Randolph’s Philosophy

A museum sits quietly and unassumingly beside the school that bears her name today. The gatherings of simple items portray the sum of a life dedicated to serving others and speak volumes about “true grit” and persistence in the face of insurmountable odds. Visitors to the museum will come away with a better understanding of our country’s educational history at a most crucial time in our past and with very personal glimpses of this educator’s struggles and successes as she pioneered into uncharted courses of establishing curriculum, securing funding for facilities, and enrolling community support and involvement as well as teacher training. One may wonder what sustained her will power to bring about all of these accomplishments. How did she physically have the energy to continue year after year to gracefully, and she was a graceful lady in every sense of the word, and wholeheartedly keep focused on the educational mission at

hand without getting distracted by all the everyday problems associated with teaching and supervision? Even though she was first and foremost an example to students and teachers, she was also an advocate for both. She would never have admitted to having any *philosophy* when she began to teach. There were the fundamental things involved in her practices, policies, and leadership. Boiled down to the essentials, her philosophy included:

- (1) Each day's program of school activities included some activity that might come under the humble head of work, such as gardening, woodworking, sewing, laundering, or cooking, thus creating a genuine respect for work on the part of the students. They mixed this work with reading, writing, history, geography, and other academics.
- (2) They also used everyday things of life found at one's door to be resourceful instead of waiting until funds were secured to purchase articles. An example of this was the baskets they made from honeysuckle vines.
- (3) Finally, parents were made to become interested in the school and involved in the work of their children. Randolph used whatever means necessary to foster good-will and support from the patrons of the school and the entire community (Wright, 1936).

These practices are still in place at the Virginia Randolph Community High School today with its hands-on approach as seen through the many vocational offerings taught along with the academics. Some of these *hands-on* courses of study to choose from including, but are not limited to, the following: auto body; auto repair and servicing; business and information technology; brick masonry, carpentry; culinary arts; cosmetology; electricity; horticulture; nurse aide; graphic communications/printing; and vending machine repair (VRCAHS, 2008). A variety of workshops are offered for parents to foster their involvement in the work of their children. Some of these workshops offered in the 2007-08 school year include: Resolving Family Conflict, Internet Safety and Cyberbullying, Staying Connected to Your Teen, Helping you Child with Tough Choices, and Gang Prevention and Keeping Your Kids Safe over the Summer. Success is evident at among the approximately 350 students at Virginia Randolph Community High School as seen in the numbers of students electing to continue their education or join the workforce. According to the current school profile, 20% of the students go on to four year colleges or universities; 20% attend community colleges, 5% enroll in technical schools and 55% go to



work/other which may include the military (R. Lowerre, personal communication, October 16, 2007).

### Successes for Today

Another success at Virginia Randolph Community High School stems from the recent collective effort on the part of the faculty and students of this school. It is the new CTE (Career and Technical) bus which was transformed from an old yellow school bus (Miss Randolph also used things that were available) into a mobile classroom. The CTE bus project started from the desire to provide a way to get students to think more about their future careers. When an old yellow bus became available, it was transferred to the Virginia Randolph Community High School where students and faculty from the technical educational center removed the insides of the bus. Six flat screen TVs, fifteen computers, workbenches and cabinets were installed. The floor of the bus was laid with black and white tile, and two air conditioning units and an awning were installed. Just like the community support of years gone by, all materials were donated from Career and Technical Education (CTE) local business partners. The students and teachers from each technical center played a hands-on role in the development of the bus. Now the bright red bus travels throughout Henrico County much like a bookmobile. Once on board, students in all grade levels can learn about the technical centers, about varied careers, summer fun programs and attend career fairs (School Days, 2007). After hearing about this innovative approach for career exploration, it was time to see some more of Miss Randolph's beliefs in action.

We started our tour of the Virginia Randolph Community High School and what was apparent immediately was the student's desire to be in a learning environment. Students sat at a table in a shop setting, for instance, with the teacher in close proximity explaining a procedure. All eyes were on the instructor; all were focused and involved in the learning experience in every sense of the word. This may have been in part due the careful screening and career counseling they receive as part of the transition to Virginia Randolph Community High School to ensure that they are enrolling in a desired curriculum for which they are well suited to succeed. The school offers a variety of educational avenues students enjoy choosing from including a standard high school diploma as well as vocational options. Students may also obtain a trade certificate in such fields as follows: auto body; brick masonry; electricity; horticulture; culinary arts; auto service; auto body; carpentry; printing; vending machine mechanics; or business and information

technology. They also have the option to earn a GED. “I think Virginia Randolph would be pleased,” Lowerre stated, and I had to agree after hearing about this innovative educational leader (R. Lowerre, personal communication, February 16, 2008). Her story is one which will give inspiration to anyone, whether an educator or someone from the general public. It will give encouragement to teachers, parents and students alike, principals, and educational supervisors as well.

