

AGAINST ALL ODDS:
THE NATURAL HISTORY OF AN ALTERNATIVE-ADULT
HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM

by

Charline J. Barnes

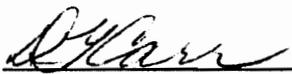
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Curriculum and Instruction

(ABSTRACT)

The traditional high school program is not appropriate for all students. Some students cannot cope with the pressures from social/family background, personal problems (independent of social/family) and school factors, and thus look to relieve these pressures outside of the educational system. The combination of these pressures, or risk factors, can cause a student to become a high school dropout, resulting in negative educational, social, and financial consequences to self and the nation.

No single alternative will solve the dropout problem;

however, studies have found that alternative programs can play a major role in the reduction of the dropout rate by enabling students to complete their secondary education.

In order to better address the dropout issue, there is a need to document the history of an alternative education program, to gain understanding of a special population, and to obtain current information that can contribute to the improvement of services to dropouts. This study focused on the establishment and development of an alternative-adult high school program, located in suburban Virginia, from 1955 to 1993. The research questions were:

1. What were the social, political, and educational conditions which contributed to the establishment of this alternative-adult high school program?
2. What program characteristics were operable during the existence of this program?
3. In what ways did the program evolve over time, and how did evaluation feedback contribute to this evolution?

Data were compiled and analyzed from student survey results, in-depth interviews with faculty, and archival documents.

Findings indicated that the adult education movement, integration, and financial commitment from local school board contributed to the establishment of the program. Furthermore, the major program characteristics that were operable included dedicated and caring staff, a supportive learning environment, and flexible scheduling. Evaluation was based on enrollment, graduation, and dropout figures as well as informal assessment.

DEDICATION

To Madine McField

(1902-1984)

a woman of courage, strength,
and great faith

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is the supreme art
of teachers to awaken
joy in creative expression
and knowledge.

--Albert Einstein

Einstein's quote describes my committee members, Drs. Gatewood, Carr, Cline, Garrison, and McKeen, so well. Their constant support in this learning endeavor has enabled me to grow as a professional. Cheers to all of you!

As for my parents, Charles R. and Ethel G. Barnes, I thank them for their extra unlimited love and resources that they always seem to find and give to me. With you two, love is measureless! Many thanks go to Charles E., for his "little-big" brother's views.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Overview

For over forty-five years, Dave Thomas, founder of Wendy's restaurants, was considered a dropout (McCullough, 1993). Bill Cosby, the entertainer, was also part of the dropout phenomenon that plagues the United States of America (U.S.A). In fact, nearly one million of the nation's young adults leave public school every year without obtaining a high school diploma (Sandmeyer, 1993; Strother, 1986). As stated in America 2000: An Education Strategy Sourcebook (1991), all sectors of society are feeling the impact of an inadequately educated young population. This population is labeled dropouts, early school leavers, or noncompleters. Although public school dropout is a serious problem, it is not a new problem (Grossnickle, 1986; Kunisawa, 1988).

The traditional high school program is not appropriate for all students. According to Quinn (1991), the forces that cause a student to make an individual decision to stop attending school fall into three

categories: social/family background, personal problems (independent of social/family), and school factors (see Table 1). The combination of these risk factors may cause a student to become a high school dropout, often resulting in negative educational, social, and financial consequences to the nation (Larsen & Shertzer, 1987). In reality, dropouts lose opportunity to learn and to earn (Allen, 1991; Baxter, 1992).

These potential dropouts bring to school multi-faceted problems over which the present American educational system has little control. However, the school system does have some control over the school factors that affect a student's scholastic achievement and later success in life (Catterall & Stern, 1987). According to Pallas (1987) and Brubaker (1991), the most cited reason that a student drops out of school is poor academic performance. Grossnickle (1986) said that dropouts often want to escape failure.

Statement of Problem

Due to definitional and data problems, accurate calculations on dropouts do not exist (Hammack, 1986/87).

Table 1

Characteristics of Dropouts

Social/Family Background	Personal Problems (Independent of Social/Family)	School Factors
Low socioeconomic status (SES)	Health problems (mental and physical)	Grade retention
Minorities	Substance abuse	Course failure
Children from single-parent homes	Legal problems	Truancy
Parents with poor education	Trauma from divorce or death in the family	Suspension
Primary language other than English	Pregnancy	Disciplinary infractions
Unstable home life	Learning disabilities	Low grade point average
	Low self-esteem	Feelings of alienation from school authorities
		External academic focus of control
		Ability grouping

Adapted. From "The Influences of School Policies and Practices on Dropout Rates" by T. Quinn, 1991, *NASSP Bulletin*, 75 (538), p. 74. Copyright 1991 by National Association of Secondary School Principals. Reprinted by permission (Appendix A).

Based on its 1991 study, the National Center for Education Statistics [NCES] (1992) designated a dropout to be "an individual who was enrolled in school at some time during the previous school year, was not enrolled at the beginning of the current school year, has not graduated from high school or completed an approved educational program, and does not meet any of the following exclusionary conditions: death; temporary absence due to suspension or illness; or transfer to another public school district, private school, or a state-or-district-approved education program" (p. 45).

However, there is no agreed upon national definition so the data on dropouts vary from one district to another (Ranbom, 1986; Rist, 1987/88). For example, some districts count out-of-school youth who are enrolled in General Education Development (GED) programs as dropouts. Others consider students who have not graduated with their class even though they are still in school. Another definitional issue is whether to count as dropouts those who leave high school early to enter college. As a result of the lack of consensus on the definition, there is no comparable data on national dropout rates (Hamby,

1989b).

Dougherty (1990) said that dropouts were once known as at-risk children in school. He defined at-risk students as "youngsters who lack a sense of identity, who lack a sense of connectedness, and who lack a sense of personal power" (p. 13). When these factors are combined with academic, social, and economic problems, the holding power of school, in most cases, is challenged and usually breaks (Mahan & Johnson, 1983). Some students cannot cope with the pressures and thus look for solutions outside of the educational system. According to the U.S. Department of Labor (1992), the unemployment rate is higher among high school dropouts than graduates, and dropouts are most likely to participate in the welfare and/or criminal justice systems (Hahn & Danzberger, 1987).

To help relieve society of the dropout crisis, alternative education programs have been established (Meyers, 1988). There are a variety of programs, ranging from vocational training to alternative-adult high schools. These second-chance programs have been designed to meet students' educational, and sometimes, personal needs

(Orr, 1987; Ramirez, 1990).

Lewis (1990) stated that the characteristics of the best schools are high expectations, high content, and high support. High expectations require educators to believe that all students can succeed; realistic goals are established. High content enables students to use their educational experiences to develop basic and higher order thinking skills that can be applied to meaningful, real world tasks, problems, and issues; the curriculum is designed to be both intellectual and practical. High support must be provided so students can develop worthwhile personal and social growth, enabling them to meet today's complex, demanding problems; adequate social services are available. However, some of these characteristics have been stripped from schools, especially ones serving at-risk youth.

Other elements specifically applicable to alternative education programs are: optional for participants, have distinct mission, and focus on total development of the student (Raywid, 1988). Wehlage (1983) described the school culture on effective programs for marginal secondary students as having collegiality for teachers. For students, it

is having a family atmosphere.

Although, there is no model dropout prevention school or program (Dougherty, 1990; Johnson, 1982), or magic pill that will solve the dropout problem (Kushman & Kinney, 1989, chap. 14), studies (Hamby, 1989a; Meyers, 1988; Thiel, 1985) have found that alternative education programs do play a major role in the reduction of the dropout rate, especially among at-risk students who have been unsuccessful in traditional high schools. One wonders why because little is known about the success of alternative education programs since there have been few program evaluations (Catterall & Stern, 1987).

Studies of how successful alternative education programs have been able to help students complete their high school education are still unclear (Office of Educational Research and Improvement [OERI], 1987). Research (Kammoun, 1991; Orr, 1987) found that alternative education programs tend to be flexible, small, and have unstructured curricula. Such programs cater to a specific type of dropout such as the chronically truant, academic underachiever, or

teenage parent, and offer a wide range of social services (Pallas, 1987; Ranbom, 1986). The staff is experienced, caring, and dedicated to this segment of learners (Ferguson, 1985). Overall, the nontraditional programs have been able to keep students when regular secondary programs could not do so (Holmes & Collins, 1988), but few studies have been conducted on the success of such programs in serving dropouts (Catterall, 1987; Pallas, Natriello & McDill, 1989).

The purpose of this dissertation was to study the establishment and development of an alternative-adult high school program, located in a school district in suburban Virginia from 1955 to 1993.

The research questions were:

1. What were the social, political, and educational conditions which contributed to the establishment of this alternative-adult high school program?
2. What program characteristics were operable during the existence of this program?
3. In what ways did the program evolve over time, and how did evaluation feedback contribute to this evolution?

Significance of Study

According to the literature, one finds that there are constant requests for evaluation of nontraditional programs (Darkenwald & Knox, 1984; Finn, 1987). In serving a diverse population, with multiple problems that cut across in-school and out-of-school experiences, many programs have been funded for years, but there is little evidence on whether a selected strategy yields appropriate results. Hahn and Danzberger (1987) concluded in their study that although enough is known for action, most programs have been systematically undocumented.

In Youth at Risk: A Resource for Counselors, Teachers and Parents, Hathaway, Sheldon, and McNamara (1989) identified a set of criteria used across the nation in serving the at-risk population. Program mission and goals, and their integration with a district's priorities, comprehensiveness of services offered, relevance to student post-secondary goals, cultural sensitivity, community involvement, and collaborative nature of the program were the features that the authors found in successful programs serving at-risk students.

Furthermore, Kushman and Kinney (1989) found that for dropout prevention strategies to work, there must be focus themes (opportunity to learn, motivation, commitment, and empowerment) within the educational system. They also noted that the educational needs of students should be met through restructuring of schedules, programs, and policies. Although alternative education programs are restructured traditional programs, very little has been done in program evaluation to confirm whether or not the approaches used are meeting the needs of the dropout population. "Any program worth spending time and money on is a candidate for evaluation," said Hamby (1989a, p. 27).

Successful dropout prevention approaches are determined by how well they serve their populations in enabling the students to receive a quality secondary education. Alternative education is one such approach. Within this program, there are many varieties; one school may be right for a particular student and wrong for another student. There are common characteristics of alternative education programs such as smallness, clear mission, supportive environment,

and student-centered curriculum, but little evaluation has been done on the usefulness of each feature in relating to different segments of the dropout population (Mann, 1986; Young, 1990).

Therefore, this study focused on conditions surrounding the establishment and development of an alternative-adult high school. Perspectives from both graduates and faculty of the program, and archival documents were analyzed to examine the characteristics and evaluation feedback of the evolution of this alternative education program.

Definition of Terms

Through the use of quantitative and oral history methods, this study focused on the natural history of an alternative-adult high school program in suburban Virginia from 1955 to 1993. The following definitions were used:

1. Alternative-Adult High School. Non-traditional secondary credit program serving returnees, ages 16 and up. This program is also known as an adult high school.
2. Completer/Graduate. A recipient of a high school

diploma or GED certificate.

3. Dropout/Non-Completer. An individual who has withdrawn from high school before completing requirements for diploma.
4. Overage. A person who is at least two years older than classmates.
5. Returnee. A person who has re-enrolled in school after an interruption in secondary education as a result of several risk factors.
6. Risk Factors. Combination of interrelated social/family, personal, and school factors that affect one's progress in the educational system.

Assumptions and Limitations

According to Ramirez (1990), there are numerous approaches to the dropout issue. Features in dropout prevention programs vary in approaches (Fortenberry & White, 1987) from interagency coordination (Hathaway et al., 1989) to individualized instruction (Duckenfield, Hamby, & Smink, 1990). However, few use the high

school credit approach (Orr, 1987). Some dropout prevention programs are tailored to the 25-year-old and older population, and are based on life experiences. Others focus on passing the GED test. The truth is "there are no simple solutions" ("The Crisis", 1986, p. 17) to the dropout crisis. However, the literature supports the theory of early intervention to be effective in enabling students to complete high school (Boyer, 1983; OERI, 1987).

Therefore, this study was limited to a suburban public school district that has run a dropout prevention program for over thirty years. During this time, modifications have taken place, resulting in three different approaches--GED, External Diploma Program (life experiences), and High School Credit--in addressing the dropout issue. Of the three dropout prevention approaches used in this school district, the high school credit program (also known as the alternative-adult high school) was the focus of this study since it served both early and late adolescents as well as adults.

Although the alternative-adult high school program has been serving dropouts for over thirty years, this study mainly looked at the

last six years of the program due to difficulty in tracking students from the early years. Since there has been no known follow-up study or program evaluation on this dropout prevention approach, perceptions from both graduates and faculty were included in this study.

Summary

There are a wide variety of alternative education programs that serve the growing population of at-risk students (Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko & Fernandez, 1989). Many are run by school districts. These educational institutions have developed and implemented dropout prevention programs in order to make a multi-dimensional assault on the crisis, but few districts evaluate (formative or summative) the success of the programs in serving the clientele (Mizell, 1986; Orr, 1987). The usefulness of this study resulted in documenting the natural history of an alternative-adult high school program, gaining understanding of a special population, and obtaining information that can contribute to the improvement of services to dropouts.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Characteristics of Dropouts

In reviewing the literature, dropouts are best described as members of the underclass who most likely come from a low socioeconomic status (SES) background, are older than classmates, have minority backgrounds, and/or are academic underachievers (Barber & McClellan, 1987; NCES, 1992). These students can come from urban, suburban, or rural school districts (Quinn, 1991; Whalen, 1985). They have few goals, hopes, and aspirations (Bechtel & Nave, 1990). Conrath (1988) found that most dropouts have low self-esteem, and some are victims of sexual assault and other violence. Substance abuse also plays an important part in the characteristics of a dropout (Mensch & Kandel, 1988).

In terms of racial background, Hispanics are more likely to leave high school without a diploma, then Blacks, and finally Whites (Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack & Rock, 1986; NCES, 1992; Steinberg, Blinde & Chan, 1984). Negative attitudes and expectations of

teachers (Felice, 1981), and school organization and policies that reflect middle class, white American culture (Calabrese, 1988) are some factors that affect retention of minorities in schools.

In terms of gender, males outnumbered females when it came to leaving school without a high school diploma due to their inability to conform to the restricted educational environment (Kunisawa, 1988; Taylor, 1992).

Reasons For Dropping Out

Although the reasons students drop out of school are numerous and complex, Ainley, Foreman, and Sheret (1991) in their Australian study found that students' perceptions of the quality of school life can make a difference in whether they stay or leave. Several studies in the U.S.A. reached the same conclusion (Bucci & Reitzammer, 1992; Catterall & Stern, 1987; Dougherty, 1990).

Negative school experience is the most cited reason for leaving without a high school diploma (Hamilton, 1986; NCES, 1992). From their research, Fine and Rosenberg (1983) found that a dropout is aware of the contradictions of schooling; the noncompleter becomes

knowledgeable of the "institutional inadequacies and discrimination practices" (p. 258). The present school organization does not accommodate all learners (Fortenberry and White, 1987). Sometimes, such disempowerment causes students to commit to what Clifford (1990) called "educational suicide" (p. 22)--dropping out. Many of these students are average learners, but feel discouraged and defeated due to poor academic performance (Cuban, 1989; Felice, 1981; Hahn & Danzberger, 1987).

