**CASE STUDIES OF STUDENTS TRANSITIONING
FROM AN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL BACK
INTO HIGH SCHOOL**

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(ABSTRACT)

The purpose of this study is to identify critical elements that impact the transition of students who return from an alternative program back into their high school. In order to address the purpose of this study the following research questions have been investigated:

a. What are the critical elements that are reported as having impacted students' success or failure in making the transition from an alternative program back into high school?
b. What types of intervention strategies occur when students return to high school from alternative programs?
c. How are students returning from alternative programs achieving in terms of their grades, attendance and behavior?

In this study students and parents, along with administrators, counselors and teachers, share their understandings about the value of interactions and interventions. Their descriptions will help explain why some students achieve success and why some experience failure when they return to high school from an alternative setting.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

American education is continuously confronted with the challenges and demands of school reform. The definition of school reform varies greatly among individuals, the media and even education groups. There is a consensus, however, that the word reform refers to more dramatic change in the school systems than what can currently be achieved without legislation or structural policy change. In most instances, fundamental school reform requires legislative or popular initiatives, or the approval of a governing body for education in a state (Allen, 1996).

In a Report of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (Dyer, 1996), school reform is defined as "Breaking the Ranks", conveying a recognition that old ways that no longer work must yield to change. Using technology to link schools and communities with global information networks, developing instructional strategies which engage students in their own learning, and developing an integrated curriculum which makes connections to real life, are several examples of current reform efforts (Dyer, 1996).

Other school reform initiatives include block scheduling as a means of restructuring time for more flexible instruction (Canaday & Rettig, 1996); assessment of the academic progress of students, in order to measure what they know and are able to do through the use of portfolios; and student diversity studies which demonstrate that language minority students are becoming literate in English, and can learn the same curriculum in language arts, science, and math as native English speakers (Minicucci, Berman, McLaughlin, McLeod, Nelson and Woodworth, 1995). Finally, an integral part of the school reform movement

has been the creation of alternative schools, which attempt to meet the needs of students who do not experience success in the traditional school program.

According to Brant (1994), alternative programs developed in the 1990's to modify traditional approaches to accountability. For example, the Whittle Corporation's Edison Project, which began as a competitor to public education, contracted its services to local boards of education. The Edison Project is based in the belief that the creative entrepreneurial forces so vital in other areas of our society can breath new life into public education. While this project failed, it was based on the premise that time can be reconfigured; teachers can be deployed in a truly professional setting; and technology can be used in new and exciting ways (Schmidt, 1994).

Another example of increased choices in education in the 90's is home schooling, which families are choosing for a variety of reasons, including social, academic, family and religious. Parents engaging their children in home schooling are using America Online which features home school forums, and taking advantage of multimedia technology, including software on CD-ROM. Also, home school/school district partnerships are emerging. These partnerships allow students who are home educated to participate in sports and other extra-curricular activities at school. Additionally, home schooled students are afforded dual-enrollment, which offers enrichment classes and free standardized testing in local schools (Jeub, 1994).

One other example of an alternative school is the charter school. Bierlien and Mulholland (1994) contend that in its purest form, a charter school is an autonomous educational entity operating under a contract negotiated between the organizers who manage the school (teachers, parents, or other from the public or

private sector), and the sponsors who oversee the provisions of the charter (local school boards, state education boards, or some other public entity). Charter schools are accountable for their performance, both to parents and their sponsoring public authority. In return for stricter accountability, such as measurable gains on standardized test scores, states exempt charter schools from all state and local laws and regulations except those related to health, safety, and non-discriminatory practices, and those agreed to within the charter provisions.

One of the characteristics shared by many alternative programs is that they are programs of choice for students and parents. However, there are alternative programs in which students and parents do not have a choice. These programs have been designed specifically for students who have been described by the prefix "dis" – disenchanted, disaffected, disaffiliated, disturbed and disruptive (Arnove, 1978). These students are characterized by acts of violence, both in and out of school, basic academic skill deficiencies, chronic class cutting, chronic school discipline problems, dysfunctional home situations, probation, suicide attempts, unusual living arrangements and substance abuse (Kellmayer, 1995).

Alternative programs for disruptive students have played a vital role in the school reform movement. One of the tenets of school reform is maintaining a safe and orderly environment (NASSP Bulletin, 1996). For students who require alternative education settings, including the 2-5 percent of the chronic offenders whose behavior can interfere with the education of others, schools need to develop programs that will provide a full range of educational, counseling, and career education opportunities (Heller, 1996). Alternative programs have isolated disruptive and violence-prone students and are increasingly being

seen as the way to protect against classroom disruptions and the violence that sometimes accompanies it (Glass, 1995). Programs under the aegis of alternatives for behaviorally disruptive students and which are considered successful in meeting the varied needs of students have several characteristics.

Successful alternative programs for behaviorally disruptive students are characterized by short-term intervention strategies, behavior modification, eventual assimilation of students back into the regular school program, and a focus on the diverse need of students (Glass, 1995). Young (1990) reviewed several empirical studies of alternative schools and concluded that small school size, a supportive and noncompetitive environment, and a student centered curriculum were structural characteristics commonly associated with program success.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

School districts around the country have continued to respond to chronic disruptive behavior of students by assigning them to alternative settings out of their base school. While school districts are creating alternatives in order to maintain a safe and orderly environment, what happens to students when they return from alternative schools? What support systems are in place to help them make the transition back into the traditional school program?

When students return to their base school they are likely to experience problems similar to those that plagued them before being assigned to the alternative setting. To help them avoid repeated failure in their base school, support systems, when established by teachers and administrators can provide the necessary encouragement and sustained nurturing (Harris, 1996). While the immediate role of most alternative school programs may

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be short-term intervention, to be truly successful, they must provide a follow-through function as well (Glass, 1995).

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study was to identify critical elements that were reported by the study subjects as having impacted the transition of students who return from alternative programs to their base high school. In order to identify these elements, case studies of students returning from alternative placement were conducted in a small urban school district in South Central Virginia. To develop the case studies, data were collected from the students, their teachers, administrators, counselors and parents.

Research Questions

In order to conduct this study the following research questions were investigated:

1. What are the critical elements that were reported as having impacted students' success or failure in making the transition from an alternative program back to high school?

2. What types of intervention strategies occur when students return to high school from alternative programs?
    a. Existence of programs.
    b. Availability of staff resources.
    c. Instructional strategies.

3. How are students returning from alternative programs achieving in terms of grades, attendance and behavior?

NEED FOR THE STUDY

The results of this study will be useful to guide the actions and behaviors of principals and other administrators, counselors, teachers and parent as they work with students who make a transition from alternative settings. The results of this study may help principals develop goals and objectives that specifically address the varied needs of students returning to high school from an alternative school, thus, creating quality programs through a variety of educational options for returning students.

This study may also be useful to counselors in taking actions that assist students who make the transition by incorporating the following:
1. Teaching students to take responsibility for their actions.
2. The concept of mutual respect for themselves and others.
3. Training in basic life skills: communication, decision making, problem solving, and conflict resolution.
4. The belief that students who feel good about themselves and have positive relationships with others, achieve more and are more successful in and out of school(Brigman & Earley,1991).

The results of this study could assist teachers in understanding the effects of their behavior on students returning from a very structured environment to a traditional high school.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

In order to identify the critical elements that allow students to transition back into their base school, the methodology used was qualitative case studies. The method of data collection was interviews. Data were collected from groups comprised of students, administrators, teachers, counselors and parents where possible. This methodology was most appropriate

because through the use of in-depth structured interviews, a "thick" description of the experiences of students making the transition from alternative placements back into their base high school emerged. **Thick description** is a term from anthropology meaning the complete and literal description of the incident or entity being investigated (Merriam, 1988). At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experiences of other people and the meaning they make of those experiences (Seidman, 1991). Analysis of the data drawn from the experiences of students, administrators, teachers, counselors and parents, will clarify the types of interventions, interactions and supports, which impact their academic success.

Definition of Terms

Intervention Strategies: Activities which help students to focus on academic achievement, self-esteem, conflict resolution and social interaction with peers and adults. Examples of intervention strategies include, mentorship programs, school-to-work programs and focus groups (Harris, 1996).

Mentoring: A strategy for teaching and coaching, for strengthening character, improving racial harmony, promoting social change, assuring total quality education for all, and creating opportunities for personal empowerment (White-Hood, 1993).

Success: In this study, success is defined as a student attaining passing grades in all subjects; 90% or better attendance in all classes; and no suspensions for disruptive behavior for an entire semester. Additionally, in this study, success can be defined as students in this study meeting the required level of achievement on local and state test.

Support Systems: Support systems may be defined as small

groups of students who meet for the purpose of learning (Soled &
Bosma, 1992). Within the broader context of the school
environment, support systems in this study were defined as small
groups of individuals, students, teachers, counselors,
administrators or parents who meet for the purpose of resolving
conflicts for students who return from alternative programs for
disruptive students.

Limitations

The following limitations are placed on the findings of
this study and their application to other areas:

1. Follow-up data on students who are returning to high school
    from alternative schools is limited in the school district in
    which this study is being conducted. According to Cox
    (1996), one of the methodological limitations of
    individual studies of alternative education programs, was a
    lack of follow-up data on students who leave early or
    graduate from alternative schools.
2. Students who participated in this study were limited to a
    school district in a small rural city. As a case study, no
    attempts will be made to make generalizations to other
    populations.
3. Limitation of responses from a limited study sample.
4. Limitation of looking at one alternative school.

Review of the Chapters

Chapter 1 includes the introduction, need for the study,
the purpose of the study, research questions, description of the
study, definition of terms, limitations and a review of chapters.

Chapter 2 will include a review of the available research
related to cooperative learning, role of the mentor, parental

involvement and other studies.

Chapter 3 will describe the methodology used in this study. This chapter will define the research design, the site of the study and sample selection. Additionally, this chapter will discuss data recording strategies and the planned method of analysis.

In Chapter 4 the findings of this study will be presented and explained. An analysis of the data will include demographics of the study population, and information collected from individual interviews of students, teachers, counselors and parents.

Chapter 5 will include conclusions and implications. Additionally, recommendations will be provided to guide the actions of principals, counselors, teachers and parents who deal with students who transition from alternative settings to the traditional high school setting.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Currently, little is known about what happens to students who return to their base high schools after attending alternative programs for behavioral disruptions. No studies on this topic were found in the existing literature. Most of the literary discussions about alternative placement have focused on the alternative school or alternative programs for disruptive youth.

In the school district in which this study was conducted, more than half of the students returning to their base school from an alternative placement dropped out in the 1998 – 1999 school year. Of the twenty-three students who returned to their base high school in the 1994-1995 school year, thirteen dropped out of school. In the 1995-1996 school year seven out of fourteen dropped out. And during the 1996-1997 school year nine out of fifteen dropped out. These astonishing figures lead the researcher to believe that these students were in need of some type of assistance or intervention on the part of the school and/or the school district in the alternative school setting and in the regular school setting. Therefore, current literature on intervention strategies that help students in the regular school setting as well as in the alternative school will provide a theoretical context for this study.

Research studies conducted by Aronson and Associates (1978), Johnson and Johnson (1978) and Slavin (1980) provided a lens through which to view cooperative learning models of instruction employed in the regular school setting. Observations by Soled and Bosma (1992) set the stage for examining these studies. Also, in a research study conducted by Freedman and Jaffe (1993) the role of the mentor was examined. In an

evaluation of a mentor program after two years, McPartland and Nettles (1991) defined the one-to-one relationship between adults and students who need support to achieve personal, social, academic and career goals. Finally, practitioners in the ranks of education (Stoffer,1992; Duncan,1992; Dixon,1992; Louchs,1992; Jackson and Cooper,1992; Comer, Haynes, Joyner and Ben-Avie, 1996) add to our body of knowledge by suggesting the importance of achieving and maintaining school and home collaborations.

In contrast to the intervention strategies employed in the regular school setting, this literature review will explore the strategies in alternative school settings. Daniel Duke's (1998) research study of 33 Alternative Schools in the State of Virginia provides insights into the types of intervention strategies that are employed to prepare students to return to the regular school setting.