*Sometimes our light goes out but is blown into flame by another human being. Each of us owes deepest thanks to those who have rekindled this light.*

Albert Schweitzer

### She Carried her Stove to School

If you work in the field of education, or any occupation that necessitates working with people or products for that matter, there are times one can feel overwhelmed with all of the work to be accomplished. At times we may ponder well into the night searching our innermost selves for strength to meet the demands of the job at hand. We question our physical reserve and countenance, our fortitude, our tenacity, and our ability to motivate others and even ourselves at times like this when the undertaking is daunting that we must tackle and that job may seem impossible for us to take on without many resources at our fingertips or without much community support.

Such were the thoughts perhaps of Miss Virginia Randolph, although this humble woman seemed to face the insurmountable odds with such a calm confidence it causes the majority of readers of her biographical sketches to wonder what made this woman have such persistence and determination during this difficult time for a leader in the field of education in the post-Reconstruction arena, especially a black woman who was the daughter of slaves. In Howard Gardner’s book, *Leading Minds, An Anatomy of Leadership*, the author stated that once in high office *leaders had to determine and depict what it meant to lead their respective organizations at a rapidly changing moment in history. They confirmed certain traditional norms and yet helped to redefine the nature of their institutions in their times* (Garner, 1995). Indeed, this is what Miss Randolph accomplished. As we examine her outstanding motivational leadership style, we can also examine what role environmental factors had in her upbringing and education which may have contributed to her desire and ability to lead.

We must surmise much about her youth as there is not a great amount written about that time in her life. Her parents (Sarah Elizabeth Carter Randolph and Edward Nelson Randolph) were former slaves in the home of a professor at Richmond College (now the University of Richmond). She was next to the oldest of four children. Her father died when her sister was only one month old. As stated earlier, she learned to sew, knit, and crochet from her mother and helped her run the household. She started school when she was six years old and graduated from Richmond City Colored Normal School in 1890 (Cosby, 1990). She began teaching actually a year before she was of legal age to do so. She was only sixteen when she began teaching in Goochland County. She taught there for only two years and returned to Henrico County to teach near where she grew up. She found much improvement needed at that school and accomplished both the building of new school facilities as well as dormitories (Wright, 1936). Arnold Cooper reminds us in his book, *Between Struggle and Hope*, that during this time the black educator: “He finds no way prepared, he must make one; he finds no school-house ready, he must build one; he finds no people anxiously awaiting him, he must persuade them,” (Cooper, 1989).

We need to stop and remember Miss Virginia Randolph when we start to complain or wonder if we will be able to get community involvement and financial support. As mentioned earlier, she donated her own money to have gravel brought to the muddy school yard and then organized a Patrons Improvement League that focused on the physical improvements of the school and its surrounding grounds. Most of the group was composed of men from the community. Another group she established was the League of Willing Workers. This group was made up of women who focused on fundraising and providing for the basic needs of the students. Finally, she created the School Improvement Club, which comprised of students and parents. This group maintained the school and took care of the general upkeep of the grounds (Brown, 1990).

Miss Randolph often housed students who lived a good distance to the school and did not have any transportation. It is said that at times she had as many as 17 students living with her. Mrs. Hilda Cosby, curator of the museum reported that Miss Randolph indicated she didn't remember how many total students stayed with her but she thought it there were around 49 who needed to stay there. “This was during segregation times,” Cosby said. “We had to board children as there was no transportation available for them.” Eventually, money was given to build dormitories at the school site. One was for teachers and one for students. Stories handed

down from former students, or parents of students, told of how early Miss Randolph got up in the mornings to cook a good breakfast for her charges. In one of her handwritten reports concerning her curriculum practices, she indicated that she spent an hour a day teaching the students skills that she determined to be important life skills such as cooking, gardening, and sewing in addition to the academics taught. Since she did not have a facility to teach these skills for some time before the home economics cottage was built in 1939, she would disassemble her still warm wood stove and carry it to school in order to teach students how to cook. It was a common sight in that area to see Miss Randolph on her horse drawn wagon with a cook stove on it. She was a leader who led by example! (H. Cosby, personal communication, December 14, 2007).

Things have changed with the times at Miss Randolph's school, but Mr. Lowerre has continued to keep her dream alive that all students gain from both the academics and work from their hands with such vocational choices offered as part of the curriculum today at Virginia Randolph Community High School. He has also taken her methods of creating new items from everyday things which were on hand such as that old yellow bus which is now the CTE traveling "high-tech" career center. Yes, Mr. Lowerre, Miss Randolph would be pleased to ride along her beloved roads of Henrico County on the *learning tech* career exploration mobile.