Excluding school factors, familial problems also plague dropouts. The major reason females leave is due to pregnancy (National Dropout Prevention Center [NDPC], 1991). Many males leave early so they can assist in the financial support of their families. "Students from low-income families always comprise an unusually high percentage of the dropout population. Low-income status is generally accompanied by a single parent family, a large family size, lower educational attainment of parents and a way of life that differs from that of 'middle and upper class' families" (Taylor, 1992, p. 23).

Personal reasons such as peer pressure, substance abuse, and

mental and physical problems can also cause students to leave without a high school diploma (Fine, 1991). Compounded risk factors leave many students "engulfed by hopelessness" (Futrell, 1986, p. 12). Such hopelessness causes many learners to become dropouts (Brown, 1990).

Consequences of Dropping Out

Regardless of the reason that students leave without completing school, there is a price to pay. Educationally they miss the chance to escape poverty (The Forgotten Half, 1988) since they lack the skills and if hired, they are employed in low-paying positions. Economically, dropouts are twice as likely to be found on the unemployment lines than graduates (Markey, 1988). They earn less, pay little or no taxes, and are most likely to experience welfare and/or be involved in criminal activities (Allen, 1991). In social costs, Catterall (1987) found that dropouts are less productive in a work environment, are producers of intergenerational cycles of less-schooled children, and have health problems. Eventually, the combination of educational, economic, and social deficiencies of dropping out weaken the nation's potential growth (Hodgkinson, 1988; Quinn, 1991).

For some dropouts, such a bleak future causes them to return to school. Fine (1991) discovered that dropouts whose academic and personal backgrounds made them least likely to leave were most likely to return. Pallas (1987) found that non-completers who came from supportive families, who scored high on achievement tests, and had post-secondary plans were more likely to return and finish high school. Experiences and perceptions changed these returnees so they were willing to work within the school establishment in order to obtain the high school diploma.

Addressing the Dropout Crisis

Research (OERI, 1987; Smith & Lincoln, 1988) has shown that individual characteristics do affect a student's decision to leave school early. A student's social background, family lifestyle, and personal problems can contribute to the decision. However, institutional characteristics of schools also have been the focus of some research (Weis, Farrar, Petrie, 1989). Factors such as educators with indifference attitudes, attendance and disciplinary policies, and course scheduling can influence retention of pupils. According to Catterall

and Stern (1987), the purpose of school is to "improve their [students] chances for success after high school" (p. 80). This can only be accomplished with a multi-dimensional assault on the dropout problem through a cohesive, integrated effort by the public and private agencies, and only with a long-term commitment (Hahn & Danzberger, 1987; NDPC, 1991).

Another important factor is parental involvement (Allen, 1991; "Helping Students Gain Control", 1988). Children's attitudes and achievement in the school system are determined by the essential role that parents play in giving appropriate support and corrective feedback (Dougherty, 1990; Nardini & Antes, 1991). However, this significant component, parental involvement, has been found to be more critical in alternative education programs that serve young adolescents (Orr, 1987).

The dropout problem cannot be solved overnight (Perry, 1990). It must first be put in the public's eye. Awareness is important in order to have action (Grossnickle, 1986). The public must recognize that there are many approaches to the dropout crisis, not just one

(Duckenfield et al., 1990). All appropriate agencies must come together, commit to the problem, and then cooperatively share resources in addressing this massive problem (Ramirez, 1990; Wehlage et al., 1989).

Calabrese (1988) found that the American society must provide quality public education, from early childhood to secondary, for all, not just for some students. Quality means providing a positive instructional environment with competent, caring educators who believe in the success of all learners (Bucci & Reitzammer, 1992).

So what really works? Programs that provide warm, flexible environments, have clear missions, and allow for participatory decision-making by staff and students (Ascher, 1982; Young, 1990) have shown positive results. Having high teacher expectations and a rigorous curriculum (Bechtel & Nave, 1990) also help. Hathaway, Sheldon, and McNamara (1989) found that programs that are culturally sensitive, provide employment/career training, and coordinate with other agencies can make a difference in the dropout crisis. According to Conrath (1986), having experienced, qualified

staff has helped in getting students to complete their secondary education.

A major component in dropout prevention is having a program that uses active teaching and learning with non-traditional approaches such as cooperative learning, parenting skills, or work-study opportunities in a small, community setting (Cuban, 1989). Pittman (1986) found that some dropout prevention programs address both academic and social skills deficiencies. Studies (Howe II, 1991; Kammoun, 1991; Orr, 1987) revealed that alternative education combines these characteristics for successful dropout prevention approach.

Even with these facts, the literature also indicated three significant factors that will affect the future in dealing with early school leavers. First, there is no nationally identified dropout rate (NCES, 1992; Piphon, 1988). Student attrition is defined differently by various school districts ("How Many", 1991). "The term dropout rate can have one of several conflicting definitions, depending upon the manner in which the rates are calculated, who calculates them, and

how the coefficients are to be used...Differences in the time of year, state laws, and school recordkeeping system complicate the process" (Fortune, Bruce, Williams & Jones, 1991, p. 225). As a result of the absence of stable data, the estimates across districts are noncomparable (Rumberger, 1987). There is a need for uniformity in calculating dropout data among school systems, but it is presently a difficult, expensive task due to accounting and tracking procedures (Hammack, 1987). High dropout rates also have a negative effect on funding and performance evaluation of public school districts (Natriello, Pallas & McDill, 1986) so there is political pressure to keep the rates low.

Second, due to the lack of consensus about the definition of a dropout, patterns and policies differ in school districts. The marginal student is affected by the impact of rules and regulations enforced by the school system (Wehlage & Rutter, 1986). The promotion and graduation requirements, attendance policies, discipline system, and curriculum and instruction practices are some of the school factors contributing to the dropout problem (Kunisawa, 1988; Quinn, 1991).

"Schools cannot make children successful, but schools can create an opportunity structure where children will succeed" (Schlechty, 1990, p. 32). Restructuring schools has enabled educators to find some answers to this complex situation such as site-based management, effective schools movement, and improved technology ("Changing Schools", 1992; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Wood, 1992).

Finally, program evaluations have been limited in assessing the success of dropout prevention programs. The effectiveness of particular approaches is not clearly documented (Finn, 1987; Ralph, 1989). In 1984, Darkenwald and Knox called for formative evaluation of comprehensive dropout prevention approaches in order to ensure the success in meeting the developmental needs of hard-to-reach young adults. Orr (1987), in her review of different types of dropout prevention programs, found that only four of the fourteen programs had conducted some type of evaluation, even though most programs had been in operation for over five years. Orr concluded with a call for systematic evaluation because of the need to document usefulness of selected strategies and services within a program. Evaluation also

needs to include follow-ups on participants in order to reinforce or extend programs (Mann, 1986; Pallas et al., 1989).

Summary

In summarizing the literature (which is representative, not exhaustive), a dropout is someone who withdraws from school early without completing requirements needed to obtain a high school diploma. A dropout impacts society's resources. This person has less of a chance of becoming educationally, socially, and economically successful due to many overwhelming and interrelated risk factors such as poor academic performance, pregnancy, low self-esteem, poverty, drug addiction, and limited work skills (Boyer, 1983; Fine, 1986). Once a dropout leaves the educational institution, there are negative consequences which impact on both the individual and society; unemployment, health problems, and use of the judicial and penal service are just a few (Walker & Sylwester, 1991).

As a result of these consequences, some dropouts do return to the school system. Hahn and Danzberger (1987) called these returnees "accessible" (p. 51) because they are motivated and willing to

give school a second chance. Although these students previously turned their backs on school, they find out that education is viewed as the great equalizer (Fine & Rosenberg, 1983), and they must learn how to work within the establishment in order to have the educational opportunity and mobility available to them (NCES, 1992).

Alternative education programs have been found to play an important part in dropout prevention efforts. However, the major issues continue to plague the attempts to solve the dropout problem. These issues--non-comparable dropout rate, different patterns and policies across districts, and limited program evaluation--leave one to wonder about what "true" benefits do students get from their participation in an alternative-adult high school.

CHAPTER THREE

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Background Information

For over thirty years, the suburban school district in Virginia used in this study developed and implemented a wide variety of alternative programs to provide education to a growing population of at-risk secondary students. Due to a formal request, the identity of the school district and participants in this study will be kept confidential. Even with low dropout rates (see Table 2), the school district has regularly funded second-chance educational programs.

One program that this district provided was the alternative-adult high school program which offered out-of-school students the opportunity to complete their secondary education (see Table 3). Originally, this program, based on the Adult Education Act of 1966 (U.S. Department of Education, 1991), was for adults who were over 25 years old.

Table 2

Dropout Figures by Ethnic Group in ---- School District for 88-93

ETHNIC GROUP	92-93	91-92	90-91	89-90	88-89	TOTAL
White/Caucasian	615	567	577	700	871	3,330
Black/African-American	229	212	206	225	298	1,170
Hispanic/Latino	257	190	173	137	184	941
American Indian/ Native American	5	6	6	4	5	26
Asian/Pacific Islander	143	126	140	145	227	781
Other*	1	0	0	0	1	2
TOTAL	1,250	1,101	1,102	1,211	1,586	6,250
ENROLLMENT	61,122	60,412	59,369	59,648	61,527	302,078
PERCENT	2.0	1.8	1.9	2.0	2.6	2.1

Note. The dropout rate is the number of dropouts (regular-term and summer)

expressed as a percent of the sum of the end-of-year membership and the regular-term dropouts. This revised calculation method differs from the method used locally in previous years (see Appendix B). Previously, the rate was calculated as the number of regular-term dropouts in high and secondary schools (grades 9-12) expressed as a percent of the total enrollment in these grades and schools. *The "other" category included students of bi-racial or undesignated ethnic background.

Table 3

Enrollment, Graduation, and Dropout Figures for Alternative-Adult High School Program for 1988-93

SCHOOL YEAR	YEAR-END STUDENT MEMBERSHIP	# OF STUDENTS GRADUATED	# OF STUDENTS DROPPED OUT
1992-93	933	156	227
1991-92	542	240	165
1990-91	508	118	192
1989-90	555	113	199
1988-89	494	194	233
TOTAL	3,032	821	1,016

Note. These figures represent the three centers in the alternative-adult high school program as reported by ---- Statistical Reports of Dropouts, 1988-93.

The program was designed to allow students to earn a traditional high school diploma during the day or evening hours by attending classes at an adult education center (see Table 4). However, students did choose to leave the program for many reasons (see Table 5). Quinn's (1991) research on the profile of dropouts also indicated similar reasons.

Since the adult high school in this study was considered a tuition-free program, the only cost to each student was a materials fee of \$12.00 per course and a personal commitment (---- School Board Regular Meeting, 1955). This program provided small classes, low pupil-teacher ratios, and individualized instruction. In the early years (1955-1969), the program was set up as a one-room school house for adults where all subjects were taught by one teacher. As the years past, the program became more structured when several teachers were hired to instruct in specific subjects. This evolved due to increased student enrollment (---- Adult and Community Education General Advisory Committee [ACEGAC] Annual Report, 1971).

Table 4
Graduation Figures by Ethnic Group and Gender for Alternative-Adult High School Program
for 1988-93

ETHNIC GROUP	92-93		91-92		90-91		89-90		88-89		TOTAL	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
White/Caucasian	34	39	61	61	28	34	33	39	56	72	212	245
Black/African-American	21	13	18	9	4	3	3	6	7	10	53	41
Hispanic/Latino	13	17	13	20	6	10	7	7	4	6	43	60
American Indian/ Native American	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Asian/Pacific Islander	6	13	19	39	16	17	11	7	18	21	70	97
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	74	82	111	129	54	64	54	59	85	109	378	443

Table 5
Dropout Figures by Reason for Alternative-Adult High School Program for 1988-93

REASON	92-93	91-92	90-91	89-90	88-89	TOTAL
Achievement Problems	119	82	79	101	104	485
Behavioral Difficulties	3	6	5	7	28	49
Employment	24	19	34	28	29	134
Family	7	10	10	25	17	69
Financial Hardship	15	10	12	3	5	45
Health	3	2	4	2	6	17
Moved/Status Unknown	56	36	48	33	44	217
TOTAL	227	165	192	199	233	1,016

Note. The reason categories for dropouts are explained in Appendix C.

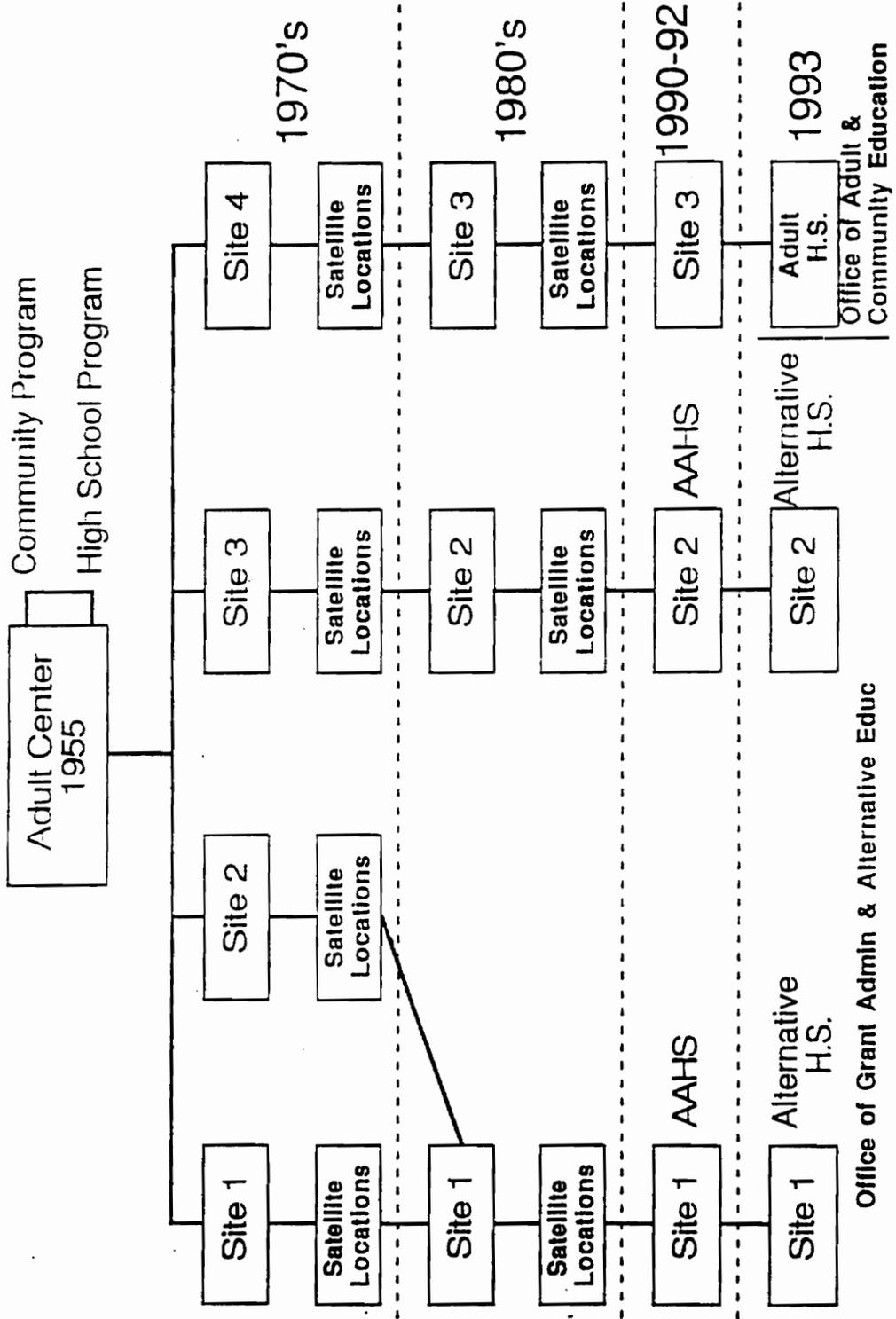
In 1992, the Adult and Community Education General Advisory Committee reported to the School Board that in this alternative-adult school program, enrollment was up and the age of participants was down. It also recommended replication of the program in the western section of the County to serve the growing at-risk population.