COOPERATIVE LEARNING

For the student transitioning back into the regular school setting, alternative methods of instruction may be helpful. Soled and Bosma (1992) in studying several cooperative learning methods, found these methods to be significant student support systems. They compared traditional instruction to these methods and found that even in cases where increases in achievement were not demonstrated, there were always positive affective outcomes. Additionally, in small group instruction, not only does participation provide the students with feelings of self-worth, but so does the reinforcement that results when the students participate. They noted that in the traditional classroom, the teacher is unable to give sufficient reinforcement to every student; in comparison the reinforcement in small groups is greatly increased. In the opinion of Soled and Bosma (1992) this is desirable because reinforcement strengthens the tendency of a

response thus increasing students' success experiences. Most importantly, when they examined cooperative learning methods, they found that student support systems increase both cognitive and affective outcomes in learners.

Aronson and Associates (1978) developed the Jigsaw Method in which the completion of a specific task is contingent upon the cooperation of students in teams of five to six members. Utilized in grades 3-12, each student learns one specific part of the material and is responsible for teaching that part to the group. In this study several students were assigned to classes which practiced the Jigsaw Method. In these classes all jigsaw groups have the same material so that students having the same part meet to study and learn the part, and then go back to their teams and teach it. The control group consisted of classrooms where students were not divided into jigsaw groups. In these groups the teachers, not the students, did most of the teaching and the atmosphere was that found in normally competitive classrooms. After a period of six weeks the researchers compared the results of a jigsaw classroom to a nonjigsaw classroom (control classroom) by using a questionnaire to measure the attitudes towards school and toward themselves. Here is a summary of the major results:

A) Students in jigsaw classrooms increased their liking for their groupmates without decreasing their liking for other people in their classroom;

B) Students in jigsaw classrooms increased their liking for school to a greater extent than children in nonjigsaw classrooms;

C) Children in jigsaw classrooms increased in self-esteem, decreased in competitiveness, and viewed their classmates as learning resources in relation to students in nonjigsaw

classrooms;

D) Black and Mexican American students in the jigsaw classrooms learned the material significantly better than Black and Mexican-Americans in nonjigsaw classrooms (as measured by objective test results).

E) Anglo students performed as well in the jigsaw groups as in the nonjigsaw groups.

F) Finally, children in the jigsaw classrooms (compared to children in a competitive classroom) showed a greater ability to put themselves in the role of another person, even outside the school environment.

Taken together, these results show a strong, positive pattern of behaviors, feelings, and abilities which can be attributed to the Jigsaw Method (Aronson, Stephan, Sikes, Blaney & Snapp, (1978).

In a study of sixty-six students Johnson and Johnson (1978) found that in using the Cooperative-Competitive Method, cooperative groups have a goal structure based on a common reward for the entire group, so that within the group, students' achievement is positively correlated. In the competitive groups, the goal structure is such that one student's achievement is negatively correlated with others. The results of this study imply that teachers who wish to promote high levels of student achievement might wish to structure drill-review tasks either cooperatively or individualistically, problem solving tasks cooperatively, programmed-learning task cooperatively or competitively, and retention test cooperatively. When teachers wish to promote positive attitudes toward instructional tasks, they might wish to structure the lesson cooperatively and avoid competition. In view of the results of this study the researchers think that teacher-training programs may wish to increase the emphasis on the skills involved in structuring

learning cooperatively.

The Team-Game-Tournament Method (TGT), developed by Slavin (1980) has both cooperative group structure and competition among individuals from different groups. A heterogeneous group of four to five member teams study together to prepare each student for game sessions in an on-going tournament. Tournament competition takes place once or twice per week. Each student competes with students from other teams of equal achievement level. At the end of each competition, points are determined according to rank within the achievement level. Team scores are then calculated and the results publicized in a classroom newsletter. In a program of field experiments involving a wide range of subject areas, grade levels, and experimental designs, the Team Game Tournament method was found to increase academic achievement in seven of ten evaluations. Positive effects of TGT on mutual attraction among students, peer support for academic performance, positive race relations, and other variables were also found (Slavin, 1980).

Student Teams Achievement Divisions is similar to TGT in that it uses heterogeneous teams who work together and are rewarded as a group based on performance. In this method, instead of students competing in games, students take quizzes and receive scores based on the rank of their particular score within a small ability-homogeneous achievement division. Slavin (1980) found that this method has positive effects on academic achievement and like the Jigsaw and TGT Methods had been found to increase mutual attraction among students and positive race relations.

THE ROLE OF THE MENTOR

In a qualitative research study examining contemporary mentorship relationships through mentor organizations in five

major cities, Freedman and Jaffe (1993) found that pairing elders in the community with young people was a cost-effective approach to providing constructive adult relationships that might give a boost to more youths. They point out that elders, as the fastest growing segment of the population, may be relatively inexpensive to employ, and are themselves in need of opportunities for socially productive activity. In New York, Boston, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Dallas students in grades 7 through 12 were paired with elder mentors. The study showed significant relationships that provided benefits to both partners. They divided these relationships into two types: primary relationships characterized by attachments approximating kinship; great intimacy and a willingness on the part of an elder to take on the youth's full range of problems and emotions; and secondary relationships, in which elders served as helpful "friendly neighbors," focusing on positive reinforcement but maintaining some emotional distance. Elders were attracted to fulfilling the "elder function," the propensity of the old to share the accumulated knowledge and experience they have collected. Mentoring ability appears to be more easily expressed in the senior years of age (Freedman & Jaffe, 1993).

Freedman and Jaffe (1993) found youths that were involved with a mentor adult, felt that their day-to-day quality of life had improved; indeed their basic skills improved and they experienced emotional benefits from the primary relationships with elders. Additionally, stability, competence, access, advocacy and maturity were benefits that the youth gained from their elder mentors. One of the study's more interesting findings was that the most effective elders were people who had not lived what would be commonly called "successful" lives. Many had endured strained family relationships, struggled at low-

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paying jobs, and battled personal problems, such as alcohol abuse.

Mentoring is commonly defined as a one-to-one relationship between a caring adult and a student who needs support to achieve academic, career, social, or personal goals (McPartland and Nettles, 1991). In evaluating the RAISE Project, a Chicago based community mentorship program which matched 60 at-risk students from grades 7 through 12 with adult mentors, McPartland and Nettles (1991) found that mentor-student relationships can develop naturally or within structured interventions through activities designed to arrange, sustain, and monitor matches. Advocacy, on the other hand, as the term is currently applied, refers to a supportive relationship. In this relationship a resourceful adult (who may be called an advocate, program coordinator, youth worker or counselor) works with the same group of students over a specified period of time. Within that period of time the advocate provides intensive material, and emotional support that can include assessing students' needs for academic and social services, intervening on the students' behalf in schools and other institutions. Furthermore, the advocate monitors students' participation in programs, and assist in identifying and brokering formal services.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Stoffer (1992) says that parental involvement declines as students grow older. Parents are slow to be involved at middle level and senior highs for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is the child's resistance to such involvement. However, educators must involve parents of secondary school students because increased parent involvement enhances a sense of student pride in community and school. Also, parental involvement is

mutually beneficial to all shareholders.   Parents and educators no longer feel alone when dealing with difficult students and situations, and schools have powerful allies in parents.

The traditional nuclear family, in which the biological children and their parents live in a single family dwelling, is no longer the dominant family scene in America. Family structures are becoming increasingly diversified. Single-parent families, remarried families, "his, her and ours" families, and parent-friend families are increasingly changing the norm of family living (Duncan, 1992).

Parents and schools set the expectation level for students. Providing as many opportunities for understanding emerging family structures as possible is an important contribution schools can make to revitalizing the parent/school partnership. The thoughtful consideration and discussion of emerging family structures is an important element in the design of the partnership (Duncan, 1992).

The Southwest Development Laboratory in Austin, Texas, conducted extensive interviews with parents, teachers and administrators and found that the parents are eager to play all roles at school from tutor to decision maker. It was also found that the barriers to more parental involvement is not parent apathy but lack of support from educators (Dixon, 1992).

In The Evidence That Grows, an annotated bibliography published in 1991 by the National Committee for Citizens in Education, 35 studies on parental involvement are described. All the studies show that in almost any form, parental involvement produces measurable gains in student achievement (Dixon, 1992). Research, therefore, suggests that schools or parents alone, cannot provide all the sustenance, services, and support that children need to thrive and develop well in this increasingly

complex society. When children, families, educators and
community groups and agencies participate as full partners in the
educational enterprise, there are direct and indirect benefits to
children. The benefits to the students include expanded learning
opportunities, a coterie of caring adults, development of
leadership skills through internships and apprenticeships,
increased motivation to stay in school, and a desire and effort
to pursue higher education. The benefits to families include
increased access to social services and increased ability to
network with child development experts and other parents.
Educators benefit by having a network of services and support for
children's learning (Comer, Haynes, Joyner and Ben-Avie, 1996).

OTHER STUDIES

In a field study of 32 public alternative schools in
Virginia (Duke, 1998), it was found that the organization and
delivery of instruction in most alternative schools differs from
what we find in the regular high school. It was found that in the
alternative school the basic unit of instruction does not tend to
be conventional, simple subject courses. In half of the schools,
instruction is organized around multi-age and multi-groups in
which students work on programmed or computer based material.
Class sizes are generally smaller, 15 or fewer students and
computer based technology is used to guide individual
instruction. Other instructional strategies found in this study
included the use of interdisciplinary or thematic lessons, field
trips as motivational devises and a means of exposing students to
a variety of learning environments, and cooperative learning. In
Duke's study it was found that several alternative schools
utilized self-paced learning for students who have previously
failed to function well in large group learning situations.

Teachers in the study were asked to indicate all the efforts they had made to help a particular struggling student between the beginning of school and the end of the first grading period, the five most frequently mentioned interventions were as follows:

1. Parent-teacher conference   22.3%
2. Tutoring during class   13.1%
3. Advising student   11.8%
4. Unspecified teacher-parent communication   11.8%
5. Offering a student a second chance to
    complete work.   10.0%

    Additionally, in a field study of 14 schools examining at-risk students Wehlage (1998) emphasized successful programs for at-risk youth matching their responses to a number of salient characteristics of sub-groups of students. Descriptions of programs demonstrated a match of program components with low achieving students, alienated students, school-aged mothers, poor youth with low self-esteem and serious home and family disruptions. Matching emphasizes the need for schools to adapt programs to some common characteristics of students. Regular comprehensive schools contribute to their students' failure and becoming at risk of dropout when they refuse to adapt to students and expect students to do all the adapting.

    Wehlege's (1989) study introduced the initial elements of a theory of dropout prevention. This theory applies the concept of school membership to identify a basic student need and outcome that is fundamental to other school goals. School membership is a goal defined in terms of social bonding criteria: attachment, commitment, involvement and belief. According to the study, at-risk students need schools that act in ways to show their commitment to helping them overcome the impediments to membership. This active membership begins with an assumption of

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reciprocity between adults and students and requires warm and personal relations between them.

CONCLUSION

For students transitioning from alternative placement back into the regular school program, what happens in the alternative school can play a vital role in how they make the transition back into the regular school programs. The aforementioned studies are important to this study for a variety of reasons. First, by recognizing that students can learn cooperatively takes educators away from the notion that those traditional methods of instruction work for all students. One could argue that students returning from alternative schools would benefit from alternative methods of instruction. Methods that makes learning interesting and do not delve students into repetitive paper and pencil tasks, create an unmotivated and bored individual, doomed to fail because no one recognizes that he/she learns differently. One would guess that these students would end up returning to an alternative placement or dropping out of school.

Next, by recognizing the potential for mentorship programs, matching caring adults with students who are at-risk because of behavior or other factors may lead educators to tap into an underutilized community resource. These adult mentors could possibly help young persons returning from alternative settings make a smooth transition into regular school programs by having adults help them. Adults who are non-judgmental, listen to the student's problems, and can assist them in finding solutions.

Research on parent/family involvement leaves little room for debate. Students who are academically successful tend to receive consistent support from their parents and other adults in

the home (Louchs, 1992). Jackson and Cooper (1992) identify several factors that seem central to successful high school programs to improve high school-home collaborations. These factors include: leadership, accessibility, time, cultural awareness, active teacher roles, continuity, public recognition, broad-based support, having an adolescent focus and recognition of parents as people with needs and interest in being involved in school programs. For students transitioning back into their base school from an alternative program, parental involvement is critical.