## CHAPTER IV

### ARTICLE 3: THREE ARTICLE DISSERTATION (TAD)

Note: This article was prepared for submission to the Phi Delta Kappan for consideration of publication. The style follows the specified guidelines of the publications and is consistent with the Virginia Tech Educational Leadership Program Area requirements.

#### Miss Virginia Estelle Randolph

Historical research awakens sleeping giants and often brings them alive to walk with us for awhile. Miss Virginia Estelle Randolph is one such giant whose story must be told and retold so that others may share in the awe and amazement of what this educator accomplished and become inspired by her methods of getting things done!

Long before the phrase *No Child Left Behind* became commonplace, Virginia Randolph set out to make sure that as many children as possible would have the opportunity to go to school and not be left behind during the post-Reconstruction period of our country. At this time there was literally no transportation available for these children to attend school, very few school facilities existed, and even fewer supplies were accessible for their instruction. In fact, the setting of this story occurs in a time and place in history that could have had a very different ending had it not been for the efforts of this lone woman who literally started an educational movement in her area which still benefits from her vision and leadership today (Registry, 2007)

#### Model for Public Choice Alternative Education

In the fall of 2006, I had the opportunity to visit the Virginia Randolph Community High School which is on the original site of the Old Mountain Road School near Richmond. I had visited with an associate of the Virginia Department of Education earlier; and on his recommendation, decided to make a site visit to research this alternative education program. My investigation in connection with doctoral studies in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Virginia Tech had led me to other such visits; but when I heard that this school was the first public choice alternative high school (only three exist) to be fully accredited in the state, I knew I had to make an on-site visit.

Multicolored leaves danced across the campus sidewalks that beautiful crisp day. The sun was out and Mr. Robert Lowerre, principal, talked enthusiastically about the many opportunities the school had to offer students who would have probably quit school altogether if it had not been for a second chance at his school. Initially, I wondered if it was the gorgeous fall day that seemed to make the campus appear so special. At first I just enjoyed the atmosphere; but the longer I was there, the more I realized that my positive impressions were not just a result of lovely day, or the principal's presentation of school matters, or the well-kept facility, or Miss Randolph's sycamore trees in the courtyard, or even the solemnity of her grave nearby at Virginia Randolph Memorial Museum - this was indeed a special place!

There was a sense of this historic persona apparent visually but also a sense of pride within the student body which was displayed in the manner in which the students greeted us politely and with a sense of purpose. Everyone seemed to know exactly what business they were about and were enjoying their day. Many of these students, according to Mr. Lowerre, would have dropped out of school if they had not been placed at this school administratively or enrolled voluntarily. He indicated that the students will tell you that. "There would not have been any other place for them except the Virginia Randolph Community High School," (R. Lowerre, personal communication, October 21, 2006).

The Virginia Department of Education 2005-2006 Dropout Statistics reports a total of 10,608 students dropped out of school that year in the state (VDOE, 2007). This number is indicative of a great loss of human potential, human resources, and disenfranchises many from the American Dream. Virginia is not the only state faced with this problem. Many students nationwide drop out of school without any job training or career plans (Miline, 2005).

After Mr. Lowerre spoke about Miss Randolph's philosophy of education and of how the program there today parallels her philosophy, it was time to see some of her beliefs in action. Students enrolled here learn from many hands-on work experiences, and it what was apparent immediately was their desire to be in this learning environment. Students sat at a table in a shop setting, for instance, with the teacher in close proximity explaining a procedure. All eyes were on the instructor; all were focused and involved in the learning experience in every sense of the word. This may be in part due to the fact that they were studying a curriculum in which they are well suited to succeed. The school offers a variety of educational avenues, including a standard high school diploma as well as GED and vocational options. Students may be able to obtain a

trade certificate in such fields as electricity, culinary arts, auto service, auto body, brick masonry, carpentry, horticulture, nursing, printing, vending machine mechanics, or business and information technology. They may also earn a GED. “I think Virginia Randolph would be pleased,” Lowerre stated, and I had to agree after learning about this innovative educational leader. Her story is one which will inspire any teacher, principal or educational supervisor as well (R. Lowerre, personal communication, February 16, 2008).

Sometimes our light goes out but is blown into flame by another human being. Each of us owes deepest thanks to those who have rekindled this light.

- Albert Schweitzer

If one works in the field of education, or any occupation that necessitates working with people or products for that matter, there are times one can feel overwhelmed with all of the work to be accomplished. At times we may ponder well into the night searching our innermost selves for strength to meet the demands of the job at hand. We question our physical reserve and countenance, our fortitude, our tenacity, and our ability to motivate others and even ourselves when the undertaking is daunting that we must tackle and the job may seem impossible for us to take on without the necessary resources at our fingertips or without much community support.