The ACEGAC Annual Reports, 1980-93, also indicated that the alternative-adult high school profile included language minority students (with overage status), pupils who were recovering from substance abuse, teenaged parents, and youth who were on probation in addition to adults who were over 25 years old. The profile revealed that most of these students had been out of school for at least six months. Although this was designed to be a self-selected program, younger students were being placed by school or judicial officials.

Furthermore, the program moved from being housed in many trailers throughout the school district to a three-site location as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Physical Evolution of the Alternative-Adult High School



Site Information

At the time of this study, the alternative-adult high school program was located at three sites. Two of the three sites were selected due to their similarities. Site One was located in the central part of the school district and Site Two was located in the southern part. Both sites had an enrollment of more than 250 students. Both sites offered day and evening schedules. The schedules were set up in a campus-style, semester, year-round arrangement where the teachers taught core and elective classes from September to January (Fall Semester), from February to June (Spring Semester), and from July to August (Summer Session). This meant, for example, that a year of a regular high school course could be covered in a semester at the alternative-adult high school. At both sites, students provided their own transportation and meals. Unlike regular secondary school, graduation at these sites occurred twice a year.

However, these sites also had some distinctions. Site One was housed in a former elementary school and had a large English as a Second Language (ESL) student population. This site had no library.

Site Two was located in a former high school. It had a child care facility and a library. There was also a large population of students coming from a low socioeconomic status (SES) background.

Participants

Graduates and educators from the alternative-adult high school program participated in this research. Dropouts, 16-years-old or older, who enrolled and graduated from this alternative-adult high school program were surveyed. After an interruption of their secondary education due to at-risk factors such as pregnancy, relocation, discipline problems, and/or poor scholastic achievement, these dropouts entered the program and completed the requirements needed to receive their high school diplomas. Graduates from both sites gave feedback about the program. All of the students came from graduating classes of 1988 to 1993.

The other participants were educators. In order to document the many sides of the program's history, administrators and teachers who had worked in the alternative-adult high school program were interviewed. These educators were formerly teachers in a regular

secondary program and had been involved in the alternative-adult high school program for at least five years.

Research Design

The school district's management information system (MIS) regularly updates student information. A directory information list (names, addresses, and year of graduation) of the graduates was obtained from MIS and put on mailing labels for the survey. The survey was coded with identification numbers (ID numbers) in order to maintain confidentiality. This 18-question survey was sent with a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the graduates from both sites. Turn-around time for the survey to be completed and returned was two weeks.

The researcher conducted sixty to seventy-five minutes interviews of faculty from both sites. These interviews occurred either at home or work. With permission, all interviews were taped. Each tape was transcribed. A copy of the transcription and a letter was sent to each person interviewed. Each interviewee was asked to review the written comments, and to include only a code name for confidentiality.

In addition to surveying the graduates from the last six years and interviewing teachers and administrators, other documents such as newspaper articles, archival records, personal papers, memorabilia artifacts, and school board official records and correspondences were reviewed in order to gain information about the social, political, and educational conditions as well as the evaluation feedback that contributed to the establishment and development of this alternative-adult high school program.

Evaluation Instruments

The following instruments were used to obtain data:

1. Alternative-Adult High School Survey (AAHSS). An 18-question, self-reporting survey was designed and adapted from the SEEDCO Dropout Program Study (SEEDCO) by Orr (1987) and the National Survey of Public Alternative Schools (NSPAS) by Raywid (1982). Graduates from classes of 1988 to 1993 at the two sites were mailed this survey with a cover letter. A self-addressed, stamped envelope was included with each survey.

There were four sections in the survey (see Appendix D):

- A. General Information covered demographics in Questions #1-5.
- B. Work Information focused on current employment in Questions #6-9.
- C. Post-Secondary Education Plans covered higher education and career goals in Questions #10-12.
- D. Alternative-Adult High School Experience, focused on student perceptions of the program's quality in Questions #13-18.

In the survey, there were twenty-three variables. Only two, Questions #12 and #18, were fill-in blanks; the rest were multiple-choice. Some of the multiple-choice answers required the respondents to check off two important reasons from selective alternatives.

2. Interview Questions. Taken from Field Visit Guide (Orr, 1987) and NSPAS (Raywid, 1981), these questions were adapted and used for interviewing purposes with administrators, and teachers about the establishment and development of the program. First, telephone contacts were made to interviewees living in the local area, requesting

consent to be interviewed. The time, date, and place of interview were established during a phone contact. A letter which explained the study was sent, along with an informed consent form where the interviewee checked whether or not a tape recorder could be used during the interview (see Appendix E). If requested, the researcher's resume was made available to the interviewees. After the interview, a draft copy on the transcript was sent to the interviewee requesting a review. Interviewed persons provided a code name for confidentiality upon returning the draft transcript.

The interview questions covered five areas (see Appendix F):

- A. History/Background of Program required interviewees to give their "beginning" into the program.
- B. Characteristics of Program focused on the structure of the program.
- C. Characteristics of Student Population required interviewees to described the clientele.
- D. Characteristics of Staffing and Management focused on selection and training of the teachers and administration

of the program.

- E. Evaluation/Assessment of Program dealt with formal or informal review of the program.

Evaluation Process

Due to a formal request, the school district and participants in this study will remain anonymous. Copyright releases (see Appendixes G and H) of Field Visit Guide (Orr, 1987) and NSPAS (Raywid, 1982) were obtained in writing. All data collection and analysis of documents, surveys, and interviews were done by the researcher.

Analysis of Data

Both graduates and faculty provided the data for this study. Quantitative methods were used to analyze survey responses (AAHSS), mainly by descriptive statistics. Interviews and archival documents were analyzed and reported by use of oral history.

Summary

Based on this study, the strengths and weaknesses of the alternative-adult high school program in serving its population were identified. By researching the conditions that led to the establishment

of the program, the characteristics that were operable during the program's development, and the role that evaluation played throughout the program's changes, a better understanding of how this school district in Virginia was able to deal with the dropout dilemma from 1955 to 1993 was gained.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

PART 1: QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Overview

In this suburban school district, one option for high school dropouts was to return to an alternative-adult high school program where they could complete educational requirements for a high school diploma. Students had to complete Carnegie units, and meet state graduation requirements by attending a certain number of instructional hours and maintaining satisfactory course work. Exemptions were not made for students who could show competence without attending classes. The program took students approximately two to three years to complete.

As stated in Chapter Three, the two sites selected for the study were picked for their similarities in program, population, and staff. Graduates, for the years 1987-93, from both sites were mailed a copy of the Alternative-Adult High School Survey (AAHSS). One thousand, seventy-five (N=1,075) surveys were mailed with two

hundred sixty-seven (N=267) undelivered due to no forwarding address. One hundred twenty-three (N=123) were answered and returned which represented an 15.2% response rate of graduates who were contacted as indicated in the table below:

Table 6

Number of Surveys Mailed and Answered

SITES	NUMBER OF SURVEYS RECEIVED BY GRADUATES	NUMBER OF SURVEYS ANSWERED	RESPONSE RATE BY PERCENT
One	486	60	12.3
Two	322	63	19.6
TOTAL	N=808	N=123	15.2

Basic statistical analysis was used for overall results and site comparison. Some of the responses were cross-tabulated with demographic data through the use of frequency distribution.

Demographics

Males (52.8%) responded to the survey whereas 47.2% of the females did. Of the total number of respondents, 80.5% were between the ages 20-25.

In terms of ethnicity (see Table 7), 61.8% were White/Caucasians. Asians (14.6%) represented the second highest, and Hispanics (12.2%) were the third highest ethnic groups to respond.

Table 7

Percentage of Respondents by Ethnic Group and Gender

ETHNIC GROUP	FEMALE		MALE		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
White/Caucasian	36	29.3	40	32.5	76	61.8
Black/African-American	7	5.7	2	1.6	9	7.3
Hispanic/Latino	7	5.7	8	6.5	15	12.2
American Indian/ Native American	1	0.8	--	--	1	0.8
Asian/Pacific Islander	5	4.1	13	10.6	18	14.6
Other	2	1.6	2	1.6	4	3.3
TOTAL	58	47.2	65	52.8	123	

Of the respondents (N=94/76.4%) were single. Graduates from February 1992 (N=23/18.7%), June 1992 (N=21/17.1%), and June 1993 (N=19/15.4%) had the first, second, and third highest response rates respectively.

Work Information

On AAHSS, Questions #6-9 focused on work information. Most responding graduates (N=98/79.7%) were employed. Of this number, 65.3% (N=64) were employed in full-time positions (see Table 8).

In regards to work location, most (N=82/66.7%) respondents worked in Virginia. The types of work (see Table 9) that both full- and part-time, employed respondents held were mainly in traditional fields based on gender except in the "other" category. In this area, the graduates indicated a variety of employment activities.

Post-Secondary Education Plans

Many (N=90/73.2%) of the respondents had continued their education after graduating from the alternative-adult high school program. Most of these (N=66/73.3%) had continued their education in two categories: community/junior college (N=48/72.7%) or on-the-job training (N=18/27.3%).

On Question #12 related to future career goals, the respondents had obtained more career opportunities through formal education and

Table 8

Percentage of Respondents by Ethnic Group and Employment Time

ETHNIC GROUP	PART-TIME		FULL-TIME		UNEMPLOYED		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
White/Caucasian	17	13.8	40	32.5	19	15.4	76	61.7
Black/African-American	2	1.6	4	3.3	3	2.4	9	7.3
Hispanic/Latino	7	5.7	8	6.5	--	--	15	12.2
American Indian/ Native American	1	0.8	--	--	--	--	1	1.0
Asian/Pacific Islander	6	4.9	10	8.1	2	1.6	18	14.6
Other	1	0.8	2	1.6	1	0.8	4	3.2
TOTAL	34	27.6	64	52.0	25	20.2	123	

Table 9

Percentage of Respondents in the Top Five Types of Work by Gender

TYPE OF WORK	FEMALE		MALE		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Administrative Support	14	19.1	5	6.9	19	26.0
Construction Trades	--	--	9	12.3	9	12.3
Marketing and Sales	4	5.5	4	5.5	8	11.0
Personal Service	7	9.6	6	8.2	13	17.8
Other	10	13.7	14	19.2	24	32.9
TOTAL	35	47.9	38	52.1	73	

Note. The "other" category included employment areas such as child care/senior citizen assistants, religious volunteers, lot attendants, tour guides, bank tellers, and machinists.

having their own businesses.

Alternative-Adult High School Experience

The two main reasons cited by the graduates regarding why they enrolled in this program were to get a high school diploma (N=107/

87.0%) and for personal satisfaction (N=33/26.8%).

The largest percentage (N=56/45.5%) of the respondents obtained the information about the program from the school guidance office. A "friend" (N=26/ 21.1%) was the second highest response as to where the graduates received information about the alternative-adult high school program.

Respondents indicated that the two most important services that were helpful during their alternative-high school experience were the guidance staff (N=69/56.1%) and the teaching staff (N=29/23.6%) respectively.

The flexible schedule (N=88/71.5%) and small classes (N=47/ 38.2%) were the two top aspects that graduates liked about the program. However, if the program had not existed, many (N=53/43.1%) of the graduates would have taken the GED test. Males (N=31/25.2%) indicated this decision compared to females (N=22/17.9%).

The final question, Question #18, focused on ways that the program could have improved. In regards to services, most comments

were on the need for transportation, job placement services, and more guidance counselors. For courses, the respondents requested more elective classes, advanced coursework and vocational training. Specific types of services or courses were not indicated.

Site Comparison

For both sites, the majority of the respondents were males (N=65/52.8). Site One had 53.3% (N=32) and Site Two had 52.4% (N=33).

Of the total number of respondents, 75.0% (N=45) were in the age range of 20-25 for Site One and 85.7% (N=54) for Site Two.

Further demographic analysis (see Table 10) showed that the top three ethnic groups responding from Sites One and Two were White/Caucasians, Asians, and Hispanics respectively.

Single was the top marital status with 75.0% (N=45) for Site One, and 77.8% (N=49) for Site Two.

Site One had the most responses from four graduation years. These included February 1992 (N=12/20.0%), June 1993 (N=11/18.3%), June 1989 (N=7/11.7%), and February 1993 (N=6/10.0%)

Table 10**Percentage of Respondents in the Top Three Ethnic Groups by Site**

ETHNIC GROUP	SITE ONE		SITE TWO		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
White/ Caucasian	34	31.2	42	38.5	76	69.7
Hispanic/ Latino	8	7.3	7	6.4	15	13.8
Asian/Pacific Islander	9	8.3	9	8.3	18	16.5
TOTAL	51	46.8	58	53.2	109	

respectively. However, Site Two received most of its responses from three graduation years. These included June 1992 (N=17/27.0%), February 1992 (N=11/17.5%), and June 1993 (N=8/12.7%) respectively.

For Site One, 80.0% (N=48) of the graduates who responded said that they were employed and 55.0% (N=33) of these were in full-time positions. For Site Two, 79.4% (N=50) of the respondents said that they were employed and 62.0% (N=31) of these were in full-time positions.

For work location, 70.0% (N=42) of respondents from Site One worked in Virginia while 81.0% (N=51) from Site Two did.

At both sites, respondents were mainly employed in administrative support, construction trades, marketing and sales, personal service, and other as the top five types of work as indicated in the table below:

Table 11

Percentage of Respondents in the Top Five Types of Work by Site

TYPE OF WORK	SITE ONE		SITE TWO		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Administrative Support	12	16.4	7	9.6	19	26.0
Construction Trades	5	6.8	4	5.5	9	12.3
Marketing and Sales	5	6.8	3	4.1	8	11.0
Personal Service	2	2.7	11	15.1	13	17.8
Other	9	12.3	15	20.5	24	32.9
TOTAL	33	45.2	40	54.8	73	

Note. The "other" category included employment areas such as child care/senior citizen assistants, religious volunteers, lot attendents, tour guides, bank tellers, and machinists.