Finally, studies conducted by Duke (1998) and Wehlage (1989) give us an understanding of how educators can create environments for success for students returning to the regular school from an alternative program. If we know that in alternative schools smaller class size, organizing instruction differently, utilizing computer based technology to individualize instruction makes a difference in helping at-risk students, what should we be doing when they return to the regular school setting? If matching and adapting programs to the characteristics of students is an important factor in reducing dropouts, what should be happening in both the alternative school and the regular school setting?

These questions set the stage for case studies of individual students to determine what they perceive to be the elements that assist them when they transition back into the regular school setting from an alternative placement. Their perceptions about instructional methods, their relationships with mentors, parents or significant role models in their lives, as well as, adaptive programs to meet their individual needs, may be the lens through which we look to lead these students to success in school, in work, and in life.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

To explore the research questions, the researcher developed case studies that relied primarily on data collected in interviews. Selection of participants was purposeful and non-random (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982). Students who participated in the alternative high school and returned to their base school were the primary participants in this study. They were high school students who attended the alternative school because of chronic disruptive behaviors. These behaviors included fighting, open defiance of authority, and possession of drugs or weapons. Administrators, teachers and counselors who interacted with these students at their base school were participants in this study. Where possible, parents also participated in this study. Because some students in this study were in independent living situations or temporary foster homes, it was not always possible to interview their parents. The responses of administrators, teachers, counselors and parents were used to validate data extracted from students.

For each student in this study, a case study was developed to demonstrate a range of evidence of the types of intervention strategies that have assisted them in making the transition back into the regular school setting from an alternative placement. Once completed, each case study was examined for common themes and patterns across cases and the findings reported as collective data. Additionally, interviews with administrators, counselors, teachers and parents of the individual participants further explored the range of assistance that the students received to help them adjust socially and academically when they returned to

their base school. Once again, the responses validated the data collected from students.

The researcher invited students who had been in the alternative program for a minimum of one semester, and had been back into their base school for a minimum of one semester to participate in this study. These students were in the regular education program. Students in Special Education could not be participants in this study due to the fact that student in Special Education were not sent to the alternative school in the school district in which this study was being conducted. In all there were nineteen students who qualified to participate in this study in the fall of 1998. Of the nineteen students eight students accepted the invitation to participate in the study. All students who accepted the invitation were required to attend a preliminary interview. In this interview the goals of the study were discussed and an informed consent document signed, in accordance with the Rights of Human Subjects Protocol required by Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. All interviewees were asked to listen to and read the informed consent notification so that they understood the purpose of the study, the questions they would be asked, and that their participation was voluntarily. This study provided interviewees with confidentiality and reasonable precautions were taken to safeguard them from criticism or chastisement for statements they made during their interviews.

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

The basic methods of case study used by qualitative researchers for acquiring information are "participation in the setting, direct observation, in-depth interviewing, and document review" (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). The variety of empirical

data available to the researcher adds to the depth of the study (Hamel, 1993), and the "potential to evoke unexpected data" (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). The primary data collection technique however was semi-structured interviews.

This study was limited to one high school in one school district to permit comprehensive interviews with students, administrators, teachers and counselors. The researcher initially contacted the school district by telephoning the superintendent. This was followed with a letter to the appropriate administrator in charge of testing and research. The Assistant Superintendent for Testing and Research responded by providing the protocols to be followed in conducting research in that school district. In each method of communication, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and asked permission to visit the district for the purpose of collecting information. Next, a schedule was set up in the district to interview students, principals, teachers, counselors, and where possible, parents.

Open-ended questions were asked in the interviews. An open-ended question, unlike a leading question, establishes the territory to be explored while allowing the participant to take any direction he or she wants. It does not presume an answer (Seidman, 1991). Also, the interviews included semi-structured questions to permit the interviewer the latitude to proceed with follow-up questions based on judgements made during the interview. Semi-structured questions were prewritten and the order of the questions was flexible (Appendix A).

A pilot of all questions was conducted in November of 1997 at a high school in another school district. Six students in grades nine through twelve were interviewed. Of these six students three were male and three were female. Two were in grade twelve; two were in grade eleven, one in grade ten and one in

grade nine. Additionally, eight teachers from different
disciplines, two administrators and three counselors were
involved in piloting the questions. Many of their responses and
suggestions prompted the researcher to change the length of
questions and the order in which they were presented. Their
responses to these questions allowed the researcher to develop
and practice follow-up questions. The pilot assured the
researcher that the questions were clear, easy to understand and
relevant to addressing the research questions.

The interviews were tape recorded with the subjects'
permission, and supplemented by note taking. The interviews were
conducted in a quiet, semi-private location, convenient for the
respondent. The interviews took place at the school site or
other locations of the respondents' choosing. Interview sessions
lasted approximately thirty to forty-five minutes for each
student, administrator, teacher and counselor. The recorded
interviews were transcribed verbatim.

Confidentiality

Guarantees of confidentiality were provided to the school
district in this study. Unique or identifiable characteristics
that permitted readers to detect the identity of the school
district were avoided. Also, pseudonyms were assigned to the
sample school district and participants in the study.

Analysis of Data

Bogdan & Biklen (1992) point out that, "data analysis is
the process of systematically searching through and arranging the
interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials
accumulated, thus increasing the researcher's use of them"
(P.153). This sets the stage for analysis. They continue,

"Analysis involves working with data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, synthesizing them, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what can be learned and deciding what you will tell others" (P. 153).

The analysis was focused on the research questions that guided this study. The primary strategy was to code interview data by taking excerpts from the transcripts and placing them into broad categories such as adjustment of expectations, encouragement, and adjustment of instruction (Seidman, 1991). A matrix was used to code data (Appendix B). By focusing on excerpts from the transcripts, the intent was to highlight what meaning the primary participants in the study gave to the behavior(s) of administrators, counselors, teachers, parents and peers as they made the transition back into high school. Underlying patterns, themes and connections among the excerpts within categories were identified as well as connections between the various categories that address the research questions.

Additionally, field notes were written to permit reflection and rethinking of findings (Seidman, 1991). The field notes included a compilation of data collected and summaries of information. This process helped clarify the significance of what students, administrators, teachers and counselors meant and what they cited as influencing students as they made the transition from an alternative school into the traditional school setting.

As patterns and themes emerged, informed judgement about what was significant in the transcripts was exercised (Seidman, 1991). Additionally, expressions and phrases that signified common agreement among participants about how they were influenced were given special attention, as well as language that

indicated differences of opinion in what participants had to say (Seidman, 1991).

Specifically, in order to accomplish data analysis in this study, all information that was collected for each case was brought together, interview data and field notes were organized. The next step taken was to develop categories in order to interpret the data. Developing categories, typologies, or themes involves looking for recurring regularities in the data (Merriam, 1988). The researcher accomplished this by examining the matrixes used to code the collected data under the categories that emerged from the interview process. According to Merriam (1988) the number of categories one constructs depends on the data and the focus of the research. In any case, the number should be manageable. Merriam (1988) further states that the fewer the categories the greater the abstraction. A large number of categories are likely to reflect an analysis based on concrete description.

The final step in the analysis of data was development of theory to explain the data's meaning. This third level of analysis transcends the formation of categories, for a theory seeks to explain a large number of phenomena and tell how they are related (Merriam, 1988).

Reliability and Validity

Reliability of data was verified through the process of triangulation (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Hendrick, Bickman & Rog, 1993; Marshall and Rossman, 1995; Merriam, 1988).

Triangulation, in qualitative research, is achieved when the researcher,

...uses a number of sources of information and data, not necessarily about different things but about the same

things. As themes begin to arise from interviews or
documents, they are crossed-checked with other sources so
as to verify them, to check the accuracy of information and
to test the perceptions of the different actor
[interviewee] to given events (Owens, 1982, p. 14).
Triangulation of data from primary and secondary participants,
field notes and documents were the sources used in this study.
Triangulation occurred by comparing like responses from students,
parents, teachers, administrators and counselors.

The validity of this study was determined by the measure
of truthfulness and accuracy of the responses from the
participants in this study. Follow-up questions and repeated
interviews also assisted the researcher in determining the
validity of this study. Member checks, taking data and
interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived
and asking them if the results are plausible was used in this
study to determine internal validity. Also, peer examination,
asking colleagues to comment on the findings as they emerged, was
a means to determine the internal validity of this study.

Chapter 4

Case Studies and Case Analysis

The school represented in this study gives us a backdrop upon which to illustrate the case studies of the students in this study and to set the stage for analysis. Central High School is a campus school located in Southwest Virginia. This magnet high school has an enrollment of approximately 1400 students in grades nine through twelve. The school is accredited by the Southern Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges and the Virginia Department of Education as well as being designated by the United States Department of Education as one of the top 218 schools in the nation (1989-90). Central High School offers three innovative programs: the school for science/engineering, the school for unified arts, and the school for global studies in addition to the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program. Students who attend Central City High School and are placed in an alternative program attend the Central City Learning Academy.

The Central City Learning Academy (CCLA) is the alternative school that students in this study attended. This alternative school has an enrollment of 120 students from grades 7-12. The CCLA is divided into two parts, the front of the Academy is for grades seven and eight and the rear of the Academy is for grades nine through twelve. The purpose of the Academy is to provide an opportunity for students who have experienced limited success in traditional middle and high schools to earn a diploma, be prepared for employment, earn a Graduate Equivalency Diploma, be prepared to enter the military, or to return to their base school. CCLA is located in a remote business district, which discourages students from wandering around or leaving the facility. The high school course offerings at CCLA include English, math, science, social studies, computer repair,

business/technical, ICT (Industrial Cooperative Training), and GED preparation.

While there is a high incidence of students who drop out of Central High School after returning from the Central City Learning Academy, within Central City there exists a network of programs designed to assist the dropout. The Director of Alternative Programs for the Central City School District states that there is a network of services provided to dropouts by the Central City School District, the City Division of Human Resources Office on Youth and the local community action agency. The role of these agencies working together is to locate dropouts and encourage them to return to the regular school program, enroll them in an alternative school program or engage them in a work related program. The local community action agency program is a federally funded program that has a work component in which students can earn a GED (Harmon, 1999).

Case Study Number 1

Heather is a sixteen year old junior at Central High School. She was sent to the district's alternative school for setting a bathroom on fire with two of her friends. Since entering high school Heather has had a history of cutting classes, rude and disruptive behavior and poor grades. She remained at the alternative school for one year and returned to Central High School.

At the alternative school Heather experienced academic success. Her grades moved from straight F's to A's and B's. She attributes much of her success to small class sizes and the caring relationship that she developed with the principal of the alternative school, Ms. Sanders. Additionally, Heather's mother had been a source of support. Heather's mother described her as

being very bright and articulate and in general very good in school. When she entered high school she noticed changes in Heather's behavior and strongly felt that her friends were the primary reason for these changes.

Heather had a difficult time making the transition back to the regular high school program.   Upon her return to Central High School Heather didn't experience the level of support that she experienced at the alternative school. She only saw her counselor on one occasion to help her with her schedule. Teachers didn't take the time to review or re-teach materials if students fell behind and Heather felt lost. Soon Heather began cutting classes and missing assignments. According to Heather's mother, she began hanging out with the same group of friends that originally got her into trouble, her attendance declined and her grades dropped significantly. After one semester back at Central High School, Heather returned to the alternative school.

Case Study Number 2

Andrew is an 18 year old senior at Central High School. He was sent to the districts alternative school for chronic disruptive behavior, poor attendance and poor grades. When he arrived at the alternative school, he immediately felt that this was not a place he wanted to stay. He experienced students disrespecting teachers when directed to complete task. According to Andrew, they often "cussed out" the teacher and walked out of the classroom. After being at CCLA a month Andrew began displaying the same type of behavior. However, Andrew was determined to leave the alternative school and return to Central High School. With the encouragement of his mother and support from teachers at the alternative school, Andrew made a complete turn around. He attended school regularly, completed all

assignments and behaved in class. After two years, Andrew was allowed to return to Central High School.