Such were the thoughts perhaps of Miss Virginia Randolph, although this humble woman seemed to face the insurmountable odds with such a calm confidence that it causes many readers of her biographical sketches to wonder what made this woman have such persistence and determination, during this difficult time for a leader in the field of education in the post-Reconstruction arena, especially a black woman who was the daughter of slaves. In Howard Gardner’s book, *Leading Minds, An Anatomy of Leadership*, the author stated that once in high office *leaders had to determine and depict what it meant to lead their respective organizations at a rapidly changing moment in history. They confirmed certain traditional norms and yet helped to redefine the nature of their institutions in their times* (Gardner, 1995). Indeed, this is what Miss Randolph accomplished. As we examine her outstanding motivational leadership style, we can also examine what role environmental factors had in her upbringing and education which may have contributed to her desire and ability to lead.

To fully appreciate the significance of Miss Randolph’s efforts, one needs to develop an understanding of what it was like in that era after the Civil War. African-Americans had long

been denied educational opportunities. After the war there was a great crusade to educate the 4,000,000 emancipated slaves and the 1,000,000 free men. This educational movement rose to a flood with 90,000 in school in 1866 and 150,000 in 1870. Twenty years later there were 1,250,000 attending school and by 1910 there were 1,600,000. By 1930 there were 2,500,000 enrolled (Provenzo, 2002). This astonishing educational movement accounts for the funding that became available to assist Miss Randolph's efforts in building and improving school facilities, establishing new types of curriculum approaches, and conducting teacher training.

The ideals and practices of order and industry that Miss Randolph adopted can be traced perhaps in part to environmental factors associated with her upbringing as a daughter of former slaves owned by a college professor who taught at Richmond College (now University of Richmond). She grew up in an environment where education was valued. She had an opportunity to witness people reading and experienced the joy of learning new things. One can imagine that scholarship was expected to be a part of her life from an early age. She also learned many useful life skills from her mother as a child and her mother taught her by showing her how to sew and demonstrating how to cook foods. These influences in those early years most likely shaped Miss Randolph's desire to help children in their quest for knowledge along with being able to perform worthwhile tasks as of result of working with their own hands (H. Cosby, personal communication, February 20, 2006).

On the other hand, these ideals and practices may be attributed to the general advancements in higher education during that time which were being lead by Booker T. Washington (Registry, 2007). Washington, who graduated from Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute (now Hampton University), maintained strong ties with the Institute and with Virginia. After graduation, he taught in the area at what is now Virginia Union University. He was later recommended to become the first leader of a new normal school (teacher's college) which later became Tuskegee University. He was known as an educational leader who believed in teaching students industrial trades. (He indicated that the students actually built the brick that was used to build the Tuskegee University.) He was the formidable founder who took the steps necessary to teach students at Tuskegee to be self-sufficient and exemplars of strong character. Washington regularly visited every class to observe students being instructed to become cooks, plumbers, nurses, carpenters, coopers, cobblers, blacksmiths, or millwrights, as well as young men and women who perfected their skills in agriculture (Boyd, 2000).



In 1908, Miss Randolph was appointed the first black supervisor for teachers by funding made available for rural schools by Anna T. Jeanes, a Quaker philanthropist from Philadelphia. As part of her training and that of the other supervisors appointed later, she was sent from time to time for in-service training at Hampton Institute to study the Booker T. Washington industrial methods (Botsch, 1998). His methods were similar to those of her youth and were comparable to her way of learning as well. They served an instrument to help many students become proud learners.

When she began teaching at Old Mountain Road School (later named in her honor as Virginia E. Randolph Training School in 1915), she was confronted with conditions typical to most black schools of that time. Miss Randolph described the school, “It was old, bare within and without, and stood on a roughly cleared patch of ground by the side of a hilly road in which the visitor’s buggy would sink at times to the wheel hubs” (Brown, 1990). Miss Randolph began right away to make the school a more attractive place for her students to come to for their education. She also believed it was important to improve the appearance of the school and grounds with trees. Along with teaching the academic subjects, Miss Randolph enlisted her students help to transform the school into a much nicer facility complete with gardens established and tended as part of agricultural studies also. She mobilized parents with the efforts of the school, and with the assistance and help from community patrons, Miss Randolph conducted the first Arbor Day program in 1908 at her school and planted 12 sycamore trees that day (Randolph, 1946).