Since graduating from the program, 76.7% (N=46) of Site One's respondents said that they continued their education; Site Two had 69.8% (N=44) of its responding graduates to indicate so. In responding to the kinds of education that they received, graduates (N=30/65.2% for Site One; N=18/40.9% for Site Two) continued at the community/junior college. For Site One, 13.3% (N=8) of the respondents received on-the-job training while 15.9% (N=10) did for Site Two.

On future career goals, respondents for both sites focused on obtaining more career opportunities through formal education and/or through professional growth.

The major reason that graduates (N=53/88.3% for Site One; N=54/ 85.7% for Site Two) noted as to why they enrolled in this program was to get a high school diploma.

For Site One, the majority of respondents received information about the program from the school guidance office (N=26/43.3%) or from a friend (N=13/21.7%). Respondents from Site Two obtained their information about the alternative-adult high school from the

school guidance office (N=30/47.6%) or a friend (N=13/20.6%).

Both guidance and teaching staffs were noted as the two premier services. Respondents (N=25/41.7%) from Site One rated the guidance staff as the top service. The teaching staff (N=20/33.3%) was chosen as number two. Site Two had N=44/69.8% (guidance) and N=9/14.3% (teaching) as first and second top services respectively.

Responding graduates from both sites indicated that flexible schedule and caring staff were the top elements that they liked about the program as shown in Table 12.

If this program did not exist (see Table 13), 48.3% (N=29) of the respondents from Site One and 38.1% (N=24) from Site Two said they would have taken the GED test.

For Question #18 concerning ways that the program could have improved, Site One's respondents indicated need for more guidance services and advanced coursework. Respondents from Site Two wanted transportation and elective courses.

Table 12

**Percentage of Respondents Preferring Top Two Program Elements
by Gender and Site**

SITE ONE

REASON LIKED PROGRAM	FEMALE		MALE		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Flexible Schedule	21	40.4	22	42.3	43	82.7
Caring Staff	5	9.6	4	7.7	9	17.3
TOTAL	26	50.0	26	50.0	52	

SITE TWO

REASON LIKED PROGRAM	FEMALE		MALE		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Flexible Schedule	22	38.6	23	40.4	45	78.9
Caring Staff	4	7.0	8	14.0	12	21.1
TOTAL	26	45.6	31	54.4	57	

Table 13

Percentage of Respondents by Gender and Site Who Indicated that They would have Taken the GED Test if the Program did not Exist

SITE	# OF SURVEYS ANSWERED	FEMALE		MALE		TOTAL	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
One	60	11	18.3	18	30.0	29	48.3
Two	63	11	17.4	13	20.6	24	38.1
TOTAL	N=123	22	17.9	31	25.2	53	43.1

Discussion on Quantitative Results

In terms of ethnicity, Asians, Caucasians, and Hispanics were the top respondents to this survey. However, African-Americans had a low response rate (N=9/7.3%) to this survey. According to ---- Statistical Reports (Forms SA.079 and SA.100) of Graduates, 1988-93, African-Americans made up 11.4% (N=94) of the total diploma recipients (N=821) from the alternative-adult high school program. At this time, the reasons for such a low response rate are elusive.

Although many of the graduates who responded to the survey were employed, the employment areas were in technical, sales,

clerical, and "other" fields. Possible speculations for the concentration in these areas include: (1) geographical area of this school district has an abundance of white-collar jobs; (2) previous economic predictions of growth in these areas.

In answering the questions on post-secondary education plans, the respondents did continued their formal education through community college or job training tracks. The noted career plans were indications that the respondents have pursued educational means to achieve their goals.

For some (N=33/26.8%) graduates, obtaining the high school diploma demonstrated a feeling of accomplishment. If the program did not exist, a few respondents (N=25/20.3%) indicated that they would have returned to regular high school although they were previously unsuccessful in that setting. However, the responding graduates did recognize the value of the high school diploma, and indicated that they knew that the GED was still an option if the alternative-adult high school program did not exist.

In regards to services provided by the program, the personal

touch from guidance and teaching staffs was preferred as indicated by the majority of respondents. This may have resulted because of the multiple, interconnecting risk factors that strongly impact on the lives of dropouts, and the need of students for someone to care and provide some direction in improving their lives (Farmer, 1992; Kammoun, 1991).

Having a flexible schedule was the number one reason why the respondents indicated they liked this program. Even with parental and employment responsibilities, students were able to complete high school requirements that could not have been achieved within the constraints of a regular school schedule (Meyers, 1988).

Summary

The quantified responses to the survey centered around three major issues. The first issue was student vs. school related needs. Although one of the main jobs of schools is to provide an education that will lead to emotional and economic fulfillment in workplace and life (Brown, 1990; Catterall & Stern, 1987), these graduates indicated a need for more guidance services. The dropouts who enrolled in this

program felt that guidance counselors were very important, but there were not enough to serve the students. Transportation was also a big problem for many of the respondents. Were these limitations a budget factor or a value judgment for the school district?

The second issue was on academic vs. vocational training. In responding to the survey, graduates presented the need for a balance of academic and vocational courses in this program. As previously cited in the literature review (Markey, 1988; OERI, 1987), many dropouts are unemployed or work in minimum wage positions. These graduates recognized the need for vocational training to ensure better job opportunities.

The last issue dealt with core vs. elective classes. Again, the responding graduates wanted more elective courses. They did not want this program to be a duplication of the regular high school which mainly emphasized academics and goals of the college-bound student. The respondents also wanted more advanced level coursework. Comments were made that the program should not only work on basic skills, but provide challenging work for those who could do it

(Clifford, 1990).

These issues were looked at again in the qualitative section. Faculty addressed these concerns during the interviews. However, the overall results from the graduates' perspective demonstrated that the alternative-adult high school program met its goal--getting dropouts to obtain a high school diploma--in a non-traditional environment.

PART 2: QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Overview

This section is an extraction from extensive interviews with six people who have been involved with the alternative-adult high school program over its history as it evolved from an adult high school to the current program. The six interviewees, four women and two men, all Caucasians, were asked questions based on five sections (Appendix F):

- A. History/Background of Program
- B. Characteristics of Program
- C. Characteristics of Student Population
- D. Characteristics of Staffing and Management
- E. Evaluation/Assessment of Program

Along with the interviews, newspaper articles, school board records, and other archival documents were searched. As a result, the sequence of the qualitative data including the writing of the introduction, discussion, and summary for each section was the doing of the researcher. Versions of particular events were told with the speaker's own distinct voice and viewpoint. Due to the request for

confidentiality by the school system, names of all speakers are pseudonyms.

The Voices

David felt he had fought the giant, Goliath--the evil force that causes students to drop out of high school. However, David, along with his staff, have helped to build the County's adult education program, including the alternative-adult high school. In 1967, he started as a night school teacher. He became director of adult services in 1970. Today, he is Director of the Office of Adult and Community Education.

Boty was hired as a teacher, and later became a counselor. Her main concentration with the alternative-adult high school has been with the English as a Second Language (ESL) population. She has actively worked with school officials to include ESL courses in the adult high school program, and to train teachers in this growing subject area.

John Initiative has been with the adult high school program since 1970 when he first began as a teacher; later, he became an

administrator. His focus within the alternative-adult high school has been on individuality for sites, but commonality for the program.

Knitting Needles retired in 1987, but that didn't stop her involvement with the alternative-adult high school. Since then, for each graduation, Knitting Needles and her husband, Bob, return to Site One (her last place of employment) to help with the ceremony. This couple has prepared gowns, taken pictures, cheered graduates, and praised staff.

Mother is now retired. Before joining the alternative-adult high school program, she taught in regular secondary programs, both in the U.S.A and overseas.

Mother Mary joined the alternative-adult high school program in 1971, but left to give birth to her son in 1973. She had taught five years prior to coming to this geographic area. After maternal leave, Mother Mary returned and mainly worked with the juvenile court schools, an off-shoot program of the alternative-adult high school. Today, she is Coordinator of the Volunteer Learning Program (VLP).

Introduction to the History/Background of Program

The increased value placed on high school completion in the United States was due to the post World War II education efforts and the Adult Education Act of 1966 (Toby & Armor, 1992; U. S. Department of Education, 1991). The goal was to target adults who were over 21 years old, and give them an opportunity to obtain a high school diploma or GED. Adult night schools sprang up within many school districts. Some school districts even started daytime adult high schools for those who were employed on shift or evening schedules. Regardless of the cost factors, the adult high school program was an opportunity for adults to complete requirements for a high school diploma.

Upon establishing the adult education program in 1955, the ---- School Board defined the adult high school as a place where students over 18 years old could come to "accumulate the credits required for a diploma through satisfactory class attendance and performance" (---- Adult and Community Education General Advisory Committee [ACEGAC] Annual Report, 1972, p. 14).

Reorganization and integration came to the adult education program in the 1970s due to population growth and national education policies (---- School Board Regular Meetings, 1970). There were four adult centers with satellite locations. Trailers were used at most of the satellite locations. Adult high school expanded to both day and evening programs (---- School Board Regular Meeting, 1971).

The School Board also approved an adult and community education general advisory committee (---- School Board Special Meeting, 1973). Its job was to acquaint the School Board of adult education activities, provide evaluation (annual reports), and project future plans in order to better serve the County's residents.

In the 1980s, there was the establishment of adult ESL program due to the growth of cultural and linguistically diverse populations. The ---- Division of Adult Services became known as ---- Office of Adult and Community Education. It added more non-credit classes for industry and parenting classes for families. An External Diploma Program (EDP) became part of the adult high school. Administered by the American Council on Education, this is a "competency-based

high school diploma program for skilled adults who were self-directed and more comfortable demonstrating practical applications of their learning rather than extensive paper and pencil testing" (---- ACEGAC Annual Report, 1993, p. 7). From a representative sample of graduates, it was found that the average age of students enrolled in the adult high school had dropped (---- ACEGAC Annual Report, 1972).

The ---- Office of Adult and Community Education celebrated its 35th year in 1990. A Task Force on Alternative Education was authorized by the Superintendent to study the impact of overage ESL youth, young mothers, and Virginia's compulsory attendance law concerning the delivery of services to the student population (---- ACEGAC Annual Report, 1990).

In 1993, two alternative high schools (Site One and Two) were moved from ---- Office of Adult and Community Education to ---- Office of Grants Administration and Alternative Education. Site Three remained under adult education, and now serves as an evening adult high school as summarized below:

Table 14**Major Events in the Alternative-Adult High School Program**

YEAR	MAJOR EVENTS
1955	Establishment of Adult and Community Education program
1957	Opening of adult high school (evening) at one site
1963	President Kennedy sends letter to school boards about actively working to get high school dropouts back into school
1966	U.S. Adult Education Act is signed into law (P.L.89-750)
1969	Establishment of county task force on adult services
1972	Opening of adult high school day program
1980	Opening of adult English as a Second Language (ESL)
1981	Adoption of External Diploma Program (EDP)
1990	Adult and Community Education celebrates 35th year
1992	Adult high school becomes alternative-adult high school
1993	Sites One and Two become alternative high schools

Voice of David

In 1955, the School Board approved the establishment of an adult education program. The Board approved the appointment of an assistant principal at ---- High School to be the Director of Adult Education and provided him with a salary [supplement] sum of \$50 a month. That was the first program and that program was set up to offer things like shorthand, bookkeeping, typewriting, woodworking, wood refinishing, sewing, arts and crafts, and high school English. The certified teachers were to be employed on an hourly basis at a rate of compensation of \$3.50 an hour. As was true in all County schools in the 1950s, program was segregated. The program for White residents was at ---- High School and for Black residents at ---- High School. It is unclear in the history of the adult education program when the adult high school got underway as a separate program.

I joined the program as a night school teacher in 1967; I taught U. S. History. At that point in time, the program served adults who wanted to earn their high school diploma. The program essentially had three classes in English, two in social studies, and two in math.

The average age of the class was well over 35 years of age. It was truly an adult program.

What I think the program had been able to demonstrate over the years was that there needed to have been some minor modifications to the design of the regular school program. The adult high school served an entire group of students who would not have otherwise been served.

By the 1990s we came to realize that there was a bunch of kids that while you may have had that as a goal for them, they sometimes disagreed. What we came to recognize was that if we gave them an alternative by providing them an option in finishing school and in overcoming whatever obstacles that may had prevented them from completing high school, the chances were we could prevent more dropouts. That was when the alternative-adult high school became the alternative high school.

Voice of Boty

Since 1955, the County offered a high school credit program. I mean if offered credit courses for those who hadn't finished high school. There was a feeling that the GED was not appropriate for everybody. There were older people who had not finished high school; they had dropped out for whatever reason. There were a number of people who had married early and had children. So there were people coming back to school who were in various stages of life.

For the adult high school program, I guess the obstacles were having no services other than providing the academics. However, we had an understanding that when people came, student support was the main thing to give. Some obstacles were purely logistical. We moved to here and there, and at times, our offices were moved too. For example, we came to ----, we left, and came back.

There were also physical constraints. One time, the trailer door blew off. When it rained, you lifted up your feet because there were three inches of water on the floor of the trailer.

By the 1970s and 80s, we could define ourselves as having three

credential programs. There were the EDP, the GED, and the high school program, and they all had support services. However, the adult high school program did not have the same framework as the regular high school. For the adult high school, the schedule was different, the students were older, and the staff did everything.

Well, I think the program probably had a couple of dramatic changes. In 1971, there was a small student population until about 1978. In 1978, we began to get a lot of international students. We saw students from various parts of the world. From 1978 to 1986, we handled the local high school dropouts, international students, and teen parents. We just grew.

Voice of John Initiative

I taught in this program from 1970 to 1981 as an evening teacher, teaching a variety of classes in social studies, geography, American Government, and American History. I became an administrator in the program in 1981 at the ---- Adult Education Center. Back in that period of time, the program offered high school credit courses to all different age groups over 16 years old, but there were more adults beyond 18 years old who attended.

What has since evolved is other types of programs like the External Diploma Program (EDP) that offered people the opportunity of getting a high school diploma based on life experiences. For the alternative-adult high school, we got more students who were 21 years old and under with the prime age group of 17, 18, and 19 in the alternative high school program today.

Voice of Knitting Needles

I started working in the adult high school program in 1973.

Prior to that, I had been teaching at a regular high school on a part-time basis for the Homemaking (now Home Economics) Department. It was a wonderful way to teach because I had free time at home with the family, and also I could be in the classroom.

What the adult high school administration wanted me to do then was to teach the Homemaking [classes] to girls, most of whom were pregnant. We knew the chances of keeping them in school were very, very slim when under that condition--motherhood. So I went at it, and taught in one end of a trailer. I took a little black Singer 221 sewing machine under my arm, and we made layettes. We also talked about nutrition. Hopefully, we got those girls a little bit further along in their ideas of what the responsibility of having children was all about.