Andrew initially had a difficult time making the transition back to Central. He was used to smaller class sizes and a more structured environment. After a few months it became easier for Andrew to adjust to his new environment. He attributes his successful transition back to the regular high school program to a supportive coach, counselor and mother. While Andrew feels that he has made a successful transition back to Central High School, after one semester he is maintaining only a D average but is hopeful that he will graduate with his class. When asked what his plans were when he returned to Central High School Andrew replied, "The only plan I have is to stay out of trouble." When asked what would have helped him make the transition easier coming from the alternative school, he said, "It would have helped me to be able to meet with someone every day or every other day. The school should check up on returning students more frequently."

Case Study Number 3

Larry is an 18 year old senior who was sent to the alternative school for chronic cutting of classes and skipping school. He hung out with a group of students who would meet in the hall and leave for the entire day because they didn't feel like going to school. Larry spent one semester at the alternative school. He felt that his biggest problem was that he was lazy. When he did his assignments they were easy for him at the alternative school. According to Larry, classes were made easier at the alternative school because teachers worked with students on an individual basis and students weren't rushed to get things done. He also stated that his success at the

alternative school was determined by his own desire to catch up on his credits in order to be able to graduate on time.

When Larry returned to Central High School he had a difficult time adjusting to the regular school program. One of the biggest decisions he had to make was whether or not to make new friends. It was hard to resist hanging out with the same crowd that encouraged him to skip school, but he made new friends and has been attending every day. Larry's average dropped from a C at CCLA to a D at Central, but he feels everything is going to be all right. In making the transition back to Central High School Larry felt that it would have helped if there had been more contact with his counselor. Many of his teachers have been very supportive and look forward to him graduating. Larry also has a supportive family who has encouraged his continued success.

Case Study Number 4

Markus is a 17-year-old senior who was sent to the alternative school for chronic disruptive behavior and skipping school. He describes his time at the alternative school as a "learning experience" in which he learned to communicate with others in appropriate ways and evaluated his behavior. Immediately after arriving, he began to make plans to return to Central High. After one year in the alternative program Markus returned to Central High School.

Upon his return Markus began experiencing success in all of his classes. He attributes much of his success to a supportive family and several of his teachers at the alternative school and at Central High. He has maintained a D average since he has returned to Central, while he received D's and F's before going to the alternative school. While Marcus' grades did not substantially increase, his social skills are the area in which

the greatest gains were made. Markus cites Coach Mason as having
a big impact on his success at Central High since he has returned
from the alternative school. "Coach Mason and I have a
friendship where we sit and talk, and he understands where I'm
coming from. He knows my family and he makes it a point to see
me on a regular basis. He is someone I trust." Markus' teachers
and administrator view him as a young man who will do well at
whatever he wants to accomplish. Since his return to Central
High School Markus has become a student leader as an active
participant in the Student Government Association. At both the
Central City Learning Academy and Central High School Markus'
transition from the alternative setting into the regular high
school has been viewed by his teachers and administrators as a
success story.

Case Study Number 5

Albert is a 16-year-old junior who attended the Central
Learning Academy for one year because of chronic disruptive
behavior. At the alternative school Albert began to work on
modifying his own behavior in order to return to Central High
School. "At the Central City Learning Academy I learned to deal
with problems without fighting and using bad language. I learned
to adapt when I felt under pressure to behave in negative ways."

After spending one year at the Central City Learning
Academy Albert returned to Central High School. Albert
attributes his successful transition to Central High School to
Ms. Clover, a teacher who constantly reminded him that he could
be successful and take responsibility for his behavior.
According to Albert she had extremely high expectations for him,
and he enjoyed working hard and being successful. Also Albert
credits his mother for encouraging him to do well in school and

checking up on him on a regular basis.

After a semester at Central High Albert admits to being in trouble with some of his teachers. He feels that many of them treat him differently because he came from the alternative school. Teachers continuously held the threat of sending him back to CCLA over his head when they discipline him. He has a good relationship with his administrator and feels that he listens to him and is secure that he will be treated fairly by him. However, Albert is currently failing his courses. Albert is proud that teachers only have disciplined him on four occasions. In Albert's opinion this is great, "Before going to the alternative school it was at least once a day."

Case Study Number 6

Cynthia is a 16-year-old junior who was sent to the Central City Learning Academy for one-year for fighting. She describes her experience at the alternative school as being in an environment where students were openly hostile to teachers and other authority figures. She had to adapt to this environment in order to make it out of this alternative setting. She had a good relationship with teachers there and treated them with respect. In response to being asked what she learned at the alternative school, Cynthia stated that, "You learn that in life you're going to have to deal with a lot of different kinds of people and certain things you should know to do and certain things that you should not do. From day to day you learn right from wrong." For Cynthia this was an important lesson as she learned to modify her own behavior.

Upon her return to Central High School Cynthia had a difficult time making the transition because of large classes, lack of individualized instruction and counseling. However, she

was determined to stay out of trouble and developed a strong and supportive relationship with her history teacher who encouraged her to remain on task and focused on her studies. Additionally, Cynthia's mother had been a supportive influence in her life and works with her teachers to resolve issues related to Cynthia's academic achievement. However, after a semester Cynthia is doing poorly in all of her subjects, but has not had a single physical altercation of any kind.

Case Study Number 7

Renee is a 16-year-old sophomore who was sent to the Central City Learning Academy for chronic disruptive behavior, insubordination and skipping classes. Renee describes her experience at the alternative school as terrible. When asked what she learned at the alternative school her response was, "You learn that when you get out in the real world you're not going to know what is going on around you because they don't teach you anything there. So I've learned to just wise up and come back over here (Central High School) and get what I need." After three semesters at the alternative school Renee returned to Central High School.

Since returning to Central High School Renee has re-established positive relationships with at least two adults in the building, Coach Mason and her math teacher Ms. Carter. However, she doesn't trust adults in general and states, "I just learned throughout my life, you can't trust people. I've put my trust in people who I thought trusted me and it didn't work out because you find out that you really don't know people even when you think you do."

Upon her return according to administrators, Renee has not adjusted very well. She is still defiant of authority and

continues to break school rules. Renee still cuts classes and many teachers don't see her for several days and when she is in class she is not prepared. Her principal stated, "Renee was successful at the alternative school but has returned and has been negatively influenced by her peers who she was acquainted with before going to the alternative school." According to her counselor, "Judging from Renee's actions she will either drop out or be put out if her behavior doesn't change."

Case Study Number 8

David is a 16-year-old sophomore who spent two years in the Central City Learning Academy. David has a long record of willful disobedience and chronic disruptive behavior.
He was sent to the Central City Learning Academy after he threw a desk at a teacher in 6th grade. Additionally, he had a few experiences with the law and is currently on probation for Grand Theft Auto. Before being placed on probation David spent a short period of time in a juvenile detention facility. David's home environment was less than desirable and the court placed him in a foster home. Since coming to Central High School David has been a model student. He had a positive experience at the alternative school and he worked very hard to get back into the regular school program. When asked what he learned at the alternative school David's response was, "I learned to control my attitude and come to teachers when I need help."

According to David's teachers and administrator David has done well in making the transition to Central High School. David attributes his success to his new home, in which his foster parents give him the support he needs to be successful. They monitor his activities closely and have on-going dialogue with court and school officials regarding David's academic

achievement.

Analysis of Data

After careful examination of students' transcribed interviews, there were several critical elements that were reported as having impacted students' success or failure in making the transition from an alternative program back to high school. Three elements set the stage for a successful transition of students back into Central High School. These elements include the following: a positive relationship with an adult in the school, parental involvement, and encouragement and positive peer assistance. Elements that contributed to the failure of students making the transition back to Central High School include: the lack of counselor initiated advisement, lack of student involvement in school activities and the absence of a formal transition program. In order to answer the first research question, each of these elements was examined.

Positive Relationships with Adults in the School

According to seven out of eight students in this study a positive relationship with an adult in the school is a major factor that contributes to a successful transition when they return to their base school from an alternative program. In this study, it was found that teachers, counselors or administrators who showed an interest in these students who were returning to Central High School, initiated the relationships. Thus, it created an atmosphere of trust in which these students felt valued and cared for as individuals.

When Heather describes the relationship she had with Ms. Summers her administrator she said, "She was there to help everybody. She was there to help people when they were in trouble. She was there to help them with out-of-school problems,

just as well as problem they faced in school. She checked on me on a regular basis to make sure that I was attending all of my classes. She would nag me in a nice way to make sure I completed all of my assignments." Heather's mother said that, "Ms. Summers practically adopted her. I think she really helped mold her."

Some teachers developed these relationships outside of the school. David talked about his math teacher when he said, "Mr. R is real dedicated to his students that really wanted his help, and if you needed help, he gave you his phone number. He knew many of us lived in the projects and some of us never went camping or kayaking so he took us."

Markus talks about trusting his coach, "I trust Coach Washington because he knows where I'm coming from. He grew up in my neighborhood, he knows my family, so basically, he knows where I'm from." Markus' mother stated, "Mr. Washington played a big role in his life since he came back to Central. He really keeps real good tabs on him. He kept in touch with him over the summer and if there is something he needed to do to keep his grades up he will call me and tell me."   Coach Washington stated, "Because of the rapport I develop with these students they trust you, and if they trust you they will tell you anything. I don't have any problems with any of these students. As a matter of fact, I consider them my little buddies and they messed up and now they're back. We're going to give them a fresh start and if anyone gives them a hassle, then they will let me know and I will take care of it."

Administrators at Central High School feel that the development of positive relationships are very important in the day-to-day interaction they have with students returning from the alternative program. Mr. Johnson, an assistant principal stated, "It is important to keep in constant contact with these students.

We must make them aware that they have someone they can rely on. I've had some success with a couple of these students. Another assistant principal Mr. Patterson stated, "We work with these students very closely. When it looks like they are going the wrong way we try to have a student support meeting which involves the parent, counselor and administrator and we discuss strategies that we can use to assist these students." According to the Principal, Mrs. Holmes, "We monitor these students very closely and every Tuesday we specifically talk about students who have returned from the alternative school and think of ways we can assist them."

Parental Involvement

All students in this study recognized that their parents contributed to their successful transition. Heather stated, "My mom was kind of leery about letting me come back. She was afraid that I would start getting in trouble again by being around a whole bunch of people. She decided to let me come back and since I have been back she calls up to the school to make sure I'm there and talks to my teachers and finds out what I'm doing." David stated, "Since I have been back in the regular school program my parents assist me with my homework assignments." Renee said, "Every day may parents ask me if I have any homework and let them see it when I finish, and they help me if it is wrong." Cynthia said, "While my mom does not participate in the PTA she calls the school to see what is going on all the time. She checks on my attendance to see that I am in class. My mom is my best friend, and there is nothing that we cannot talk about." Albert stated, "My mother was happy for me when I was allowed to return to Central and since I have been back she makes sure that I complete my homework before I go to work." Larry said, "Ma just kept pushing me forward, kept telling me she wanted me to

graduate when I came back to Central. My mom and dad both want me to graduate from high school and basically, that is what is making me go to class more than I used to, and I pay more attention in my classes because of them."

The parents of these students feel that their involvement has helped their children go back to Central High School. Andrew's mother said, "I talk to his teachers at school, after school, at home and they can call me anytime." Cynthia's mother stated, "Upon her return to Central I was involved with getting her back into her classes and I talked to her teachers on a regular basis." Markus' mother stated, "When he was younger I was involved in his schooling a lot. As he got older he has become more independent and doesn't want me involved. However, since he has returned to Central, I check up on him regularly."

When teachers and administrators were asked what they thought were the most important factors that help students make the transition back to the regular school program, parental involvement was prominent. Mr. Curtis, a technology education teacher at Central said, "Parental involvement, first of all, is the most important factor. Getting them involved in activities at the school and being willing to participate." Mr. Harper an English teacher stated, "Sometimes there is a breakdown, not just with students' responsibilities but parental responsibilities. When I call some of these parents they really don't know what to do when these students have problems and there is no program to assist them." According to the principal and her assistants, when students return to Central High, the parents are involved from the beginning. "When students re-enter the parents are present when we discuss rules and responsibilities and a contract is signed by both students and parents. When there is a problem with these students in school, parents are contacted. When there

is a problem at home or in the community with these students, parents often call us."