The Superintendent of Henrico County Public Schools, Dr. Jackson Davis, noticed Miss Randolph’s innovative *hands-on* teaching methods in instructing the students such skills as gardening, woodworking, and sewing. He also liked the changes that had been made to the appearance of the school, inside and outside, including the grounds. He encouraged her to continue with her industrial training an hour a day as well as the academics. Dr. Davis coined her approach as the *Henrico Plan* and wanted her to teach her methods to other teachers in the area. She is considered the first vocational teacher and the *Henrico Plan* was subsequently used in as many as 23 schools that Miss Randolph supervised. Her *hands-on* approach was later adopted in the southern states where Miss Randolph would also travel to give in-service training to teachers (Brown, 123). The methods of the *Henrico Plan* were even adopted in Britain’s East, West, South, and Central African colonies (Buck, 1952).

It is important to note more details of how the funds became available for the building of new educational facilities as well as the funding for the supervision position for the implementation of the Henrico Plan into other schools by Miss Randolph. As stated earlier, Dr. Davis obtained money from the Anna T. Jeanes Fund to promote the *Henrico Plan*. Miss Anna Thomas Jeanes had provided funding to be used for rural schools like the Old Mountain Road School. Two years before Jeanes death, Dr. Hollis B. Frissell, the Principal of Hampton Institute, and Dr. Booker T. Washington, of Tuskegee, visited Jeanes with the hope of getting donations for their institutions. Even though Miss Jeanes was interested in their schools, she felt others had given to the larger schools and she desired to donate \$10,000 to Dr. Frissell to be used for teacher salaries (Brown, 121). She also gave Dr. Washington a similar amount to be used for the building of rural schools. The money was then turned over to Mr. George Foster Peabody, treasurer of the General Education Board (Organized in 1902 for the purpose of distributing gifts made by John D. Rockefeller and chartered by Congress in 1903). Peabody wrote Miss Jeanes a letter explaining that the Board was in a position to assume responsibility for any donations she may like to make. She contacted Dr. Frissell instead and donated a sum of \$200,000 to the Board. Then in 1907, Miss Jeanes donated a considerable amount of money, one million dollars, to be used for furthering education in the small black rural schools. She stipulated William Howard Taft, not yet President of the United States; Andrew Carnegie; Hollis B. Frissell; George Foster Peabody; and Booker T. Washington as the first members of the Board of Trustees of the Anna T. Jeanes Fund (p. 122).

As the many county superintendents sent the board letters asking for aid for their schools, one came in about an enthusiastic teacher and her methods in Henrico County, Virginia. The board liked the idea of the Henrico Plan and granted funding to Dr. Davis for its development and use and expansion. He requested the money to be used to pay the salary of an industrial supervisor, Miss Virginia Randolph, to work in every rural school in the entire county of Henrico. He wanted the other county schools to become well kept with landscaping and gardening as was Miss Randolph's. Her enthusiasm spread into the community and parents and school patrons as well became involved with school projects as she taught her students needed life skills along with academics. The aspiration of Dr. Davis became a reality as Miss Randolph shared her hands-on approach, the Henrico Plan, and helped other teachers become more in touch with the conditions of life in their communities. She now travels up to three hours one way

on often rough country roads with a buggy and driver, hired at her own expense which she covered with her meager salary, in order to supervise teachers at the other 23 different schools in Henrico (p. 224).

As with anything new and different, her novel teaching methods at times brought some opposition from within her community. Parents wanted their children to learn academics from books, not such skills as sewing, gardening or woodworking which one would consider manual labor. But the superintendent stood behind Randolph, and upheld her appointment as the first Jeanes Supervisor Industrial Teacher in the South (Link, 1986).

### Miss Randolph Carried Her Stove to School

We need to stop and remember Miss Virginia Randolph if we start to complain or wonder if we will be able to get community involvement and financial support. She donated \$7.50 her own monthly salary of \$25.00 to have gravel brought to the muddy school yard, and she organized a Patrons Improvement League that focused on the physical improvements of the school and grounds. Most of this group consisted of men from the community. Another group she established was the League of Willing Workers. This group was made up of women who focused on fundraising and providing for the basic needs of the students. Finally, she created the School Improvement Club, which comprised of students and parents. This group maintained the school and took care of the general upkeep of the grounds (Brown, p.112).