Then in 1972 and 1973 we moved to ---- and that was interesting, because we were then taking the adult high school program into an entirely, at that point, black area of the County. Black students had

not been coming to our trailer at ----. Most of our students at the other site were White, and we thought the Black girls needed a chance too.

To get the program started, we drew up a flyer that had a silhouette of a person with a mortarboard, and said this could be you; then I personally took those into the apartments. If people didn't answer me, I could not put the notices in their mailboxes; I had to put them under the doors. Lots of times, I would go up the hall and not see anybody at all. Then bingo, I'd see some people who would ask what I was doing. I would ask them if they would be interested in the program. We did not have an overwhelming response when we were there. A lot of those people did not want their neighbors to know that they did not have a high school diploma, and so they wouldn't come near us.

So we began to appeal to the younger population. I took a playpen in, and you are talking about integration; that playpen would have a black baby and a white baby who were just having the best time playing together. We had some really neat kids who came in, and that

was when we began to pick up some older people. Some people who had to go to work as youngsters and couldn't finish their high school studies began to come because word got out that we were having so much fun. We also got a couple of people who had children, and we had to work around the kids' school schedules.

We moved the program [out of the trailer] in 1982 to Site One when adult education consolidated, and I retired in 1987.

Voice of Mother

I came to the program in 1970. My main position was with the high school students; this was not the GED program.

I was hired to teach English and social studies at the old elementary school in ----. David's office was upstairs. There was one other teacher [a male] who taught math and science. This was the beginning of the daytime program.

In my day, the program grew from GED to Adult High School to EDP. These programs were primarily for adults. Then the adult high school program grew to include a large ESL population. Overall, it was really a growing, complex program.

Voice of Mother Mary

I moved here with my husband who had just finished graduate school. He taught political science at the local community college. I had decided that I was not going to embrace another career. At that time, the County wasn't hiring anybody; there was a hiring freeze. So I thought, what the heck, I'm going to start a new career. And I tried this and that since this was such an expensive place to live; the money was just getting tighter, and tighter, and tighter.

So I started substituting and pretty soon I was teaching almost every day. It wasn't long until the principal had a position that became available, and he offered me a job. So I asked him, "Wasn't I under that hiring freeze?" He replied, "Oh well, I can get that waived. You just go down to personnel."

So I did. I previously had taught in an excellent school system in Tennessee, and I had done a lot of innovative teaching only because the school system provided the opportunity. The guy in personnel said, "I got another job I think you'd be interested in. I'd like you to go down the street." That's where the original office of adult

education was located. So there I was with two jobs. First I had none, and then I had two.

David [of adult education] explained to me that I would be working with the kids from a residential treatment center for emotionally disturbed boys [court school program]. I thought, well, I have taught normal kids. Why don't I try something new? I spent an entire week making the decision. I would run it by my husband. I agonized over it. I just thought there's no possible way I could weigh it all. Finally, I decided to take the job with adult education. It was 1971.

Discussion on History/Background of Program

All six of the interviewees started teaching in the adult high school program between the late 1960s and early 1970s. Prior to that time, these educators worked in a regular secondary program. It is impressive to see that these certified educators were willing to teach many content areas in the adult high school as compared to a few in a regular high school.

Although the high school program was under adult education, the interviewees recognized that there were three distinct programs--GED, Adult High School, and External Diploma Program--as the needs of students were identified. However, the speakers noted that these programs were originally designed to serve adults.

Originally this program was racially segregated. Integration and immigration changed the composition of the student population in relations to the diversity of achievement levels, ethnic backgrounds, gender, and age make up. Students were taught in a heterogeneous environment. However, there was little discussion by the speakers on the homogeneous composition of the staff in a multicultural setting.

Constraints within the adult high school were recognized by the interviewees. Logistical and physical obstacles were challenging parts of the program. However, these teachers agreed that reaching the students was the major focus of the program. They realized, as time went on, that the students enrolled were representatives of the norms for the adult high school program. In looking back, the speakers realized that the obstacles did not prevent them from fulfilling the mission.

Introduction to Characteristics of Program

The mission of the adult high school program was to offer "Carnegie unit credit courses leading to a regular high school diploma. The curriculum was the same as used in the regular county high schools." (---- Department of Career and Resource Development Services Handbook, 1985, p. 32).

Adult high school expanded to both day and evening completion classes. Day centers varied from small groups to individualized instruction to contracted projects. The centers also served pregnant girls, suspended students, and juvenile delinquents from group homes (---- ACEGAC Annual Reports, 1970-74).

Classroom format included skill centers, informal field trips, and vocational courses such as cosmetology, auto mechanics, and air conditioning. These formats were part of the program's freedom and flexibility. For students in residential therapeutic facilities who participated in the court school program, they received "instruction in basic skills, remediation, enrichment, and career orientation" (---- Bulletin, September 1972, p. 14).

In 1992, the School Board established eligibility, registration, and program guidelines for the alternative-adult high school program which by then, reflected the needs of the younger dropouts (---- School Board Regulation 3511.1, 1992).

Voice of David

The original mission of the adult high school was to provide adults an opportunity to finish high school. The theory behind this was first of all, the school system valued education and wanted to provide the maximum number of people the opportunity to finish school. Secondly, if you could raise the educational level of the parents, you are likely to raise the value that the kids put on education, and as a consequence, you do a better job of educating the kids with the fact that you involved the parents. I can remember in my very first year of teaching in this program, there was a lady in her mid-40s. I asked her why she was taking junior year history. I wanted to know what would motivate her to do that at such an age. And she said, "I have two daughters in school. They keep throwing up to me that I dropped of school, and they want to drop out of school too. But I'm planning to finish school so they don't have that argument anymore."

I will tell you that in the 1970s, there was a concern that the schools ought to serve the young people, and the district ought not to

provide alternatives that permitted them not to go to school because going to school provided the youth with social opportunities and future development. The mission hadn't changed much. It now serves for late adolescents as an alternative to regular high school.

I went into administration of the program in 1970. Now in 1971, there was an assistant superintendent appointed for adult education and that was when the program first got a real thrust of interest and money. In addition to an assistant superintendent being appointed, three adult center principals were appointed. Furthermore, several teaching positions were added. So by 1971, the adult high school program was a night center at one site and day and night at several sites.

What happened in the 1970s was that the overall school population in ---- County declined. We had mobility; we had kids; to economize, the school system started closing some of the schools.

When the County started to close some schools, adult education petitioned the School Board to obtain access to those closed buildings. The trailers were physically inadequate. They just were too darn

small. So we needed more space.

What amazed me was how little modification was needed. Modification was largely in the schedule. Adult high school didn't schedule students with five or six periods a day. We used block periods, maybe a couple times a week. And that seemed to reduce a whole lot of pressure on the kids to participate. Secondly, we had enough time built into the schedule, recognizing that some students had to work. So, we didn't tie them up all day; we tied them up for pieces of the day, but still permitted them to work.

Initially the effort was to try to keep the pupil-teacher ratio low. In the early years, I think we were pretty successful with that. Now, it has been a mixed bag. Sometimes the classes are really, really large, and sometimes they're kept light. But that had been an effort in the initial years when the resources were available to try to keep the pupil-teacher ratio low.

Voice of Boty

Adult high school had only one defined mission, and it was not much different from the alternative high school's mission is right now: to serve who for some reason or other are not appropriately placed or served in regular school. It could be pregnancy; it could be age; it could be responsibility; it could be some sort of educational dysfunction.

There were four centers, and then they were reduced to three. Each one had either a day and evening program, or an evening program.

We issued the same diploma in 1971 as we did in 1991 as we do now. We always had the regulations that were required to get the course credits, but not many people knew about us. I think it was important to the School Board that many people did not know about us. It was my understanding that it shouldn't be a high profile program; it should be just a place that's comfortable for folks who were frustrated with the regular school and had dropped out for one reason or another.

Voice of John Initiative

Basically the original mission was to try to get as many people who had not completed high school into the program, and then to work with those folks in order to go through the necessary classes to get their diplomas. There was a great deal of flexibility in the program in order to help those students to take the various classes. As classroom teachers, our idea was to try and assess the students' background in the subject area and then provide the proper placement. Many adults were most hesitant about not being in a classroom setting for many years. They thought they were going to come in and see a ton of high school kids. At first, the older students were the majority, and they offered a positive effect on the high school kids [which was a small amount in population]. This emphasized to high school kids who were failing in school or were potential dropouts that a high school education was needed for not just to get a job, but also for job advancement.

The mission hasn't changed. It was to reduce the dropout rate by offering an opportunity to get a high school diploma. With the

mobility of the population in this area, the mission has increased in the volume of the need. And what has also occurred is the greater expansion of courses.

What was initially offered--some English, some social studies, and a little bit of math--has grown into a wider range of those classes. For example, we used to teach English 9, 10, 11, and 12 at the same time in one classroom. Today, we offer separate courses in each of those areas. We offer ESL classes. We offer a wide range of science and social studies courses. We offer work-study classes. For our day programs--which were smaller and met in trailers--we now have our own school buildings, and full fledged guidance services. This year, for example, we are offering special education services. Now, we have classes in our day program that only were being offered in the evening program. These are our major differences of commitment on the part of the school system.

The hours of operation when I knew it at first was an evening operation, and then it grew into a day program. The evening operation was year round. Today we go continuous from 8:00 a.m. to

10:00 p.m. with year-round operations. So there is a much greater commitment. We have our own buildings which are to be renovated soon.

Originally, the program was physically located in different high school buildings. Eventually, as there were shifts in school populations and some buildings were closed, the school system began to see a need for other uses of the buildings. This [Site Two] was a former high school that became an intermediate school, and then eventually declining enrollment suggested a new use. So school officials did their consolidations, and they made this into an adult education center.

We brought in a variety of adult programs, as well as high school credit. The adult high school program grew in the early 1980s as we were dealing with a center of one hundred students. Today we are dealing with eight hundred students at one site. We used to give students their high school diplomas when they finished. Today, we have two ceremonies a year. Regular, formal graduation ceremonies with cap and gown, speakers and all of that are part of our schedule. We now graduate anywhere from fifty to seventy students [per site/per

graduation] at a time.

So we have provided more education with full guidance services. We have done testing. We have some health services. We have things like teen parenting programs where girls who years back had homebound instruction when they got pregnant; today we have classes with regular organized programs where they [young mothers] are bussed to school. Here at Site Two, for example, we have a one hundred twenty in the teen parenting program, and we have a child care facility where they can bring their babies on an open-space availability. The school system provides the bus transportation whereas in the past the young mothers had to figure out their own way to get to school.

If the student failed a course in the regular high school, the student could go see the guidance counselor and with the appropriate signatures from their parents and school officials, s/he could enrolled with us and take the course as a repeat course. Some students who were trying to get out in three years could double up with permission from their regular high schools.

We have also helped students get into trades by working with the apprenticeship or vocational program. In all, we have met with different community agencies to help provide additional services to the students. These new services have met the changing needs of the student population; this has been the commitment of the School Board.

Voice of Knitting Needles

We had certain classes Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays. Others were on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The students came certain days depending on their academic needs.

We had year-round schooling, and when these people (today's educators) begin to talk about year-round schools, I said, "Yes, I know how that's going to be." It's hard; we graduated one day, and started the new semester the next day. I mean there was no break. You had two weeks vacation and that was all. I taught four levels of English, social studies, and home economics.

Now while we were at ----, we were doing everything by ourselves, and that was hard. We had graduation alone. We had to do the whole thing. I mean I made the punch, provided the tablecloths, and bought flowers . Sometimes the flowers came from many sources. One day I had a perfectly beautiful arrangement at one graduation; it was gorgeous. It was great big, beautiful magnolias. A boy had brought them in. I said, "These are so beautiful!" And he said, "Yes, aren't they?" And I said, "Where did they come from?"

And he said, "My neighbor's tree." Then I found out that the neighbor wasn't home. I hope the neighbor didn't mind; they were just perfectly beautiful flowers. Graduation got to be a family affair, because you had people who had many children and the entire family came for graduation. They would bring food, you would not believe, and so we made a big event of the graduation.

We decided that we really should have graduation gowns; we hadn't gotten to the caps and gowns fees, yet. One year, the girls decided they wanted to have graduation dresses. Now when you are dressing black, white, Hispanic, and Asian, finding one perfect color is a little difficult. They went over--now listen to what they did--they went over to Minnesota Fabrics, and they found a color that suited every single one of those girls; it was a pale green, and they each made a dress. Some were evening dresses, and others were short dresses, but we had matching dresses that year for graduation, and they were beautiful.

What was the program's mission? The program's mission was to give these people whatever they needed to improve their living and for

graduation.

Yes, we had tests. We gave various tests. Of course with what I was doing, the students had tests that were life-searching tests. For example, in the psychology class, I would remind students of what they had studied and then asked, "What influenced you in life, and what in your life has made you what you are today?" They had to come up with influences that proved that they understood why they were where they were in life, based on the information that they learned in the psychology class. They wrote a lot of term papers. They had to have a least four sources. I read each term paper three times. Then on a separate sheet of paper, I wrote a critique with all corrections, suggestions, and criticisms.

We also provided the students with an evaluation sheet upon entering the program so students had an idea of where they were in terms of credits. I would urge them all to go on to the community college. I just thought that if I could move them straight on, it would help. I had the guidance people from the community college come to the trailer and talked. The students had a face with a name to whom

they could relate. I think this was very important because I didn't want them to quit learning.

Voice of Mother

We were scheduled like a college. It gave students an opportunity to come three days a week [M-W-F] for some classes and two days a week [T-TH] for the other classes. The goal was to get in a certain amount of hours of classwork for each course per week. The schedule looked like this:

MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI
1.5 hr. per class	2.0 hrs. per class	1.5 hr. per class	2.0 hrs. per class	1.5 hr. per class

We also gave them the option [only upon entrance into our program] of taking tests that would put them ahead so that if they had dropped out in, say the 10th grade, they had a chance to test onto an 11th grade level.

Sometimes we allowed them do outside work that would give them credit hours for extra projects. They read and reported on appropriate literature. One [student] assessed the impact on of her going back to school on her son.

We felt getting them out of the classroom and into the community was a good idea. I always took them at the beginning of

the year for a library tour, and we arranged it so that the librarian did a special tour for them. I wanted them to use the library, and some of them didn't really know how to do so. And we in those cases [field trips] used cars.

We also had social days. We had a Christmas party and an end-of-the-year party. We tried to encourage social interaction.

The ---- site housed four of us in two trailers with two teachers in each trailer. I know I taught at ----, and then they moved the trailers from ----, and they put our program in at ---- and closed down those trailers. So it was three moves and in 1978, I was recruited to go to the court system to work in a voluntary tutoring program, so I didn't teach in the alternative-adult high school from 1978-1984. The Volunteer Learning Program (VLP), at the courts, was geared to help students pass the GED exam--an alternative to the high school diploma. I was there for six years.

Discussion on Characteristics of Program

The design of the program was tailored to meet the mission. As the years past, the interviewees saw changes in the structure of the program and student population, but the mission basically stayed the same--to give students an opportunity to obtain a high school diploma.

One major characteristics of the program that interviewees recognized was the flexibility within the program and among the staff. Although the program was year round, courses were set up in a block schedule with time given for social interaction, to accommodate students' work schedules, and to meet graduation requirements.