Encouragement and Positive Peer Assistance

All students in this study felt that when they returned it was difficult getting used to the larger class sizes, large population of students and less individualized instruction. Seven of eight students cited that encouragement and positive peer assistance helped them to make the transition into Central High School after being at Central City Learning Academy. Andrew discussed how a friend encouraged him when he came back to Central and how he would encourage others who return to Central High School. "I have an older friend who encouraged me to graduate and stay in school. For someone who wants to come back here, I would tell them to keep focused. Stay focused, do your work, try to stay out of trouble. I would let them know they ain't playing no games around here. If you get into trouble they can send you right back out of here. Don't come over here with the same attitude you had over there (CCLA). I would tell others things like that." Additionally, Andrew stated, "My girl friend is an honor roll student who always encourages me to do my work." Larry stated, "Not only teachers and parent encouraged me, but basically just a lot of friends. Basically, I stopped hanging out with the friends who got me in trouble before going to the alternative school. The people I hang out with now are staying in class and paying attention. They are trying to graduate too." Markus said, "My friends encouraged me to stay focused. If you need help, ask your teacher. If you don't understand anything, ask questions. Just stay focused and try to do it."

Several teachers expressed the necessity of encouraging these students to be successful. Ms. Waynewright, a biology

teacher stated, "I encourage these students by setting high expectations. My belief is they must come up to my expectations and, once they see that they are trying their best, I think they feel good about themselves. If they feel that what I'm doing has meaning, they can succeed. I believe this builds self-esteem once they get here and have that structure and discipline. This is "tough love" and with this tough love I give as much guidance as I can give them." Mr. Randle, a health education teacher states, "In helping students to make a smooth transition back to Central High School my role is to encourage that student personally to do their best and try to motivate them. To build a relationship with them in such a way that they can develop respect and rapport so that they would want to achieve and do as they are expected." Mr. Kennedy, a mathematics teacher said, "We need to encourage these students to be involved in school activities and getting them in contact with other students."

Mr. Carson, a guidance counselor stated, "Upon their return I encourage these students coming from the alternative program to be responsible. Attend classes regularly and focus their attention on instruction throughout the entire block. I encourage them to make every effort to complete all assignments and to take learning seriously and ask for help when they need it. I encourage them to go about doing those things that are necessary to reach their goal which is to get their high school diploma." Ms. Boyd, a guidance counselor stated, "I would encourage these students to buddy up with one of our Student Government Association members or a student whose behavior we value in the school to serve as a model for these students. This positive peer interaction could make a difference."

Counselor Initiated Advisement

Seven of eight student participants in this study said that they had only met with their counselor on one or two occasions. When asked what they viewed as the role of the counselor, Heather said, "Well, I think she needs to do more talking to me, as well as other students who are transferring here from CCLA. 'Cause she is a new counselor I really don't think she knows exactly what she is doing yet. But I think she needs to have more contact, and talk more to students who have transferred. I've only talked to her one time, and that was about credits, and she didn't even know what to tell me about me having problems in algebra. I asked her if there was a tutoring program or something I could get into. She said she didn't know if that would be the best thing, but I needed to talk to my mom and teacher before I decided that's what I wanted to do." Albert stated, "I don't go to my counselor because my old counselor was a friend and she left to go to Washington. This new lady, I don't know her, but she fixed up my schedule for me." When Cynthia describes what she believes is the role of her counselor she said, "They should talk to you more and get more involved with your program. They should be more available to you to help you with your problems." When asked how often he met with his counselor, Larry said,' I ain't really met with my counselor."

Counselors cite large student loads as being a reason for not seeing these students as frequently as they may need to be seen. The principal, Mrs. Holmes however stated, "The counselors' responsibilities are to make sure that they (students returning from CCLA) are headed in the right direction, academically, behavior-wise, attendance-wise. They basically maintain that responsibility and stay on top of that." She also stated, "They're supposed to pick them up and work with them.

They know who they are and they do a very good job at that. I think they do counsel with them and do help them. They're supposed to be anyway." In this instance there seems to be some uncertainty on the part of the principal as to what she believes that counselors should be doing and what they are in fact doing.

 According to counselors there is no standard procedure related to working with students who return to Central High School from Central City Learning Academy.

Counselors shared varying perspectives about these students. When asked if the alternative high school adequately prepared students to return to their base school, Mr. Carson stated, "I have seen success stories with a few students who have returned from the alternative school, however, I don't think that a lot of them are prepared to return. I've seen many students drop out and get into serious trouble." Ms. Swan stated, "I think that because of the smaller class sizes at the alternative school, when they return to their home school they are overwhelmed. Moving from classes of ten to twelve students to twenty-five is a big difference." Mr. Wiggins stated, "In some ways I think they do. Some students that have returned have done very well, other have not. Those that haven't done well, it has generally been an issue of lack or self-discipline or motivation. Many of these students lack the self-discipline to sit in the classroom, follow the teacher's instructions, complete assignments, or being able to interact with others in a traditional classroom setting." Ms. Boyd stated, "Yes and no. No, in that students may not have been held to the same standards as far as attendance, behavior and class work. Yes, in that all students do not fit into our little box that we want them to, so they might have grown and achieved in this type of setting. But as far as a transition program back to Central, I would say no

they are not prepared."

Also, when counselors were asked, what are your expectations of students returning from the alternative school, Ms. Boyd said, "I expect that they conduct themselves like the rest of the students." Ms. Wiggins stated, "My expectation is that they will be a responsible student. That they will attend classes regularly and focus attention on instruction during the entire block." I would expect that they would ask for help when they need it and that they take the responsibility of learning seriously.

When counselors were asked, what was their role in helping students make the transition back to the regular school program, Mr. Carson stated, "My role is to set the tone for students to feel that this is the place for them to be, and set the tone for them to have a positive attitude about coming back to Central High School." Ms. Swan stated, "My role is to look at the kind of classes that they had, and look at the teacher assignments too." Mr. Wiggins said, "I think that my most critical role is welcoming the student back and making the student feel that I'm open, available and willing to help them deal with any challenges or struggles that they might have."

Involvement in School Activities

Seven of the eight students in this study were not involved in school activities. Markus, cited by administrators, counselors and teachers as being a success story out of the alternative school was the only student involved in school activities out of this group. Markus believes, "My involvement in the SCA allowed me to get involved in the school and know what is going on. We plan dances and fund-raising activities and it keeps me out of trouble." Other students like Renee and David

were not eligible to play in the school sports program. Renee was ineligible because of failing grades and David was ineligible because he had not passed the Literacy Passport Test (LPT). Heather wanted to participate in the Teen Outreach Program, but she couldn't get credit for it because she had participated in it the previous year. The other students simply were not interested or invited.

Mr. Curtis, technology education teacher said, "They all need to be involved in a school activity. These students need to feel like they are part of the school again. I think a lot of them have been out so long, now when they come back, they just don't feel a part of the school." The Principal, Mrs. Holmes agrees, "They need to be involved in sports or the SGA, some place where they could assume leadership roles and shine."

Absence of a Formal Transition Program

According to students, administrators, teachers and counselors, the absence of a formal transition program for students is a major factor contributing to student failure when they return to Central High School from the Central City Learning Academy. In order to address this issue, the researcher explored the perspectives of administrators, counselors and teachers.

The Principal, Mrs. Holmes, was asked if she could create a transition program for these students, what would it look like? She responded, "I would probably pick my very best teachers. The teachers who I know are the most sensitive to these students' needs. I would develop a team of teachers and counselors that can teach at all levels and stay with these students straight through. This would be a good thing, to get to know these kids in a family-like team. I would also put them in some form of extracurricular activities in which they could assume leadership

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roles." Mr. Washington, Assistant Principal, said, "The first thing I would do is to create a class called 'Class in Character'. Students in this class would learn about hygiene, proper dress and proper mannerisms. When I did this as a middle school principal this made all the difference in the world. I had one of my counselors teach this course as a part of their academic program."

When the Principal was asked what her role was in assisting student making the transition back to Central High School Mrs. Holmes stated, "My primary role is to let them know I care by talking to them and working with them to solve some of their problems." The Assistant Principals, Mr. Washington, Mr. Patterson and Mr. Johnson all agree. They all stated that, their primary role is to welcome these students back and let them know that there are high expectations for their behavior and that they are getting a fresh start.

Mr. Carson, a guidance counselor said, "For students returning from alternative placement, assigning them the right teachers is the least we could do. Some of these students need more intense group work than what we can offer." Ms. Swan, another guidance counselor said, "I think these students should have very extensive group and individual counseling. I don't think their individual counseling issues are being met. Realistically speaking, at the high school we don't have time for groups. If possible, if they had a person that would come in and do group counseling or a counselor with a decreased case load, then I think that would help them."

Mr. Ford, an English teacher said, "When students make the transition from the Central City Learning Academy to Central High School they need an orientation to the school handbook, to school expectations, to the school goals, meeting their Deans, meeting

their teachers, and emphasizing that we are there for them. To let them know that we are not trying to isolate them, but we are mainstreaming them." Mr. Proctor, an algebra teacher said, "I think that the biggest thing we could do for these students is to create a supportive environment with teachers who really care about whether these kids will succeed." Ms. Perky, an earth science teacher said, "We need to give these students real world experiences. I think they need to take on more responsibility."

In the absence of a formal transition program, what intervention strategies are being used at Central High School, specifically availability of staff resources and instructional strategies? The second research question is best answered by stating that very few intervention strategies are being used at Central High School in regard to students' transitioning from the Central City Learning Academy. According to two of four counselors, some of these students' teachers are selected specifically for them. "Teachers were selected for these students who were empathetic and caring towards the needs of these students. Other students are just placed in classes that are available."

Furthermore, at Central High School not all teachers know that students returning from the Central City Learning Academy are even in their classes. When asked, is your staff informed of students returning from alternative placement the Principal, Mrs. Holmes said, "Well yes and no. Because we really don't want some of our staff to stereotype them and once they incur a problem, automatically they think, that kid is from Central City Learning Academy, why is he back here? We want them to have a fresh chance, a fresh start. So therefore, many times we don't even bring to the attention of the instructor who those individuals are." Assistant Principal Mr. Patterson said, "They are not

informed initially. I'll tell you why I think that is good.
Many times we can set the wrong stage in teachers' minds and when
the kid comes in here and meets with me and I say, "Hey kid you
have a fresh start, so let's don't blow it. Let's do it and show
that we can do it. Let's show that we can survive here and do
our work academically." Once I see a downhill trend going, I
call together the teachers, counselor and our student support
team. We don't do that initially." Mr. Johnson,
Assistant Principal stated, "If students were sent to CCLA from
here, teachers are aware that they are coming back. I generally
let teachers know who those kids are. But there are some
students who were placed at CCLA from the Middle School that we
have no knowledge of."

According to the Principal, Mrs. Holmes "There is no
additional available staff resources used for students who
transition to Central High School from Central City Learning
Academy. All students are mainstreamed into the general student
population."

In order to answer the third and final research question,
it was necessary to examine the data available after the first
semester for each subject. This data were generated from
Academic Progress Profiles, Discipline Inquiry/Update and a
Period Attendance Profile.

Table 1

Heather

AMERICAN LITERATURE	D
GEOMETRY	D
BIOLOGY	C
AMERICAN STUDIES	C
SPANISH I	B
HEALTH CAREERS	B
UNEXCUSED ABSENCES	9
UNEXCUSED TARDIES	5
DISCIPLINARY REFERRALS	3

Heather was receiving A's and B's while attending the alternative school and was on the Honor Roll. During the first semester back at Central High School she was struggling to maintain a C average. Additionally, during the first semester, Heather had nine (9) unexcused absences and five (5) unexcused tardies. There did not appear to be a pattern of missing any particular class. It seems that she cut classes randomly. She had three disciplinary referrals during the first semester(Table 1).

Table 2

Andrew

World History	D
AMERICAN STUDIES	D
HEALTH	D
ICT	C
UNEXCUSED ABSENCES	6
UNEXCUSED TARDIES	4

DISCIPLINARY REFERRALS	2

Andrew received D's and C's when he was attending CCLA and there has been no improvement since he has returned to Central High School. Currently his average is almost straight D's. Andrew randomly skipped six class periods during the first semester and was referred for insubordination on two occasions.