Although Miss Randolph never married or had any children of her own, she often housed students who lived a good distance to the school and did not have any transportation. It is said that at times she had as many as 17 students living with her (Cosby, 2000). Mrs. Hilda Cosby, curator of the Virginia Randolph Museum, reports that Miss Randolph had said that she didn't remember how many total students stayed with her but she thought it there were around 49 who needed to stay there. "This was during segregation times," Cosby said. "We had to board children as there was no transportation available for them." Students came to Miss Randolph's school from as far away as New York. Eventually, money was donated to build dormitories at the school site. One was for teachers and one for students. Stories handed down from former students or parents of students told of Miss Randolph getting up early in the mornings to cook a good breakfast for her charges. She was a leader who led by example. In one of her handwritten reports concerning her curriculum practices, Miss Randolph indicated that she spent an hour a

day teaching the students skills that she determined to be important life skills such as cooking, gardening, and sewing in addition to the academics taught. Since she did not have a facility to teach these skills for some time before the home economics cottage was built in 1939, she even disassembled her still warm wood stove and carried it to school in order to teach students how to cook. It was a common sight in that area to see Miss Randolph on her horse drawn wagon with a cook stove on it. She was a leader who led by example! (H. Cosby, personal communication, December 3, 2006). Her philosophy for education involved the approach that was *hands-on*, but it also included *work*.

### Randolph's Educational Philosophy

She was first and foremost an example to students and teachers and as an advocate for both. She would never have admitted to having any *philosophy* when she began to teach. What were the fundamental things involved in her practices, policies, and leadership? Boiled down to the essentials, they were:

- (1) Each day's program of school activities included some activity that might come under the humble heading of work, such as gardening, woodworking, sewing, laundering, or cooking, thus creating a genuine respect for work on the part of the students. They mixed this work with reading, writing, history, geography, and other academics.
- (2) They also used everyday things of life found at one's door to be resourceful instead of waiting until funds were secured to purchase articles. An example of this was the baskets they made from honeysuckle vines.
- (3) Finally, parents were enticed to become interested in the school and involve them in the work of their children. Randolph used whatever means necessary to foster good-will and support from the patrons of the school and the entire community (Wright, 1936).

These practices are still in place at the Virginia Randolph Community High School today with its hands-on approach as evidenced through the many vocational offerings taught along with the academics, and by the many resulting successes among the student body of the approximately 350 students who attend this school daily (R. Lowerre, personal communication, February 16, 2008).

An example of one such success is the recent collective effort on the part of the faculty and students of this school. It is the new Career and Technical Education (CTE) bus project which was transformed from an old yellow school bus into a mobile classroom. The CTE bus project began with the desire to provide a way to get students to think more about their future careers. When an old yellow bus became available, it was transferred to the Virginia Randolph Community High School where students and faculty from the technical educational center removed the insides of the bus. Six flat screen TVs, fifteen computers, workbenches and cabinets were installed. The floor of the bus was laid with black and white tile, and two air conditioning units and an awning were installed. Just like the community support of years gone by, all materials were donated this time from CTE local business partners. The students and teachers from each technical center played a hands-on role in the development of the bus. Now the bright red bus travels throughout Henrico County much like a bookmobile. Once on board, students in all grade levels can learn about technical centers, varied careers, summer fun programs, and attend career fairs (School Days, 2007).

Things have changed with the times at Miss Randolph's school, but Mr. Lowerre has continued with her dream that all students gain from both the academics and work with their hands. He has taken her methods of creating like new items from everyday things on hand just like the old yellow bus which has been customized as the new red CTE traveling "high-tech" career center. Yes, Mr. Lowerre, Miss Randolph would be pleased to ride along her beloved roads of Henrico County on the *learning tech* career exploration mobile.

#### A Visit to the Museum in Her Honor

Today a museum sits quietly and unassumingly beside the school that bears her name today. The gatherings of simple items portray the sum of a life dedicated to serving others and speak volumes about "true grit" and persistence in the face of insurmountable odds. Visitors to the museum will come away with a better understanding of our country's educational history at a most critical time in our past and with very personal glimpses of this educator's struggles and successes as she pioneered the uncharted courses of establishing curriculum, securing funding for facilities, enrolling community support, and teaching other teachers as well. One may wonder what sustained her will power to bring about all of these accomplishments. She somehow mustered the energy to continue year after year gracefully-and whole heartedly kept the focus on

the educational mission at hand without getting distracted by all the everyday problems associated with teaching and supervision. Hers was an example of hard work, courage and innovation in teaching and supervising. She even carried items from home if needed to teach a lesson.

CHAPTER V  
CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS  
FOR FURTHER STUDY OF PUBLIC CHOICE ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

Research for this study examined the lives and work of both educators and students in real life educational situations as well as educational practices from the post-Reconstruction era. Many challenges existed for both in the past period of history examined and continue to exist in today's society as well. Reports such as *Hidden Casualties: The Relationship Between Violence and Learning* suggest that children living with danger today develop defenses against fears. Energy spent on these defenses is not available for learning (Prothrow-Stith & Quaday, 1994). Chronic exposure to poverty and the situations related to poverty such as homelessness, violence, poor health resulting from lack of health care, poor diet, and influences of drug and alcohol abuse can be so consuming for children that their natural curiosity is dampened. Children whose teachers notice as inactive participants in class may actually be experiencing a normal reaction to trauma or poor health.