Among the staff, interviewees recalled doing everything from teaching to testing to counseling. Such flexibility meant that the staff relied on their knowledge of services within the County. The interviewees also stated that even with such flexibility, it was their responsibility to ensure that the mission was met. They did this by providing active, realistic instruction which was relevant to the needs of the students.

The speakers also realized that as a result of their involvement

in the adult high school, they pioneered many of today's innovations in secondary education programs. Year-round education, block scheduling, and authentic assessment are just a few of these.

Introduction to Characteristics of Student Population

"Adult education has become an important part of the lives of some local residents" (Burroughs, 1980). But they were not your typical students. These out-of-school youth and adults came to the adult high school from various backgrounds and with individual needs. "Many of the younger graduates said they enrolled in night school after encountering problems in high school...Among the older graduates, the most common reason for graduating late was the Depression or other economic pressures that had forced them into the workday world before they could finish school" (Dougherty, 1980, p.Va. 6).

In 1992, the School Board (Regulation 3511.1) began to focus on four major student populations that would be served by the adult high school [now alternative-adult high school]. There would be the "concurrent" students who were pupils jointly enrolled in regular high school and the alternative-adult program at the same time. These students would attend regular high school during the day and pick up one or two credits at the alternative-adult high school in the evening.

The second type to be served was the "transfer" student who came from another school division with insufficient credits to graduate. This student would have the option of attending the alternative-adult high school on a full-time basis. Due to personal needs, "administratively placed" students attended the alternative-adult high school based on recommendations by the school administration. Finally, the "adult" student was considered the out-of-school adult, 18 years or older, who had legally withdrawn from a secondary school, and wished to return to complete requirements for a regular diploma.

Voice of David

Now what happened between 1967 and the early 1970s was that there were some individual students who could not for various reasons--economic, social, academic, or whatever--be successful in a regular school program, and the adult high school program was asked to make an exception on the age and admit these students. We had one girl from ---- High School who had a prolonged illness, and she had gotten behind in school and needed to catch up. They asked us to accept her in the adult high school program so she could take some courses to catch up.

I would say that back in those early years of the 1970s, I think of a very common characteristic--people saw the adult high school as an alternative to regular high school. They would, for example, quit school and go to work. So you go to night school. There would be social circumstances--they had gotten married, gotten pregnant, or whatever--so they'd choose adult high school as an alternative.

At the same time, what is an "adult" student has been greatly changed because of the Assistant Superintendent for Adult Education

[who had been a former high school principal]; he was very concerned about the dropout rate. So he started an active program for recruiting dropouts to come back to high school. Up until that time, the program had essentially been responsive to the people who identified themselves. He became actively involved and for example, started sending letters from the guidance departments to people who had dropped out of school saying come on back. Well, as a result, we got not the adults in their 20s and 30s, but somebody who is just at the age of dropping out, like 16 years old. That effort in the early 1970s led to increased enrollment of young people so that, by the time you get to the mid-1980s, the average age in the adult high school program had gone from 35 years of age to 19 years of age.

The Assistant Superintendent also became very interested in our establishing parallel programs with juvenile court. The director of juvenile court was very interested in the fact that the court identified a number of kids who had been unsuccessful in school. There needed to be some kind of option for high school completion in working with these students. So I worked with the correctional facility and the

juvenile court to set up what was called 'juvenile court school programs'.

There was one teacher in there, and she would work with about ten students. All of the juvenile court students were certainly under the age of 17 with many of them 15 and 16 years old. The original plan said that there would be a teacher and a probation counselor working with the school. Now what happened in practice was that we got a really, really good teacher who was able to control the students and keep them busy. She thought that the probation counselor presence was negative to the program, and soon the probation counselor presence was not needed in the school. However, the probation officers helped the teacher because a lot of kids were on probation. But that was still adult education even though we were working with kids. What happened over the years was that he [Superintendent] wanted the juvenile court program--you were talking about an awfully small number of enrollees--but because of the circumstances, the juvenile court took over the program. However, the enrollees hadn't harmed anybody or any property. They had done

things like being truant, running away from home, or whatever. They were status offenders rather than criminals.

When you get to the current day, you have a whole mix of circumstances. You have some kids who have simply been, or feel forced out of school because they can't relate to a large environment of a large high school. Some actually have phobias about crowds in large high schools. Some can't take that structured environment. Some have mixed family circumstances that lead to why they do not work out in regular school. As a result, the main student population has changed from adults to adolescents for the alternative-adult high school program.

Voice of Boty

Most of the time the students either came from school referrals or they just walked in. Many came as a result of word of mouth.

There was a major student population in the early 1970s that caused the program to grow. There were the concurrents, dropouts who were taking one or two classes at night. Concurrent means that they attended a regular high school [in the day]. I bet you that approximately 15% of the population at the alternative-adult high school was full-time students during that time, and the rest were concurrent students who were having trouble when they failed a course. The program became an avenue for students to take a course at night so that they could open up a day spot to take something like advanced calculus, or a course they wouldn't be able to take if they didn't have their night school course. These students always paid a summer school fee for taking a course with us.

About the fifth year that I was there, the teachers got together, looked at what type of student was coming in, and put together a school-based assessment. In the classes, teachers would assess the

students again. When they had ten people or eight people, it's not too difficult to take the time to do so.

It [school-based assessment] was in different sections. We had grammar, sentence completion, math, science, and social studies sections. It was about ten pages of items that we had chosen from each subject area that we felt would assess whether a student had been out of school for one, five, ten or twenty years.

Up until the mid-1980s, very little follow-up was done. Every now and then, we would contact people just to say, "What you are doing?" We had faith that they would eventually come back to us if they had dropped out and most of them did. I'd see them a year or two later back into the program.

That was our main criteria--graduation. Successful completion was considered finishing the courses needed to get a high school diploma. If they had a stable life plan, then they may go to our program for a while and get a diploma.

Voice of John Initiative

Now you have to also understand that the population of high school dropouts has been declining, but the problem is still growing because the school system is growing. We went from approximately 55,000 pupil school system in 1961 to about 136,000 pupil system today. So while the percentage rate is dropping slowly, the numbers are still large.

Students who were under age 18, in order to come into the program, they had to be given permission to come from their local school and the Area Office. Those students were placed for many reasons such as ESL, teen parenting, because there were no other centralized programs for them. They could be here for disciplinary actions, attendance reasons, or whatever other placement purposes that the area offices made decisions on. Now if the student was 18 or older, the student made his/her own decision to enroll in the program. That was a walk-in-off-the-street type of registration.

There were the concurrent students. They were at a regular high school for the day, and they came here at night for one or even two

classes; they went to summer school as well. This especially happened when a student had a father in the military, and the father was going to get relocated elsewhere in the world. The student had to finish and so those arrangements were worked out. But there were a lot of situations and this was a very mobile area, so we had a lot of students coming in at different times in the school year. For some of those students, they just couldn't walk into a regular high school and finish a course. So the alternative-adult high school was on a semester basis, and we offered a more intensive course of study, so that a student could take a course for six hours a week. We covered classes on a four and a half month cycle versus a nine-month timeframe. So technically speaking if you got started in time, you could complete an additional four courses in the evening in one school calendar year; that's an attractive feature.

However, we did not do any advertisement outside of the school system. Our only advertisement that we did was through the regular schools. Our intent was not to promote our program. Our intent was to inform. We did not go out and make any formal presentations at

the high schools. We did not try to encourage young students to come to the program. For those who had a true need and when the regular school went through its old process of providing the services and none were working, then it was at that time that the regular school got information about our program. Then the regular high school made recommendations to the parents. We did not enter that picture at all until we were informed that the student was coming our way. That's important because there were some attractive features in the program, and we didn't want to give the students the impression that we were competing with the regular high school, because we were not. That's the furthest thing away; in fact, that should never be the case. Young students should be able to come into our program, spend a period of time, and then go back to the day school program; that happened to some degree.

Students did graduate. Of course, we had students who moved out of the area; others dropped out. For some, they dropped out for four or six months, and then they would come back. Others would wait an entire year before returning to the program. What happened

was that there was a little bit more maturity that took place. When they dropped out of the regular high school, some would come immediately to us. In some cases, what those students really needed was a chance to spend a month or two out with the real world and see what kind of jobs they could get. They had to work a job first before they came to some realization that they needed a high school diploma, and they would had to work at it seriously. So a number of these students really needed to achieve that point of maturity. Because if they didn't, all that you were getting was a repeat performance of what happened in day school. "The why are you after me?" "Why are you giving me a hard time?" With maturity, you wouldn't get that kind of dialogue.

[For those who dropped out], anyone who was in our [Site Two] files, we would go back, send letters, or make phone calls to encourage them back. If at point and time that didn't work, we recommended the GED program, and in the past we have even sent the names and phone numbers to the GED staff.

Voice of Knitting Needles

Some students found out that I knew how to knit, crochet, and sew, so on Tuesdays I would get a number of ladies who were much older attending my classes. Some were even retired. Since I wasn't running a full school at that time, I thought that if they wanted to learn to knit, I would take anybody.

Most of them were in their 60s, and one of them was a really heavy-set lady. She arrived one day and announced that she didn't know how to knit, but she wanted to make a white cape. She had enough yarn; you would have thought she was going to make a tent. She came in and she said, "I want to make a cape." I said, "Fine we'll make the cape." We labored over the cape and when we finished, a friend of mine had given me some crystal buttons. So I said, "Wouldn't you like to have these for your cape?" Yes, she would love them. One day I said to her, "Don't you think we ought to try this cape on?" And she said, "I don't. Why?" And I said, "Well, to know if it's going to fit." "Oh!" she said, "It's not for me." And I said, "If it's not for you, for whom is it?" And she said, "It's for the Lord." And I

said, "Oh Mrs. Thompson, for the Lord?" And she said, "Yes." And I said, "Well, I don't know exactly how the Lord is going to wear this cape." And she said, "I am going to sell it. I am going to raffle this cape off at the fair when we have our youth summit at the end of October, and I will give the money to the Lord." So that was what the cape was made for. So I didn't have to worry whether or not it fitted Mrs. Thompson.

Now we had a lot of students. I thought that was really good. Some of them had been put out of school for one reason or another. The year that the girls made their dresses, we had a boy who wanted to take home economics and he made a coat. He tailored himself a jacket; it looked real good on him. He even bound the buttonholes, and top stitched everything. He was so proud of himself.

We had at ---- the first Black boy to ever go to an integrated school. Somehow, he got in with the wrong group, and one of the saddest days of my life was when he and one of those miserable creepy kids decided that they needed money for drugs. So they broke into a house, not knowing that the owner was there, and got shot. I

wasn't home so I was unable to attend his funeral. This boy was handsome. He had charms. He had everything going for him. He had just graduated, and I was so hopeful that he would accomplish great things, but both of them were killed right there in the man's bedroom. These were the heartaches that we had.

Some people would work. I had a girl who worked in the cafeteria at one of the County's high schools. She would go to work, and then she would come to school to my class until it was time to fix lunch. When she got through with cleaning up after lunch, she would come back to me and stay until 3:30 p.m. So these were times that we had; these were the things that had to be done, and I think the main thing that we felt in that particular room was that this was a supportive family.

One little girl was pregnant, and she began to have labor pains. A boy got right up and said, "I will go with you. I don't think you should drive." I mean this was the kind of sharing that we had. It was an interesting population. They weren't all happy.

Before we leave ----, there is one thing I want to tell you. We

made a wedding dress. We had a little girl whose father and mother were divorced, and the mother had a number of husbands between that time and the time I got the girl. The girl had moved out. She lived with her boyfriend's family. She came in one day, and said they were going to be married. And she said, "Can I make my wedding dress?" And I said, "Well certainly! Ask your mother, or your father, or whomever for the money so we could buy the materials to make the wedding dress." They gave us \$25.00, and we went to Minnesota Fabrics and bought the material. We made this wedding dress, and it was a darling. It had the buttons all the way up to the sleeves, and it had the buttons all the way up the back. Some time before they got married, she said to Bob [husband] and me, "Will you sit on my side of the church?" And we said, "Certainly we'd love to." So we went. We were the only people on her side.

Voice of Mother

It was a program that was aimed at those who had somehow slipped through the cracks. The program also had referrals from the --- Juvenile Court. At one point there were boys who were major discipline problems. There were also young women who had dropped out. Some were unmarried; some were married. Some had children; others had none. Then women in their late 20s found out about it, and started to come.

Now there was a question about whether these teenagers would be true adults, and we decided to try and put them in with these women who were old enough to be their mothers. And it worked out that the kids were not too obstreperous. They didn't act out, and they listened to these adults in a way that they had never listened to their parents. We found that it was a good influence to have them together. So that continued as our pattern, mixing ages together.

I had a student who was very bright. One time, he went to Florida, and while there, he witnessed an accident. It affected him deeply. I suggested he write a letter to the editor of the newspaper.

He did, and his letter was published. He brought it in to show me. He was proud to be published. His sister had a stroke which impaired her speech. I sent him to the ---- Health Center. The therapist there helped him adjust, and gave his sister some help. I never will forget because he sat one afternoon and we talked, and talked, and talked. And when he got up to go, he said, "I never seem able to talk like this--but it helped." He was a young man that normally was very reserved and dignified. He didn't finish. Now, he's one who could have done it, but he didn't. But he felt better about school. So sometimes you win some, and sometimes you lose some.

We had a real big mix of students. It was interesting because they all got along very well. I had a Green Beret, a young Black man whose wife taught school, and she helped him a lot. We had a girl whose father was a trucker. She admired what her dad did, but she didn't see very much of him. We had one girl whose father had been a high official stationed abroad for the federal government. Her younger sister went to another school. This young girl was sort of an oddball. You know, she wore her clothes to the floor, and carried

deodorant and yogurt in her bag. And it didn't make any sense to the other students, but she felt comfortable in our program. She went to California to college after completing high school with us.

We had juvenile kids who came, worked for a while, and then dropped out again. Some would come back and asked, "Will you take me back?" When they found out that we would, you know, it made them feel welcome. And then they could try to make this thing work again.

We had one girl who had been on drugs. She came to us to get away from the regular school program. She went on to study veterinary medicine and did very well. Then we had some who were very hard to reach. Some of them had shriveled their brains with drugs. We had to try to get through to them even if it didn't work.

Then I came back [after working six years with VLP] and taught in the alternative-adult high school program for two years on a part-time basis. By then, there was a mix of high school dropouts and ESL students--all aspiring to obtain a high school diploma.

In the beginning (1970s), it was a mix of young people and older

women. It changed drastically during those six years that I was gone. Part of it stemmed from the ESL population. When I came back, it was more ESL students than native speakers at Site One. Although I hadn't been trained to teach ESL courses, I was expected to teach social studies to non-native speakers who had not been exposed to U.S. customs, values, etc., as younger students. So the government and history that I taught was on a different level. It was a very different challenge than the work that I had done in the 1970-1978 time period.

Voice of Mother Mary

On the first day that I walked in, these kids were a shock. Wow! I had no idea what I was up against. These kids walked in, and they looked like the dregs of society. I kid you not. This was back in the early 1970s.