Table 3

Larry

World History	D
American Studies	D
Health	D
ITC	C
Unexcused Absences	6
Unexcused Tardies	4
Disciplinary Referrals	0

When attending CCLA Larry maintained a C average. Since returning to Central High School his average has dropped to D, however, his behavior has been exemplary.

Table 4

Markus

Literature	D
Global Issues	C
Construction Technology	D

Unexcused Absences	12
Unexcused Tardies	11
Disciplinary Referrals	4

Markus is maintaining a D average. While teachers and administrators feel that Markus is an example of a students who has made a smooth transition back to Central High School, it appears that that assumption has been based on his social standing as a participant in the SGA and not his academic progress. Additionally, Markus has received four disciplinary referrals for unexcused absences (Table 4).

Table 5

Albert

Algebra 1	U
Technology	F
American Studies	F
Microsoft	F
Theatre Arts	C

TV Video Lab	B
Unexcused Absences	44
Unexcused Tardies	14
Disciplinary Referrals	4

Albert who was passing his classes with C's at CCLA returned to Central High School and maintained a D average. It appears that Albert's attendance is a problem. With forty-four unexcused absences it is clear the Albert is not in attendance enough to reap the benefits of instruction. When asked about his attendance Albert said, "It is hard to keep up in some of my classes. I just don't feel like going all the time." Albert has had four disciplinary referrals for insubordination since his return to Central High School.

Table 6

Cynthia

American Literature	U
Algebra 1	U
American Studies	F
Health	D
Cosmetology	F

Unexcused Absences	67
Unexcused Tardies	12

Disciplinary Referrals	1

Cynthia is failing in all but one subject. While at CCLA she passed all of her courses with C's. According to administrators and her counselor, Cynthia is hanging out with the "wrong crowd" and is going nowhere fast. They feel that with sixty-seven unexcused absences she will either return to CCLA or dropout. Cynthia's only interest is doing hair and according to her, "When I'm not in school I'm making money doing hair." Consequently, she is out of school on a regular basis (Table 6).

Table 7

Renee

World Literature II	C
Algebra 1	F
Biology	U
American Studies	F
Health 9	F
Principles of Marketing	F

Unexcused Absences	50
Unexcused Tardies	15
Disciplinary Referrals	7

Renee, who passed all her classes with C's at CCLA, after the first semester is failing all but one subject at Central High School. Fifty unexcused absences is clearly one reason for her failure. According to counselors and administrators Renee has taken up where she left off before going to the alternative program. She has seven disciplinary referrals for insubordination, disruptive/disorderly behavior and cutting classes. According to the Principal Mrs. Holmes, "Renee will probably return to the alternative school or drop out."

Table 8
David

World Literature	F
LPT-Math	F
Algebra 1	F
Earth Science	F
World History	D

Health	D
Unexcused Absences	5
Disciplinary Referrals	4

   While David was passing all classes with C's and D's at
the CCLA, since returning to Central High School he is averaging
F's. According to his teachers, David lacks many basic skills
particularly in reading, which makes it difficult for him to keep
up. With four disciplinary referrals for disruptive behavior his
counselor and administrator feel that he is working hard to
control his anger and work with others. David's family status
has also made a difference in his attitude and his ability to
cope with others. According to his counselor, "Having been
placed in a foster home David for the first time has the
stability and support he has needed for a very long time.   His
foster parents are involved in school activities and they also
spend quality time working with David on his social skills."

Chapter 5
Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

The conclusions drawn from the research findings relate to the dynamics between students, teachers, parents, administrators and teachers as students transition from an alternative school back into the regular high school program. A positive relationship with adults in the school, parental involvement, encouragement and positive peer assistance was cited by the students as the factors that had a positive impact on their success as they made the transition from the alternative high school back to their base high school. Factors that impacted their failure as they made the transition from alternative placement back to their base school were the lack of counselor initiated advisement, students involvement in school activities and the absence of a formal transition program.

Also, there is an absence of consistent intervention strategies and the availability of additional staff resources to work with students transitioning back into Central High School from the Central City Learning Academy. A few counselors were cited as picking specific teachers to work with these students, but this was not consistent among all counselors. In most classes many teachers don't know that these students have come from the alternative school and there is reluctance on the part of administrators to share this information with some teachers because they feel some teachers will treat these students differently.

Additionally, since returning to Central High School all students consistently receive lower grades than when they attended the alternative school. According to attendance records

three of the eight students in this study are failing due to poor class attendance. Also those students with the highest incidence of absences also have the highest number of lateness to their classes. According to administrators and disciplinary records there has been a significant decrease in disciplinary referrals for this group of students as a whole with twenty referrals for eight students. Before attending the alternative school one assistant principal said, "Each of these students would probably have twenty referrals within one semester." One issue that is puzzling is the fact that three students have cut a total of 161 classes and among them there were only twelve disciplinary referrals. This in itself is not astonishing, but what is, is that only one of the twelve disciplinary referrals is for cutting classes. This is an indication that while teachers are reporting absences from classes no measures are being taken to correct this behavior. The principal of the alternative school stated, "Absences and cutting are minimized by virtue of the schools location in an isolated setting and teachers are paying attention."

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Implications

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The implications of this study begin with the need for a formal transition program for students returning from the Central City Learning Academy. In the absence of a formal transition program these students will continue to drop out and those who do not will ultimately become "disenchanted, disengaged and turned off" (Arnove, 1978). In the absence of a formal transition program these students will continue repeated patterns of failure in their academic subjects, attendance and behavior. Additionally the results of this study point out the need for the school division to do a better job coordinating the alternative program with the regular high school program.

The results of this study imply that there is a need on the part of the school administration to develop an attendance system that flags excessive unexcused absences and lateness to classes. Left unchecked students are given the message that no one is looking, so they don't need to be present. There is no consequence for missing or being late for classes. Additionally, this study reveals the need for a coordinated effort on the part of school officials to set the stage for both academic and social support systems at Central High School. Students making the transition back to Central High School need to be made to feel that they are part of the school by being invited and engaged in school activities. The findings of the study imply that there is a need for these students to have a peer counselor who encourages them with their academic studies and engages them to become active in school activities.

Also, this study brings to light the necessity for the administrative staff, counselors, teachers and parents to be engaged in meaningful intervention strategies on an on-going basis not just when there is a problem (Comer, Haynes, Joyner and Ben-Avie, 1996). Finally, it is imperative for every student to have a meaningful relationship with at least one adult in the building and given time to meet with them on a regular basis (Freeman and Jaffe, 1992). This can be accomplished when principals build into their master schedules activity periods dedicated to mentoring, much like they have done with club periods. During this time specific individual or focus group activities can be planned. In order for students to have a meaningful relationship with an adult mentor, time must be allotted for relationship building through planned activities. These activities may start as informal meetings to discuss career planning, college placement, conflict resolution, or other topics

that are mutually agreed upon by the student and mentor.

Recommendations

A formal transition program must be developed. This transition program should have several key components. The following tasks must be completed to have a successful transition program: employ individuals to serve as transition specialists at the alternative school and at the base school, develop a formal transition team, define the roles of the team members and set expectations for students and parents. Additionally, all students transitioning from an alternative setting must be involved with one adult mentor in the school or the community.

Components of a Transition Plan

Transition specialists should be employed to coordinate the activities of students at the alternative school and the base high school. These specialists would be responsible for communicating the needs of students as they transition into the high school. Furthermore, they would ensure the coordination of activities between the alternative school and the base high school. These individuals would be responsible for developing a communication plan to discuss all students transitioning back to the high school and plans to assist them. The case studies of students in this study repeatedly point out the differences in expectation level at the alternative school and what is expected of them at the base high school. According to Duke (1998), the transition specialist makes certain that students are working at an appropriate level to enable them to function adequately when they return to a regular high school. Having transition specialists at both schools allows for continuous contact with students from the time they are sent to the alternative school to

the time they return to the high school and graduate.

The next step is to develop a transition team at the base school comprised of the transition specialist, students, teachers, counselors and administrators. This team will be responsible for creating and maintaining a multi-grade instructional model much like the program held at the alternative school. The only difference would be that the students would be in their base school. Throughout this study, students repeatedly mentioned their initial discomfort in returning to the regular school setting. Therefore, students would be allowed to transition to the general student population at their own pace. Students would be assigned to this program for a minimum of one semester, however, they may very well choose to stay in this program until they graduate. Their readiness to return to the general school population would be based on their ability to perform at acceptable academic levels, demonstrate appropriate behavior and attend school everyday unless out for illness. This team would have a scheduled meeting once a month to evaluate students' progress, both academic and social. However, should a crisis arise concerning any student, meetings can be called together by any member of the transition team at any time.

The role of each team member should be clearly defined. Peer or Student Advisors participating on the transition team should be students active in The Student Government Association, The National Honor Society, Athletic Teams, The Key Club or other service organizations. Each student returning from the alternative school would be required to participate in an extracurricular activity of his/her choice and would be assigned a peer advisor to work with him/her from one of the above groups. While the post history of students returning to the regular school program has not found them involved in extracurricular

activities, this requirement would be a condition of their return from the alternative school and their participation monitored by the transition specialist. As found in this study, positive peer assistance was one of the factors for a successful transition of students coming from an alternative setting.

Teachers should be selected for participation in this transition program based on their ability to work with students in a self-contained setting and can employ a variety of teaching strategies. These teachers should be well versed in intervention strategies designed to assist at-risk students. Duke's (1996) model of intervention strategies for at-risk students should be a key part of teacher repertoires in working with these students. Additionally, these teachers should be selected based on their ability to provide a structured and nurturing environment in their classes. Students were cited in this study as "working hard" when their teachers took an interest in them in the classroom. These teachers should have a proven record of success with at-risk students and have the ability to demonstrate "tough love" with high expectations, as well as being empathetic to those conditions that impact these students outside the classroom.

One counselor should be responsible for all students transitioning from an alternative placement. Time should be provided for this individual to meet with these students on a regular basis individually as well as engaging them in focus group activities. Focus group activities set the stage for collecting qualitative data which will allow you to assess the needs of individuals in this group (Morgan, 1988). This counselor would also communicate with the parent/guardian on a regular basis. This counselor should be experienced with working with at-risk students and should be able to work well with groups

of students. The Principal, Mrs. Holmes stated, " it would be helpful for the students to be with the same counselor for three or four years in order to get to know the kids and their families." In this study, it was made clear by counselors that large student loads prevented them from engaging these students on a regular basis. This counselor might be given a reduced case load in order to engage these students in meaningful activities that keeps him/her engaged on an on-going basis with the students.

It is recommended that one Assistant Principal should be on the transition team and all students coming back to the school from an alternative placement should be assigned to him/her. His/her primary responsibility would be to monitor students' behavior and attendance as well as give counsel to these students and their parents. In this role it is quite possible that the Assistant Principal could be a mentor for one or more of these students. His/her involvement with these students should be coordinated with that of the counselor. In this way, as stated in this study, students would have yet another opportunity to develop a positive relationship with an adult in the building.

Adult mentors, both those in and out of the school, should be involved on the transition team. Their involvement with the students could be vital in keeping them on task and engaged in his/her learning (Freeman and Jaffe, 1992). Their primary role is to work individually with students, listen to their concerns, give them advise and to seek assistance from the administrative and counseling staff when necessary. In this study, students consistently reported the positive impact of the relationships they had with certain adults in their school. In order for these relationships to develop efforts should be made to develop a schedule of activities that engage the mentor in meaningful

discussions about careers, academic and social achievement, and student's concerns. In order for students to return to their base school, one condition of their return is to be involved with an adult mentor.

The Principal or his/her designee would be responsible for selecting appropriate staff and resources for this transition program. He/she would also chair the transition teams monthly meetings. During these meetings, discussions about the progress of these students would be discussed. Additionally, he/she would act as the liaison between the community and the school as it relates to recruiting outside mentors for this program. As the instructional leader of the school, the principal must take the lead in assuring that a quality program exist for the successful transition of these students. In this study, students pointed out that the principal should talk to them and look out for them. This perspective shared by students should set the stage for the principal to engage in meaningful activities to make these students feel that their best interest are being served. Additionally, the Principal's involvement in the transition process keeps him/her in touch with the day-to-day progress or deficiencies of these students. It is imperative that the Principal be the leading advocate for this program in order to secure the necessary resources that will make it work.