Research for this study examined real people working together with positive results. The Virginia Randolph Community High School offers students a variety of vocational training in addition to academics. Many of these students would have been at risk of dropping out of school, but stay at their alternative school until graduation and experience success. According to the school profile, the students who stay and complete their educations at Virginia Randolph Community High School list their post secondary plans as follows: 20% of the students go on to four year colleges or universities; 20% attend community colleges; 5% enroll in technical schools; and 55% go to work/other which may include the military (R. Lowerre, personal communication, October 16, 2007).

To assist students and parents with the decision for a change to an alternative setting, counselors from the sending school as well as the receiving alternative school (Virginia Randolph Community High School) help families with those life-altering decisions. An application process and placement procedure is in place that is similar to those discussed above for the best results in choosing the courses of study for each student. Virginia Randolph Community High School established a variety of *hands-on* courses of study to choose from including, but are not limited to, the following: auto body, auto repair and servicing, business

and information technology, brick masonry, carpentry, culinary arts, cosmetology, electricity, horticulture, nurse aide, graphic communications/printing, and vending machine repair (R. Lowerre, personal communication, October 16, 2007).

During the post-Reconstruction period, an educator in Henrico County, Virginia, Miss Virginia Estelle Randolph, conducted classes at the Old Mountain School with a hands-on approach much like what Booker T. Washington had adopted at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. Those same practices were influences at Hampton Institute in Virginia where Washington had strong ties. Miss Randolph studied on occasion at Hampton Institute along with other educators. Dr. Jackson Davis, then superintendent of Henrico County, coined the approach Miss Randolph used to teach and get things accomplished at her school as the Henrico Plan. Her methods included instruction that she determined was necessary for good life skills. She gave an hour of instructions a day in this hands-on work that she modeled for her students teaching such as cooking, sewing and gardening (Brown, 1990). She learned this manner of teaching from her mother's side as a small child and realized the need for this instruction along with the academics taught as she had visited in the homes within the community and saw a need for basic life skills instruction. She also instructed adults at night and started a Sunday school at her school as well (Cosby, 2000). During this period of history, there were also those who believed that education could be used to keep people down as well as raise them up. There was resistance to the Booker T. Washington model of industrial instruction and some community members were included in this resistance (Provenzo, Jr., 2002). But Miss Randolph only used one hour a day for her industrial/vocational training and the superintendent of schools was pleased with her efforts.

### Conclusions

Some of the principles of hands-on instruction used by Miss Virginia Randolph 100 years ago are still in use today at the Virginia Randolph Community High School in order to serve students who are in need of a supportive alternative setting with vocational trade course offerings. A variety of workshops are also offered for parents to foster their involvement in the work of their children and to address challenges that can negatively influence school success. Some of these workshops offered in the 2007-08 school year include: Resolving Family Conflict, Internet Safety and Cyberbullying, Staying Connected to Your Teen, Helping you Child with Tough Choices and Gang Prevention, and Keeping Your Kids Safe over the summer.



There are a variety of factors that can negatively influence school success such as economic distress (poverty, homelessness, family transience), abrupt changes to the family structure (death of a parent or sibling, separation or divorce of parents; child forced by circumstance to assume parental role), exposure to violence (as witness or victim of abuse), and drug use and abuse. Add to several more of these disadvantages to include, but are not limited to the following: perceived lack of opportunity, being bullied to include cyberbullying (Youth, 2007), the lack of maturity and a command of coping skills to deal with these problems (which are indeed usually difficult for an adult) and you have a recipe for poor decision making by the youth. Other negative influences at work during the school years are linked to failure academic failure. Some problems may be unique to the individual student such as a health issue (chronic or undiagnosed) or a psychological or sociological malady such as fear, depression, anger management, grief, or lack of support structure (from friends or family) (Adams, 1998).

While it is true that people from every generation have suffered from socioeconomic disadvantage or unique personal problems, today the magnitude of these problems may surpass those of the past. For example, 42% of students in alternative program students in Virginia today reside at in a home with a single parent, foster parents, or grandparents or in a group home led by staff members (Gerges & Harabe, 1999). But another difference today is a greater awareness of the struggles disadvantaged students face as they seek to complete their education and the concerted efforts being made by communities and educators to ease their suffering. One need not go further than the Virginia Randolph Community High School for affirmation of the latter effort by the dedicated school personnel helping to relieve some of the burdens of their students and helping them realize their dreams for a better tomorrow. Just last year the faculty and students customized an old school bus into a new CTE (Career and Technical) bus which was transformed a mobile classroom. The CTE bus project started from the desire to provide a way to get students to think more about their future careers. The students and teachers from each technical center played a hands-on role in the development of the bus. Now the bright red bus travels throughout Henrico County much like a bookmobile. (School Days, 2007). Success is also evident at Virginia Randolph Community High School as seen in the numbers of students electing to continue their education or join the workforce. According to the current school profile, 20% of the students go on to four year colleges or universities; 20% attend community

colleges, 5% enroll in technical schools and 55% go to work/other which may include the military (R. Lowerre, personal communication, October 16, 2007).