And then in addition to that, we had students coming and going, far and wide. So we had the biggest hodge-podge that was ever seen in the program. We had all these boys from juvenile court; we had adults in their 40s and 50s; we had every dropout on that side of the County, particularly in the second quarter. I think I taught eighty-nine subjects. I don't know. I was just barely keeping my head above water.

Finally, I know that the only thing I did that year was to establish a bond with these young people. I don't believe I taught them a lot, and I would have to be very honest with you--maybe a little something. I mean it was just wild. Knowing what I know now, I would not go back. But I was a teacher; I thought I was supposed to take care of them.

One of the things I often worried about was placing my older students with the adolescents. It usually doesn't work in theory. But it worked for us. It was a very pleasant surprise for me. I remember having a German lady who earned her citizenship. The kids were so proud of her. She commanded respect from the younger students. She could do things I couldn't do. Once she said, "Don't you have any respect for your classroom? Don't you have any respect for your teacher? How could you throw a piece of paper on the floor?" She was their peer; you know, she was a student. It was a good learning experience for all of us.

The students were so excited about her taking the citizenship exam. I went with her. Oh, we all helped her to study. I had never done this before. Oh, she had memorized all the constitutional amendments memorized. She said, "Now, Mary, and in Marbury v. Madison, was that the church or who was that?" And then she'd go through all these Supreme Court decisions. And I'd say about establishing the supremacy of the courts over the states and all those things. She was overly prepared. The kids were so excited when she

got her citizenship. And so that was a good relationship. It was the highlight of that school year. I became very close to individual students, and stayed involved with their lives for many years.

I never had any serious problems with the students, although many were dealing with some very complicated problems. Some of them were there on assault charges. Some of them had problems involving alcohol and heroin. But I had few discipline problems with these kids. I tried to avoid power struggles with them.

I remember one student I had the last year that I taught. We were doing a geography exercise. I casually said to her, "Carol, you go up and point out for us now where so-and-so is." She begged me not to make her go to the board because her 5th-grade teacher had always humiliated her in that manner. But we were informal; there were six or seven kids in a class. We sat in a circle. But she could not do it; her ego was shaken. These kids had fragile egos. If they did something to me, I would say, "Stop now! Do you hear me? My feelings are hurt." Instead of saying you let me down; I would not use it too often. I learned that you had to engage them, and to do it

quickly.

Discussion on Characteristics of Student Population

With an open-door policy, students came and went. However, the interviewees still agreed that the policy encouraged students to fulfill the mission. It was a check-balance system. With such policy, it seemed that the problems that students brought to the program, allowed them to reassess their true endeavor about completing high school.

One of the things that the interviewees discovered about the student population was that mixing age groups did work in this alternative-adult high school program. It seemed that behavioral expectations were reinforced by the adults upon the adolescents. In turn, the adolescents encouraged the adults to achieve. Both became role models for each other.

Class size also made a difference in meeting the needs of this student population. With so many students having needs beyond the academics, interviewees noted that emotional support had to come from both the educators and the students. Class size provided opportunity for individualized instruction to be emphasized regardless

of the personal and social problems that interfered with learning.

With the unique demographic make up and continuous growth of the student population, interviewees agreed that accommodating students' needs was part of the supportive atmosphere that was provided in this program. Apparently, these educators did not give up easily. As a result, the interviewees found that students were willing to trust more, and not give up so quickly. The program became an important part in the lives of the students because the teachers combined similarities and differences in backgrounds and personalities to establish a family where members worked towards a common goal--getting the high school diploma.

Introduction to Characteristics of Staffing and Management

In 1971, there were five major adult education programs (basic education, high school credit/GED, distributive education, business, and trade and industrial) with four centers and satellite locations. By 1993, thirteen major programs were serving the schools and community in all parts of the County.

With the establishment of the adult education program, the School Board recommended "qualified and certified teachers" (---- School Board Regular Meeting, 1955). As the program grew, staff moved from part-time hourly personnel to both full-time and part-time educators.

Evening principals were hired to implement programs, serve as liaison between adult services staff and community and school, supervise evening classes, evaluate staff, and carry out necessary administrative routines (---- ACEGAC Annual Report, 1971).

Adult education's budget was part of the operating budget of the school system. Financial support came from tuition (non-credit classes), federal, state and county revenues (---- School Board Special

Meeting, 1972).

Most external staff resources and support services resulted from interagency collaboration. Volunteers were recruited and trained to tutor students (Burroughs, 1980). Although in-service days were limited, there were opportunities to focus on curriculum development, scheduling, and materials.

Voice of David

In order to get the resources to keep the work moving in the adult high school, we found that there was a funding advantage for being labeled special education. So the adult education program spun those [juvenile court schools] off to the special education division. Since then, the Office of Special Education and Support Services has been administering those schools. I believe there are twenty-five of those court schools now.

The School Board has funded the alternative-adult high school program from the beginning. There was a little bit of state money involved, but it was just a small amount. There was always some controversy about whether the School Board should put money into adult education non-tuition program like the alternative-adult high school. By having it become an alternative high school program, very little can be debated now about adult education serving this kind of clientele. This new structure has eased the entire discussion on how the program ought to be funded. In fact, the new structure has greatly enhanced the acceptance of the program by the community.

With the alternative-adult high school, the administrator has to have a greater sense of flexibility. The question ought to be, "How can I organize this place and give the kids the best education?" in dealing with this population. Now, obviously you've got some curriculum standards as they relate to graduation requirements. However, when you look at those, you find out that those are pretty broadly stated anyway and that you have a great deal of flexibility in designing a curriculum.

In keeping this in mind, the administrator has to be more selective in choosing the staff for this program than for a regular high school. Some teachers simply don't want to teach kids who don't share necessarily the same lifestyle or objectives. As a principal in the alternative-adult high school, you have to say to an applicant, "Here is our student body. Are you willing to work with these students?" This makes for a better school.

Another unique thing about this program has been the graduation. We had formal graduations a couple of times a year, and that philosophy reflected the old-fashioned idea that people's lives

weren't conveniently organized around September through June; in fact people lose jobs, families move, and disruptions occur in families. These upheavals happen year long. We first had one graduation for the entire adult education once a year which evolved into one graduation twice a year. Finally, we had three graduations twice a year. In the beginning, graduates for all three programs would come together because you'd only graduate fifty people a year. Now when the programs got larger, we came to realize that first of all, we got a full auditorium; and secondly, the centers had come up with school spirit and identification. And we thought we should build on that by allowing the continuation of separate graduations.

Voice of Boty

At the very beginning, the adult education centers were under a director. It was somebody who had an overall job, sort of an administrator. Later, each center had a principal and a counselor. Our administrators at the centers--I can say--were very responsive in terms of getting special materials. If teachers had anything to charge that made sense, the administrators always supported us.

Most of the centers just had three or four contracted teachers. It was my understanding that the School Board liked us exactly where we were, sort of low profile. It liked us working with folks that it wasn't sure what else to do with at certain times. But in the 1980s, we spread out, and got active in various places in the County when our populations grew. It was during this time that we got counselors. The counselors had other duties because they also worked with the community education section.

Also in the 1980s, we started looking for additional teachers who could make our students feel welcome, and still have them learn. Teachers were on their own a lot. They had to design all the lessons,

tests, supplemental activities because they didn't have the regular textbooks.

In terms of the budget, there was a really small amount. Some of the money came from contracts. Money from the adult and community education classes paid our hourly waged teachers. Any other money was redistributed to help the adult high school program because the students [except concurrents] were paying a materials fee; at one point, it was \$12 a course. It later went up to \$25 per course. So that money went to help with the local funding of the alternative-adult high school.

Voice of John Initiative

OK, let's start with the staff. Teacher had to have really wanted to hang in with those students. They had to show a great deal of sensitivity to their problems. I am talking about a purposeful sensitivity to recognize that you had to bring a variety of teaching or counseling strategies to this program. You could not give in on the students. The students had to know that you were there for them all the time, and that whatever was the difficulty, you were going to work with them. The past had to be put aside. Students had to be shown the way to make things happen for the future to be successful. Each teacher had to assess the students, and then provide a program.

From an administration standpoint, teachers had to have the necessary secondary certifications. But administrators also had to be flexible program managers in order to support the teachers and the students. What that incurred was for the administrators to look for unique people and ways to get students to learn the content. Administrators had to allow one-on-one instruction, small group activities, and other means of getting students to meet the

requirements. For example, as a professional, you should be able to verify that a student completed the course in three months. Some students didn't need a year or half of a year to do the work. The student ought to get the credit and go onto the next course.

So I think that the alternative-adult high school program necessitated new thinking. It required new ways to accomplish course objectives. All the students' needs were coupled along with what the County and state required, but administrators had to be very flexible in how this was to be done. If they came to the program with strictly traditional ways of how to do things and run a very tight ship, all that the students got from this was the way it was done in the past. As a result, students did not stay. That did not mean that the administrators allowed any misconduct. The instructional programs and administrative rules had to be geared towards an humanitarian approach that developed good sound human relations and academic skills. We did no good by allowing students to get away with things.

So we needed counselors in order to get students to understand what options were needed to solve problems. Teachers also needed to

communicate to the students that they could do the work, and were expected to make good contributions. This improved the student's self esteem. These students had made F's, and they felt couldn't do the work. In reality, most had the ability. But it's like anything else; the ability had to be developed. You can't be a Michael Jordan if you don't practice. You don't become a famous opera singer if you stop practicing. Teachers, counselors, and administrators had to do all of this to make the program successful.

In the older days, we were an office operation and were not viewed as schools. The school system provided some funding for a secretary, a principal, some teachers, and counselors. Today, we are viewed as schools with regular program reports. The money is processed by the regular accounting services.

Back in those days, the services did not come automatically. Services were developed through the contacts that were made. There weren't any services that just automatically came your way. That was not built into the budget. Today, in-service is provided. Teachers get the information from the curriculum specialists so they can attend the

meetings and get the materials. Now, it does not matter whether you were contracted or hourly rate personnel in this program.

It was always the School Board that appropriated the necessary funds right from day one. But there were local funds. Local funds came into two types; one, there was a small materials fee per course to offset the cost of the program. Books were obtained by hand-me-down process from regular high schools. Two, local funds also incorporated activity funds. I remember one of the principals used to sell hot dogs, donuts, you name it; we took the profit and students got some extra things like field trips. Otherwise, if they wanted to go to see a play, then X number of dollars were collected, and we either went in cars or if fortunate to raise enough money, we paid for a school bus. In the early 1990s, additional financial support came from businesses. Money came in for scholarships. As a result of our school-business partnership, we got tutors and speakers. We also used County agencies for child care, food stamps, and bus tickets for students with personal problems. We made the assumption that living in this County, there was no poverty out in the community. However,

we found that there were some pockets of poverty in the County.

For the first seven years of my teaching in this program, I never had a book; I wrote my own curriculum. While we had accessibility to some of the information and materials, we did not have it on a volume basis. You had to go seek out the curriculum specialists. This could be done then because we were a small program.

Now it has grown. When I first came here to ----, I had about four daytime and five evening teachers. Today, I have nineteen daytime and twenty-two evening teachers. I never had a library in years past. Back in the old days, we needed to teach library skills to our kids. As classroom teachers, we took students to the regular high school or public library, and that's hard. Here at Site Two, I now have a functioning library upstairs and a librarian. That was ingenuity.

The first year we opened our library here, we got all the discarded books from regular middle and high schools in the County. Then we got a part-time person to get the books up on the shelf. In the daytime, we did not have a librarian so we got the evening person to write out some simple rules on how to use the library such as how

to check books out. My daytime teachers got a copy of that, and we opened up the doors to the library. The students came and went. Teachers came with their classes, and that's the way we got it going. We never had any bit of vandalism to it. We started in that kind of manner. Today we still do a bit of that. If the librarian was out of the library, she didn't lock it up. The philosophy behind this was if you are going to call kids adults, then you got to treat them as adults. You can't pick the time and place for them; you got to be consistent.

Voice of Mother

I was very isolated, and that was too bad. We got together with the teachers about twice during the year. We also had some chances to get together to review instructional materials. But basically we were on a tight schedule, and so there were no teachers' meetings on a regular basis.

I was able at that time to get my audiovisuals and film projector through the public library. I did have access to materials (records, tapes, etc.) from the regular high school program.

One of the nicest things about teaching in our program was that we didn't have all those extra demands. We spent the time getting to know the students, and taking care of their personal and academic needs. The classes were small, and these kids needed that. I think all kids need the individual attention. Our mission was to keep them in school and help them succeed. Sometimes, we had counseling jobs. In the regular high school, most students are sent from the classroom to the guidance department to be counseled.

Voice of Mother Mary

When I came into adult education, there were few teachers. We used to have staff meetings in David's office.

The teachers in the alternative-adult high school program were very flexible and people-oriented. You could not be wedded to an AP (Advanced Placement) curriculum. You had to be flexible and care about the kids. You had to care because they were some special kids with many from sad home situations.

Resources, field trips, and extra materials were so informal in those days. We just called David and asked him. He would say yes or no. When we got building principals, we would ask them.

David, I want to say something about him. He may be a little bit modest about this. He was responsible for the concept of alternative education in the County as far as I'm concerned. David was my kind of supervisor. He's such a good listener. He made you feel that he was truly involved in what you were doing.

Discussion on Characteristics of Staffing and Management

From these interviews, there seem to be consensus that the faculty had to be flexible and caring. Both teachers and administrators noted that the staff had to be dedicated not only to survive, but to do all the necessary responsibilities that were placed upon them.

In the early days, support mainly came from the administration since the program was small. Funding was available, but limited since the program was under adult education. Resources had to be sought out in order to meet the needs of the students.

With the growth in the program, interviewees indicated that more collaboration occurred. As a result, more personnel was hired. The staff did not feel so isolated since more funding was provided. However, the speakers recognized that a certain type of teacher, counselor, or administrator had to hire for this program. First, this person had to care. The person had to recognize that this was a unique student population with difficult, challenging needs that went beyond the classroom. Second, this person had to be innovative as instructor and manager. Interviewees indicated that it took ingenuity

and self-motivation to teach in this program since training and materials were limited. Yet, the standards had to be maintained. Third, the person had to be flexible in both instruction and management of the program. The speakers made reference to the mission, and that it was not to be accomplished at the expense of the students. Apparently, working in this program required one to be a 'jack-of-all-trades' professional.

Introduction to Evaluation/Assessment of Program

Since 1971, there have been adult and community education annual reports which included information on the adult high school program. These reports usually included background information, budget summary, enrollment and completion figures, and recommendations for the future. It was the Adult and Community Education General Advisory Committee (ACEGAC) that presented those reports to the School Board.

Although there were no formal follow-up studies of students until a few years ago, students (graduates and dropouts) sometimes do phone, write, or visit. This was how the staff kept up with the progress of the student population.

A more extensive assessment was done by the 1990 Task Force on Alternative Education (---- ACEGAC Annual Report, 1990). In working with the adult education staff and community members, this committee found that more younger at-risk students needed a program like the alternative-adult high school, but with some modifications. In 1993, the School Board accepted the recommendations, changed the

program's name to alternative education program (along with educational modifications), and moved the program to ---- Office of Grant Administration and Alternative Education, thus ending the history of the alternative-adult high school program.