Once the Transition Team is in place a structured process for students coming back to their base school must be developed in order to make them feel that they are involved. The following steps should be taken for a successful transition for these students:

1. Develop an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) for each student returning from the alternative school. This IEP would be developed based on standardized test data generated

from Standards of Learning Tests or other measures used to access students' minimum competencies. This plan should be developed with the students, parents and members of the transition team. During this meeting the student should have the opportunity to discuss his/her academic strengths and weaknesses.

2. The students with their parents/guardians meet with their Assistant Principal and Guidance Counselor. During these meeting, expectations for behavior, attendance and academic achievement should be set and agreed upon. Additionally, the role of each individual is discussed. For example, the parents commitment to be involved in the PTSA and checking classroom assignments, or the student meeting deadlines and being at scheduled meetings with counselors, mentors and peer advisors, and the administrators and counselors commitment to communicate with the parents/guardian and student on a regular basis. Also during this meeting the administrator and counselor should describe the roles of peer advisors and mentors, and the process by which they will be selected.

3. Students and parents should be introduced to their teachers. During this meeting teachers should discuss their expectations in their classes and give outlines of the course requirements.

4. Students returning to their base school should have a social activity with community and school mentors and students interested in being Peer Advisors. During this time the Transition Team should plan interactive activities and the end result will be that each student leaves with one adult mentor and one peer advisor. The students, along with his/her peer advisors and mentors should determine times

when they will meet. Meetings with the peer advisor may be a part of an extracurricular activity in which students are engaged in community service or sports activities. Many high schools build into the master schedule a section titled "Service Learning". Service learning requires students to work in teams to acquire community service credits needed for graduation. This provides an opportunity for the student and peer advisor to work together. Meetings with mentors and peer advisors may take place in school and out of school. The parties involved should determine those meetings, but should be required to meet at least once per month.

5. When students are ready to leave the transition program to be mainstreamed back into the regular school setting the following process should take place:
   a. A meeting with the Transition Team, with each student and parent/guardian must take place to discuss the IEP that was developed in the beginning. After a review has taken place of the initial IEP another one should be developed for his/her transition into a regular class schedule.
   b. The student should be introduced to his/her new teachers. The counselor will be responsible for scheduling classes and selecting teachers who will support and challenge the student coming out of the transition program.
   c. The student becomes a peer advisor to new students returning from the alternative school.
   d. The student maintains his/her relationship with the adult mentor.

In order to justify the allocation of considerable resources for such a small population of students, it is contingent upon the school division to determine the value of such a program. Therefore, a pilot program should be initiated over the next two years. During this time, data generated from students' achievement records, attendance and behavior should be examined. Data generated from focus groups and counselor interaction, adult mentorship program and peer counseling would be used to make judgements about their impact on this group of students. If one of the primary goals of alternative schools is to return students in alternative programs back to their high school, what steps are school divisions willing to take to assure the successful transition of these students? It is clear that the success of such a program is dependent upon the amount of resources provided, the level of communication between the alternative school and the base high school, commitment on the part of the principal, counselors, teachers, transition specialists, parents, community members, students and the school division.

For students making a transition from an alternative school back into their high school there are many challenges to face. With a functional transition program in place students are guided back into the mainstream of student life at their own pace. With this plan they should receive the attention that they need to be successful. For students who come out of alternative programs and drop out of their base high school, it is necessary that something be done to keep these students in school and assist them in becoming productive citizens and role models for students who follow in their footsteps. Coming out of an alternative school

should not be the beginning of the end of a student's high
school career; it should be a new beginning.

Case Study Number 1

Heather is a sixteen year old junior at Central High School. She was sent to the district's alternative school for setting a bathroom on fire with two of her friends. Since entering high school Heather had a history of cutting classes, rude and disruptive behavior and poor grades. She was sent to the district's alternative school and remained there for one year. When she entered into the alternative school Heather realized she could make good grades if she put her mind to it. Working one-on-one with teachers helped her become more successful in her classes. She felt that being at the alternative school was a learning experience in which she could do much better than at her base school. This was evident because her grades moved from straight F's to A's and B's which qualified her for the A/B honor roll every report card.

Heather attributes her success at the alternative school to developing positive relationships with other students and smaller class sized than in Central high school. According to Heather, "teachers did not do much lecturing at my alternative school and students worked in small groups or in pairs at all times." She indicated "we engaged in computer assisted programs that helped us with our vocabulary and spelling." At the alternative school students were allowed to use the Internet to do research for reports. Heather stated that more work was done independently or in small groups than with a teacher giving direct instruction. Heather also attributes her success to the Principal Ms. Sanders who kept in touch with her even after her returned to Central high school.

Heather's mother described Heather as being very bright and articulate. "Through elementary and middle school she had good attendance, behavior and grades. It wasn't until high school that Heather's behavior began to drastically change. I think her friends were the primary reason for these changes." Heather agrees that her friends easily influenced her. "I skipped almost every day. Before they kicked me out, I missed a total of 80 days hanging out with my friends." Heather worked hard, received good grades, attended school regularly and was returned to Central High School.

Upon Heather's return to Central High School it was apparent to her that teachers knew who she was and that she had returned from the alternative school. She was greeted with comments by teachers like "Oh god, here comes trouble." Or "Many of the problem at Central High School exist because of the students who return from alternative school." Heather believed that she was treated differently because of her status as a student from an alternative placement. According to Heather, she was assigned to a new counselor who she saw on one occasion, and that was to schedule her classes and discuss her credits. Heather believes that it would have been helpful for the counselor to stay in closer contact with her as she made the transition back to Central High School. "Cause she is a new counselor, I really don't think she knows exactly what she is doing yet. But I think she needs to have more contact, and talk more to students who have transferred from the alternative school." Heather also thinks that some teachers need to be more sensitive to the needs of their students in general. "In my Geometry class almost everyone is failing, there is only one or two students that are passing with a D. I have a D and he doesn't try to find out what the problem is. He teaches, he

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writes notes and that's all he does. He doesn't try to help us otherwise."

Heather has a good relationship with at least one administrator, Mr. Phillips. "I've talked to Mr. Phillips a couple times, and he knows what is going on. He's been real helpful by letting me know if I have a problem that I could come and talk to him. I had a problem with one of the girls who goes to school here and he helped me through it. I trust Mr. Phillips. I guess that's one person that I can talk to at the school. He is a good person, a good man."

Heather's mother has been a strong source of support. "Yeah, my mom does a lot. She calls up the school to make sure I'm here and calls when I have problems in class. She often calls teachers when I make bad grades to find out what I'm doing or not doing."

Heather stated that if she could put together a program for students who came back to Central High School from the Alternative School she would give counselors, teachers and principals the following advise. "As a counselor, I would just let students know that if they had any problems, that I would be there for them, that I would be there for them if they needed to talk. Just let them know that they are more than welcome to come in [to see me]. I'd show them around, introduce them to their teachers, get involved in what they are doing in classes. Teachers should be more involved with their students and find out what helps teach them and helps them learn. For example, I know that I learn better with hands-on activities. Instead of doing notes constantly, do some hands-on activities too cause it helps a lot of your students. Just change your teaching ways; just don't stick to the same thing. Principals should not put you on the spot because you are coming from the alternative school; he

should just introduce himself and let you know who he is. That's Basically all he can do cause he's not there to teach you anything, but like Mr. Phillips did for me, he let me know that if you needed anything you could come to him and tell him."

Heather had a difficult time making the transition back to Central High School. Heather's teachers and administrator noticed a great deal of change when she came back to Central. She was attending class and remaining on task. After about one month they noticed that she was skipping classes and the quality of her work began to decline. According to her mother, she began hanging out with the same group of friends that got her in trouble, her attendance got worse and her grades dropped significantly. After one semester back at Central High School, Heather is back at the Alternative School. Heather's goal is to become a Pediatric Nurse and she feels that she will have a better chance of reaching that goal in an alternative setting.

Case Study Number 2

Andrew is an 18 year old senior at Central High School. He was sent to the district's alternative school for chronic disruptive behavior, poor attendance and poor grades. When he arrived at the alternative school he immediately felt that it was a bad experience. "When I first got there students were cursing at teachers and running all over them. When they were directed to do their work, they would often cuss the teacher out and then just walk out of the classroom." In describing how he dealt with his new environment he said, "When I first got there I was real quiet. This environment did affect me, just a little bit. After being there a month, I was doing the same stuff the other students were doing, but after a while I calmed down." To prepare him to return to Central High School Andrew said,

"teachers talked to us about the way we behaved, and if we didn't get our act together, that we may not return to our regular school. They would sit down and talk to you like a parent. We have special teachers over there that would just pull you out and have these long talks with you about the way you need to start behaving or your manners."

Andrew attributes much of his success at the alternative school to small class sizes. "All the classes were small. There were about 10 students in a class. We used computers and teachers would give you a little more time that you would get over at Central. We worked in small groups and sometimes there wouldn't be more than three people in the class at one time. We had a lot of help from the teachers."

When asked what was his plan when he returned to Central High school, Andrew said, "The only plan I had was to stay our of trouble. It would have helped me to be able to meet with someone every day or every other day. The school should check up on student's more." Andrew attributes much of his past failure in the regular school program to hanging out with friends and his attitude. "I skipped a few classes with my friends, and on some days I just stayed home cause I was tired from staying up late the night before. With my poor grades, I think I was just lazy. I would have a lot of reading and just scan through it."

Andrew is currently passing all of his classes and is attending school every day. Andrew's mother has been a source of support as he has made the transition from the alternative school into Central High. "Andrew needed to go to the alternative program in order to catch up on his studies. Since he has been back I have monitored his studies more and I call his teachers to make sure he is keeping up with his assignments." Andrew's teachers and administrator describe him as very capable but does

need to focus more on developing his study skills. Andrew is interested in modeling positive behavior in school to help his two younger brothers. Andrew the oldest of three boys said, "I've got two little brothers and I want to show them that they can make it in school differently than I did." Andrew's goal is to enlist into the Marines and attend college to study health related fields.

Case Study Number 3

Larry is an 18-year-old senior who was sent to the alternative school for chronic cutting of classes and skipping school. He often left the school for the entire day to hang out with friends. Larry spent one semester in the alternative school. When at the alternative school Larry thought the work was easier but was surprised at the lack of discipline that was in place at Central City Academy and felt that it is stricter at Central High School. "You weren't really disciplined at Central City Learning Academy. You could basically run over top the teachers and cuss them out, and give them no respect. Over here it is a little stricter." Larry felt that his biggest problem was that he was lazy. Assignments were easy for him at the alternative school because he felt that teachers worked with you individually and you were not rushed to get things done. He also stated that his success at the alternative school was determined by his own desire to catch up on his credits in order to graduate on time with his class.

When Larry returned to Central High School he had a difficult time adjusting to the regular school program. Classes had more students in them than three to ten that were in the classes at the alternative school. He was faced with the choice of hanging out with old friends who got him in trouble or making

new friends. This was a difficult decision for him, yet he made new friends and has been attending school regularly. After the first semester back at Central High School, Larry's average dropped from a C to a D, but he feels that he is doing alright. In making the transition back to Central High School Larry felt that it would have helped if he had more contact with his counselor. Many of his teachers have been very supportive and look forward to him graduating. Larry also has a supportive family who has encouraged his continued success.

Larry's mother describes him as a very quite young man. "Even when he was very young he stayed to himself and plays his video games. He was never a bad child he just began hanging out with the wrong crowd when he got into high school." Larry is one of two boys. His older brother is 39 years old. According to Larry, his older brother gives him good and frequent counsel. Larry said, "He tells me how life is. He has gone through some of the same stuff that I have and he tells me to stay in school and graduate. He always ask me if I need help." Larry lives with both mother and father but spends more time with his brother. His father and mother both work and they are very interested in Larry schooling. Since he has returned to Central High School his parents are monitoring his progress more closely by talking to teachers and his administrator on a regular basis.

Larry's teachers feel that he lacks many basic skills but compensates with hard work since he has returned from the alternative school. One teacher said, "Larry is the type of student who needs a lot of motivation and needs to feel he has accomplished something everyday." Larry feels he has the support of many of his teachers and he works hard when they encourage him.