This study has witnessed parents, caring community patrons, concerned legislators, and school boards in action today in developing and delivering alternative education programs for students who are considered *different drummers*—who are at risk and not successful in the regular school program. For example, a number of community business people offer opportunities with paid internships or offer their time as after-school mentors organizing activities for the students. Virginia Randolph Community High School was the first alternative school in the Commonwealth to become accredited as a high school is an established as a successful school offering public choice alternative education. Enrollment at the school is not meant to be punitive for students who were not successful elsewhere. Instead, the school offers a better fit for some students than a regular high school. The benefit of the vocational courses or smaller size classes may appeal to some; the pursuit of a GED may be in order for others who are overage for their grade levels. A student may be enrolled as a result of an administrative decision if it is considered in his or her best interest due to any of the disadvantages mentioned above (R. Lowerre, personal communication, October 16, 2007).

Because Virginia Randolph Community High School *is* a high school, students can do the things students do—like play team basketball or take part in other activities that are typical of the *normal* high school experience. Students ride the bus to *their* high school and are held to the same standards as others to achieve a standard diploma. Principal Lowerre reports that students rarely return to their old high schools as they like it at Virginia Randolph Community High School and want to stay there. All students must complete core academic classes and take the state-mandated Standards of Learning tests, but they do so through a curriculum that teaches content through hands-on instructional methods. A smaller class size allows more individual attention as well as more opportunities for students to participate in class. Teachers, counselors, administrators, and staff can get to know the students better in a school of approximately 350 students and can serve as mentors to them.

The most pleasant finding in this study was the continued influence of Miss Virginia Estelle Randolph at the school that bears her name. She taught students the academics but also how to make things with their own hands. Students today still take great pride in the history of this school and from Miss Randolph's approach. They also get satisfaction from their own

accomplishments and they profess that they have found a place where they feel they belong. This school was planned as a student centered institution and has evolved to continue to meet those needs today. Counselors, teachers, administrators and other staff at Virginia Randolph Community High School help and encourage students in their choices of study each year. Again, academics are not neglected and some students graduate and go on to college while others enter the workforce with employment skills already well defined.

### Implications

Virginia's prison population is expected to grow at such a rate that it will cost roughly \$300 million by 2013. This projection is an attempt to accommodate the masses of unsuccessful students who are also at risk of becoming incarcerated as they enter society and adulthood unprepared to be good citizens or contributors to the world of work. One might argue that these students were unwilling to take advantage of an education. But as seen above, many of today's at-risk youth are overburdened with problems they cannot cope with and are unable to succeed in school. *Regular educational programs cannot meet the needs of at-risk youth just as these at-risk youth are unprepared for regular school programs* (Green, 2008).

The quoted drop-out rate of 10,608 reported by the Virginia Department of Education 2005-2006 Dropout Statistics would be higher today if it were not for programs emulating the educational approach of Virginia Randolph Community High School. This alternative high school program illustrates the deep commitment of the Henrico County school district to help the disadvantaged better themselves with the promise of a better tomorrow. Other school systems provide educational alternatives for students as well. Careful planning for a student's placement and consideration of career goals and options in a creative alternative educational setting is well worth the time and effort for the student and for society.

### Suggestions for Further Research

Several areas of concern for further research and inquiry are determined by this study. Three of particular interests follow:

First, there seems to be a need for alternative educational intervention earlier than high school for students exhibiting academic failure. An investigation to find where such programs exist or could be created would add to the potential use and findings of this study.

Second, if such programs do exist, a comparison study would be beneficial to determine how earlier intervention for alternative educational might influence student behavior as well as academic success. Of special importance here is discovery concerning earlier intervention. Would this lessen instances of truancy among the at-risk youth involved in high school students who may have enrolled in an alternative setting perhaps by middle school age?

Third, an evaluation of the role of the integration of the history of a school, its founders, and former educational practices to current programs and approaches in gauging student success could be a comparison study. It may be worthwhile to determine if having this history as part of the curriculum and school spirit would increase student pride, behavior, academic success and parent and community involvement as well.

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