Since returning to Central High School Larry has maintained a D average and is struggling but according to his mother he is doing his best and is scheduled to graduate with his class. One thing Larry says that has helped him be successful is his friends and family. When asked what advise he would give student's getting out or Central City Learning Academy and coming back to Central High School, he said, "Not to do the same things that got you sent to the alternative school in the first place. I would tell them that they would have to improve or they would be sent right back." Currently, Larry is undecided as to what he wants to do in the future, but he is confident he will be successful in whatever he decides to do.

Case Study Number 4

Markus is a 17-year-old senior who was sent to the alternative school for chronic disruptive behavior and skipping school. He describes his experience at the alternative school as a "learning experience" in which he learned to communicate with others in appropriate ways, evaluated his behavior and immediately made plans to return to Central high School.

Upon his return Markus began to experience success in all of his classes. He attributes much of his success to a supportive family, teachers at the alternative school and at Central High. He has maintained a D average since he has returned to Central High School, while he received D's and F's before going to the alternative school. Additionally, Markus cites Coach Mason as having a big impact on his success at Central High since he has returned from the alternative school. "Coach Mason and I have a friendship where we sit and talk, and he understands where I am coming from. He knows my family and he makes it a point to se me on a regular basis. He is someone I

trust." Markus' teachers and administrators view him as a young man who will do well at whatever he wants to accomplish. Since his return to Central High School Markus has become a student leader as an active participant in the Student Government Association. At both the Central City learning Academy and Central High School Markus' transition from the alternative setting into the regular high school has been viewed by his teachers and administrators as a success story.

Markus mother has raised him on her own since 9th grade and attributes his father leaving to some of the problems she has had with Markus in school. She states that Markus from a very young age has always liked school. "When I was with Markus' father, he stayed on his case about school, the problem was he always compared him to his sister who was a A/B student. This caused a lot of friction between him and his dad. After his dad left his grades were C's and D's and I didn't put any pressure on him. Markus has not had any contact with his father at all. This could be part of the problem." She also recognizes the importance of teacher encouragement and support of Markus. "Several teachers at the alternative school and at Central keep tabs on Markus even over the summer. They have played a great role.

Markus felt that counselors, teachers and administrators should spend more time with students returning to Central High School from the alternative school. "Counselors should spend time with you talking about your future. Teachers should get to know you and treat you the same way as other students. Sometimes if they know that you came from the alternative school they think you are automatically going to get into trouble. Administrator should sit you down and tell you about the rules and regulation. They have changed since I was here before and it would have been

helpful for me to know what the changes were." Markus is uncertain at this time what he wants to do in the future but he does plan to attend Community College and try to find something he would be interested in doing for a career.

Case Study Number 5

Albert is a 15-year-old junior who attended the Central City Learning for one year for chronic disruptive behavior. At the alternative school Albert began to work on modifying his own behavior in order to return to Central High School. "At the Central City Learning Academy I learned to deal with problems without fighting and using bad language. I learned to adapt when I felt under pressure to behave in negative ways."

After spending one year at the Central City Learning Academy Albert returned to Central High School. Albert attributes his success to Ms. Clover a teacher who constantly reminds him that he could be successful and would make him responsible for his behavior. According to Albert she had extremely high expectations for him and he enjoyed working hard and being successful.

Also Albert credits his mother for encouraging him to do well in school and checking up on him on a regular basis. While Albert's mother declined to participate in this study she has worked hard as a single parent raising three boys and one girl. Albert is the oldest of the four and he takes a lot of pride in being the big brother.

After a semester at Central High School Albert admits to being in trouble with some of his teachers. He feels that many of them treat him differently because he came from the alternative school and continuously holds the threat of sending him back to CCLA when they discipline him. He has a good

relationship with his administrator and feels that he listens to him and is secure that he will be treated fairly by him. However, Albert is currently maintaining failing grades. Albert is proud that teachers have only disciplined him on four occasions. In Albert's opinion this is great, "Before going to the alternative school it was at least once a day." Albert has a goal to finish High School and enlist in the military. His long-term goal is to go into business selling sports equipment.

Case Study Number 6

Cynthia is a 16-year-old junior who was sent to the Central City Learning Academy for one year for fighting. She describes her experience at the alternative school as being in an environment where students were openly hostile to teachers and other authority figures and she had to adapt to this environment in order to make it out. She had a good relationship with teachers there and treated them with respect. I response to what it was she learned at the alternative school Cynthia stated, "You learn in life that you will have to deal with a lot of different kinds of people and certain things you should know to do and certain things that you should not do. From day to day you learn right from wrong." For Cynthia, this was an important lesson as she learned to modify her own behavior.

Upon her return to Central High School Cynthia had a difficult time making the transition because of large classes, lack of individualized instruction and counseling. However, she was determined to stay out of trouble and develop a strong and supportive relationship with her history teacher who encouraged her to remain on task and focused on her studies. Additionally, Cynthia's mother has been a supportive influence in her life and works very closely with teachers to resolve issues related to

Cynthia's academic achievement. However, after a semester Cynthia is doing poorly in all of her subjects, but has not had a single physical altercation of any kind. Cynthia feels she could do better with her academics but is pulled by her desire to become a professional hairdresser. Following in the footsteps of her mother this is the career she has chosen. However, she is cutting school to work on paying customers hair.

Her mother has raised Cynthia on her own and feel more like a friend to her that her mother sometimes. However, Cynthia's mother tries very hard to impress upon her the importance of her education. Upon Cynthia's return to Central High School her mother was very involved. She stated that, "I go up to the school quite a bit. Even when they don't send for me, I still sneak up there and check on her."

Cynthia's mother's intervention is still not working. It is very likely that Cynthia will be a successful hairdresser but with seventy-seven unexcused absences from classes in the first semester there is a good chance she will return to the alternative program or dropout.

Case Study Number 7

Renee is a 16-year-old sophomore who was sent to the Central City Learning Academy for chronic disruptive behavior, insubordination and skipping classes. Renee describes her experience at he alternative school as terrible. When asked what she learned at the alternative school her response was, "You learn that when you get out into the real world you're not going to know what is going on around you because they don't teach you anything here. So I've learned to just wise up and come back over hear (Central High School) and get what I need." After three semesters at the alternative school Renee returned to

Central High School.

Since returning to Central High School Renee has re-established positive relationships with at least two adults in the building, coach Mason and her math teacher Ms. Carter. However, she doesn't trust adults in general and states, "I just learned throughout my life, you can't trust people. I've put my trust in people who I thought trusted me and it didn't work out because you find out that you really don't know people even when you think you do."

Upon her return, according to administrators, Renee has not adjusted well and feels that she is still defiant of authority and continues to break school rules. Renee is still cutting classes and many teachers don't see her for several days and when she is in class she is not prepared. Her Principal stated that, "Renee was successful at the alternative school but has returned and has been negatively influences by her peers who she was acquainted with before going to the alternative school." According to her counselor, "Judging from Renee's actions she will either dropout or be put out if her behavior doesn't change."

While Renee's parents declined to participate in this study, according to Renee her parents assist her at home with homework assignments and assist her when necessary. However, with fifty unexcused absences from classes during the first semester it is not likely that Renee is bring home much homework and it is doubtful that anyone is checking on it. Currently, Renee has no idea what career path she wants to take at this time.

Case Study Number 8

  David is a 16-year-old sophomore who spent two years in the Central City Learning Academy. David has a long record of willful disobedience and chronic disruptive behavior. He was sent to the Central City learning Academy after throwing a desk at a teacher in 6th grade. Additionally, he has had a few experiences with the law and is currently on probation for Grand Theft Auto. Before being place on probation David spent a short period of time in a juvenile detention facility. David's home environment was less than desirable and the court placed him in a foster home. Since coming to Central High School David has been a model student. He had a positive experience at the alternative school and he worked very hard to get back into the regular school program. When asked what he learned at the alternative school; David's response was, "I learned to control my attitude and to come to teacher when I need help."

  According to David's teachers and administrator David has done well in making the transition to Central High School. David attributes his success to his new home, in which his foster parents give him the support he needs to be successful. They monitor his activities closely and have and on-going dialogue with court and school officials regarding David's academic achievement.

  Since returning to Central High School David has only had three disciplinary referrals for disruptive behavior and insubordination. However, David is doing very well for a student who is just "finding his way", according to his administrator. According to his counselor, "David becomes very frustrated when he has a hard time understanding something. Additionally, he lacks basic skills in reading and writing and is failing academically. Yet David comes to school everyday and tries his

best."

STUDENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. How would you describe your experiences in the alternative high school?

2. Did you learn anything in the alternative high school?

3. Did any activities in the alternative school prepare you to go back to your base high school? If none, what activities would have helped you to go back?

4. What activities did you engage in when you went back? If none, what activities would you have liked to participate in to help you make the transition?

5. What were the similarities of the alternative school compared to the regular high school? What were the differences?

6. Are there any adults that have made a significant impact on your life? If so, how did these individuals help you?

7. What role did your parents or other adult's play as you made the transition back into your high school?

8. What did you do to be sent to an alternative school?

9. Did you get in trouble alone or with a group of people?

10. Is there an adult in the school that you trust? How about in the alternative school?

11. Did your peers play a role in helping you make the transition back into your high school? How so?

12. How would you characterize the environment of your school?

13. What do you see as the role of your principal, counselor and teachers, in helping you make the transition back into your base high school?

14. Do you learn best in a large group setting or a small group setting? Or do you learn best alone? Explain.

15. To what extent do your parents participate in your education?

16. How do you get along with your parents and other family members? Who interacts with you most?

17. Where do you see yourself in ten (10) years?

ADMINISTRATIVE INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. What is the procedure for students returning to their base schools from the alternative high school? Is there an official school or district policy for their return?

2. Do you have programs in place to help students make the transition back to your school from alternative placement?

3. What is your role in working with students returning to your School from the alternative high school?

4. What are your expectations for students returning from alternative placement?

5. Is your staff informed of students returning from the alternative high school? How?

6. What are your opinions of these students returning to your school? What are the opinions of your teachers?

7. What is the role of your counselors when these students return to your school?

8. Are these students treated differently when they return to your school, in your opinion? How?

COUNSELOR AND TEACHER INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. How are you informed of a student returning from the alternative high school?

2. When students return from an alternative setting, what instructional support do you offer these students?

3. Do you feel that the alternative high school adequately

prepares students to return to their base school? If not what suggestions would you make?

4. What are your expectations for students who return from an alternative setting?

5. What is your role in helping students make a smooth transition back into their base school from an alternative setting?

6. What do you see as the most important factors that help students make the transition back to their base school from an alternative program?

7. In your opinion, what percentage of students re-enters their regular school and does satisfactory work?

PARENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. How would you describe your child?

2. How involved are you in your child's education? For example, attending PTA meetings, assisting with homework assignments, volunteering at school activities.

3. What was your expectation of your child and the school when he/she was sent to the alternative school? How were you involved in that process?

4. What was you expectation for your child and the school when he/she returned to the regular school setting? How were you involved in that process?

5. What adult(s) spends the most time with your child? Father, mother, relative, friend. Define the nature of that relationship.

6. Who did your child admire most at the alternative school and at the regular high school? Why?

7. What interests your child in school?

8. Describe your child's school experience from the time he/she entered up until the present.
9. How would you describe yourself as a student in school?
10. What was your highest level of educational attainment?

Appendix C

STUDENT DATA

Categories	PP1	PP2	PP3	PP5	PP7	PP8	PP9	PP10
Adjustment of Expectations	*	**	***	***	**	**	*	**
Adjustment of Instruction	****	**		**	*	**	*	*
Teacher Initiated Counseling or Advisement	*	*****		*	**			
Tutoring or Re-teaching by Teacher	*			*			*	
Supervision and Monitoring by an Adult in the School	***	**		**	*	*******	**	*
Parental Involvement	**	*	**	***	**	***	*	***
Encouragement	**	***	****	**	***	*		*
Positive Peer Assistance	**	*	***	*		*	***	*

	*	**	**	*	*	*		
Negative Peer Assistance								
Discipline		**	*					
Counselor Initiated Advisement	****	*	**	***	*		*	
Involvement in School Activities	*	*		**	**	*	**	**

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