Voice of David

So anyway, you now have an idea on how a program that was initially set up to serve adults got in the business of serving schools. Then in 1993, the school system turned part of this program into an alternative education program. My position was that the alternative-adult high school program was so massive and so great that it ought to have an administration of its own. It ought to have resources of its own. The adult education program did not have the resources required to support it, and the school system obviously did not provide them. That's what led this most recent division of adult education and alternative schools.

The program's initial design was not to reduce the dropout rate for ---- County, but I can tell you that it did help with the dropout problem. If you take a look in the old days when people dropped out, we used to try to get them back by recruiting them. Now what has happened is school counselors are very cognizant of having students who are not successful to come on over to an alternative school. Part of this philosophy has been that young people do not drop out of

school, they just move to an alternative school.

The other thing that made it difficult to evaluate this program was there isn't much agreement among the professionals as to what constitutes a successful program. If, for example, you have a fifty percent dropout rate in this program, was that successful or not? Well, one of the principals who worked for me described it this way, "Hey, I started off with one hundred percent dropouts." So fifty percent initially sounds like a lot. In reality, you have taken people who would not have been successful otherwise, and helped them to do so.

I take great pride in letting the program go to another operation. The truth of the matter is how advantageous it has been for the program to go that route. The alternative schools have added things like social workers, which we didn't have before. So there's more of an ability to follow up on students.

The one [replicated] that I always read about with some amusement in the national scene was in Jefferson County, Kentucky, which has a very active, extensive program. When you read about it, it

sounded exactly like ours. Well, I remember when those folks came to visit. I laid out for them what we had. They thought our program was wonderful. They went back home and set up one. And now they get all this publicity about it. It truly was exactly what we did. It had an open-entry, open-exit policy; it was both day and evening. Of course, being replicated has the greatest form of flattery. We were very pleased that they recognized a good idea and to do something with it.

Voice of Boty

Oh, I think the teachers contributed most to the success of the program. They reached out to the students. I knew a couple of really strong good teachers, and one of them I think started the Volunteer Learning Program (VLP). She was a reading specialist. She was a counselor. She was just everything that I knew that was good in a teacher. Also, I think a good reason for the parts of it not growing was the teachers at some points.

We did a lot of work; we did a lot of training; we did a lot of recreation with the kids. It has been a joy to watch it grow. Well, it's still growing. The other day, I found some recent statistics that noted that in the late 1980s, we had about five hundred students. Since then, about two times that amount of students have attended the program in one year. Impressive!

Voice of John Initiative

The growth of the program has been the number one evidence. There were one hundred sixty graduates last year for Site Two. The number two evidence was how the school system has seen the program's success. The School Board came to the realization that there were different kinds of needs in the student body. So the Board expanded the program. The Board saw its meaning in serving the student population.

There is a greater understanding in the field of education that students learn differently. They all do not learn the same way. Because they learn differently, some of them can't make it under the traditional setups. The alternative-adult high school has become much more tuned to that fact. The school system made a major commitment in 1993. There was an understand that students were having difficulty in school for a vast number of reasons. So the School Board provided additional resources because the community now see the need for what alternative education can do.

Now what other evidence exists? Students! When I was at the

---- Adult Center program between 1984 and 1986, all our graduates went to college. That's a belief that the students who dropped out of high school held a different type of educational commitment. Not true! Remember, all these students tried to make it in a traditional high school setting.

Voice of Knitting Needles

Teaching in the alternative-adult high school program was one of the most rewarding teaching experience that anybody could have in education. We were blessed with people who really and truly wanted to go to school. They wanted to learn. Most of the people who came to us over the years were people who really wanted to better themselves.

I guess the program had some variety. We tried to give the students as much as we could in the academics that would prepare them for either going on to college, going to work, or just making their lives better. There were lots and lots of situations where we did that. We got them into the studying mood, and down the road with knowledge that we thought were important for day to day living. We did accounting. We did business. We didn't win them all. I hated that, but we did our best.

Voice of Mother

I think the program really worked. The whole atmosphere was one of acceptance. We allowed students to come back, try again, and hopefully succeed.

The mission was to help them to succeed in their high school completion, but in some cases students needed an interim goal, like earning a driver's license, getting a job, or working for survival. And when they reached that interim goal, they would sometimes drop out again. So the high school completion was not always the main goal for the students. That was our goal for them to finish high school and go on. But in some cases, their other goal really showed the way. We worked with the survivors.

The alternative-adult high school program was very worthwhile. I would say that my work gave me a very good feeling. We recognized many new needs, but focused on our mission--to provide an opportunity to obtain a high school diploma. I think it was very useful and should continue to be so. I have a daughter who's teaching in the program now.

Voice of Mother Mary

Teaching in the alternative-adult high school program was difficult assignment. It was a stressful job. You had seven or eight kids who were working in different subjects. I did not know how stressful it was until I left.

The adult high school program did not focus so much on changing behavior as did the court school program. You had to do more in counseling. Later, it made sense that the court schools had special education teachers.

I really believe that in any successful educational experience, there has to be a strong bond between student and teacher. You know sometimes we say students can learn in spite of the teacher, but in reality, they learn best when they know the teacher cares for them.

So you have to make an extra effort to let them know you care. Respect for them was essential. I have heard teachers talk to their students in such a way that it brought tears to my eyes, and it was not necessary. And then they would turn right around, and talk to their colleagues as if they were Mr. Nice Guys. It was just phony. It was

just totally hypocritical to talk to a student in that manner and an adult in another way. So I think that all teachers I've known who have been successful had respected their students.

People used to say to me what was the first thing that you did with those court kids? Well, the first thing I did was to get them to school. That's rule number one. I kept them from staying in bed. I had to get them out of bed and to school. Then the learning could take place. You know, they expected me to say that we had certain goals in English and of course, we tried to teach to the Program of Study. They were always surprised at my answer!

Discussion on Evaluation/Assessment of Program

Initially, the alternative-adult high school program was established to serve adults. From the interviews, the speakers recognized that the increase in student population, especially among adolescents, resulted in the growth of the program.

Finances had been regularly appropriated by the School Board since the program's inception. However, the interviewees noted that because of the growth in student population and current educational trends, the School Board made a commitment to expand the program although it previously kept it in a low-profile position.

From their personal evaluation of the program, the speakers realized that this expansion came about because of the need to continue to fulfill the mission. In other words, the mission guided the program over the years. It accounted for graduates, committed staff, development of the court schools, and replication in another state. According to the speakers, these results showed that the program worked even on a limited budget. Over the years, the alternative-adult high school program became valuable to dropouts.

Summary

The history of the alternative-adult high school is a reflection of the County's desire to improve its dropout rate through three credential programs (Adult High School, GED, and External Diploma Program). Out of the adult high school, the juvenile court school program also emerged.

With its open-entrance, open-exit policy, the alternative-adult high school program attracted students from all ages and culturally diverse backgrounds in the later years. Its classroom structure thus required teachers to be knowledgeable in several content areas. But teachers also had to use many teaching strategies as well as human relations skills in working with this unique student population.

For students who did not make it in traditional secondary settings, this program offered a flexible schedule with a curriculum geared to the individual--academic, vocational, and social. Although none of the speakers had had prior experience in working this student population, they were willing not only to be risk-takers, but to help their pupils to do the same when it came to learning. As a result, the

teaching staff became a vital aspect of the program. However, the speakers all recognized the administrative support. Such support resulted in better materials, better facilities, and better colleagues in fulfilling the program's mission--meeting the academic needs of former dropouts.

Although it was kept as a low-profile program, the School Board financially supported it on a regular basis. The finances were not on the same level as a regular high school, but the County's consistent recognition of the program enabled it to meet students' needs.

However, the average age of the student population dropped. But, the needs of the students grew. As a result, additional services were required to fulfilled the mission. More teachers and counselors were needed. Diagnostic assessment and placement of students had to be more structured. Therefore, on July 1, 1993, the School Board transferred the alternative-adult high school's association from adult education to alternative education in order to provide better interagency collaboration. The mission stayed, but a new philosophy emerged; prevention became intervention--offer the program to

potential dropouts, before they had dropped out.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

Successful dropout prevention approaches are determined by how well they serve their populations in enabling the students to receive a quality secondary education. Alternative education is one such approach. There are many varieties within this approach. This study focused on the alternative-adult high school, a program once organized under adult education in a Virginia school district. From 1955-93, this program's mission was to help dropouts. Only by attending classes and meeting graduation requirements could these students receive their high school diplomas.

Data from student surveys, in-depth interviews with faculty, and archival documents were analyzed in addressing the research questions.

Conclusions

The first question looked at the social, political, and educational conditions that caused the establishment of this alternative-adult high

school program. Historical records indicated that educational concerns by federal, state, and local leaders contributed to the establishment of this program that originally began as a service to adults. Socially, the American population placed a value upon the high school diploma. As a result, graduates were found to complete the requirements so they could redeem their self-esteem and serve as role models for friends and relatives. Politically, there was a belief that having more high school graduates enabled the community to upgrade its socioeconomic status. In order for this to happen, an opportunity for adults to fulfill high school requirements was needed (Brown, 1990). So the alternative-adult high school became a non-tuition program with the School Board regularly financing it. This began in 1955, and continued for over thirty years.

The data also indicated that the program's major changes were the result of the student population. Integration of Black and White students in the public schools as well as the influx of immigrants changed the demographics of the student population. Besides ethnic background, another change element was the age of students.

Originally, the program served adults who were over 35 years old. In the last decade, students under 21 years old became the program's main clientele as a result of some administrators' efforts to reach the younger dropouts.

In answering number two of the research questions, several things were operable during the existence of the program. Sizer (1984) said that all students are capable of learning. But researchers found that the traditional high school program is not appropriate for all students (Boschee & Mehrer, 1988). This was one of the major characteristics of the program. It was a non-traditional program. It was designed as an open-entrance, open-exit program; no one forced students to stay through completion. It was not a dumping ground (Raywid, 1993). Students made the choice to come. For some, it was a compassionate haven; for others, it was an opportunity to fulfill short-term and/or long-term goals.

Another major characteristic of this program was the faculty. Research found that the staff does make a difference in serving at-risk students (Soderberg, 1988). The findings from this study indicated

that teachers realized that although there was a mission with clear explicit goals, some students had their own agendas. Regardless, the staff was willing to work with these students. Both administrators and teachers accepted the unique student population, and were sensitive to the needs (Soderberg, 1988). The educators indicated spending extra amount of time to develop a supportive learning environment. The quality of school life was important since most of the students had negative traditional high school experiences. Both graduates and interviewees acknowledged the student-centered environment was the result of a committed staff (Matthews, 1991). The teachers were found to be caring, accessible, and dedicated. They cultivated self-direction and individual responsibility as well as taught the academics. The educators may have had different lifestyles, but they were willing to help students learn regardless of the impeding risk factors. The data revealed that teachers, counselors, and administrators maintained high expectations, emphasized life skills within the curriculum, and provided encouragement to help students achieve educationally.

Another factor in the development of this program was in the organizational set-up (Quinn, 1991). Classes were found to include approximately fifteen students with much individualized instruction. There were highly flexible classes in both organization and presentation of subject matter and time; students could come for one or two classes or stay all day. The schedule was flexible, and the curriculum was meaningful; students learned the academics as well as social and vocational skills. The interviewees talked about how they built on realistic, practical content throughout the lessons. They did not want the program to replicate the traditional high school since this program served both adolescents and adults. Therefore, the data indicated mixed-age classes to support the philosophy of intergenerational learning (Wood, 1992).

Finally, the third research question focused on evaluation feedback (Young, 1990). Over the years, the program refined itself--better resources, more staff, improved facilities--but the mission was still to reach dropouts, and to help them obtain a high school diploma. One way that the program evolved was from collaboration with the

court system to establish schools for juvenile delinquents. This off-shoot program was developed on the same principles as the alternative-adult high school, and has continued even today.

The population growth also caused the program to move from limited facilities to its own buildings. Staff increased as facilities improved. Principals were hired for more efficient site-based management. Guidance counselors joined the program since more students' needs were being identified (Mahan & Johnson, 1983). Thus, teachers were able to spend more time on instruction. As a result, the curriculum was expanded to offer vocational training opportunities at other sites. Resources and funding became more "in line" with the traditional high school.

As the program grew and became more structured, evaluation became a part of it. Enrollment, graduation, and dropout figures were included in the annual reports as a result of better recordkeeping. Although kept as a low-profile program, archival documents revealed some media coverage. However, most of the evaluation has been on the students in terms of informal assessment to ensure their

completion of the program.

Recommendations

As this program enters a new era, the following recommendations should be considered in improving services to this special population:

1. Expand interagency collaboration. It saves money and brings more resources to a needy student population. This would help to better school-to-work transition (Fine & Rosenberg, 1983).

2. Recognize the faculty and encourage them to share their innovative teaching strategies with regular secondary educators.

At-risk students represent a growing population. Both teachers, counselors, and administrators need to learn how to identify potential dropouts for participation in early intervention programs, especially minority males (Calabrese, 1988; Taylor, 1992). Traditional secondary personnel also need to recognize that at-risk students are of infinite worth, and to address their needs would be beneficial to both the individual and society (Bucci & Reitzammer, 1992).

3. Develop a system to promote the program within the

school district. This should be informational since the one main principle behind the establishment of the program was the self-selection element (Raywid, 1988).

4. Develop a formative, systematic program evaluation.

There needs to be a triannual follow-up on graduates. The emphasis should be on ways to improve the program, especially when considering changes in school policies. Opportunities for teacher research could facilitate this assessment (Fortune, Bruce, Williams & Jones, 1991).

5. Expand guidance services and vocational electives.

Although dropouts deal with multiple risk factors, many have dreams and aspirations. Additional school counselors and vocational courses would help to retain students as well as prepare them for the labor market (Homes & Collins, 1988; Pitman, 1986).

Summary

Over thirty years, a program was built and the lives of the people involved were affected. One graduate (Case #1241) summed it up:

My husband and I met at ---- Adult Education Center. Both of us feel very strongly about the program. I only wished that the County school system offered this program as a true alternative to public schools, and not as a last resort with a "dirty" reputation. This is a wonderful alternative for kids who begin to display problems functioning in public schools.

Thank you for putting out this survey. Maybe the school system will take it to heart!!

Remember, dropouts leave school mainly because of poor academic performance caused by other difficulties in their lives (Brubaker, 1991). Alternative education is one solution to this problem. Alternative education provides students an opportunity to finish their studies as well as improve their chances for success in the workplace and in life.

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Appendix A

RECEIVED SEP 7 1993

September 2, 1993

Robert Mahaffey
 Director of Publications
 and Marketing
 NASSP
 1904 Association Drive
 Reston, VA 22091

Dear Mr. Mahaffey:

I am a doctoral student at Virginia Tech, Northern Virginia Graduate Center, majoring in Curriculum and Instruction. I am requesting permission to use Quinn's characteristics of dropouts categories as published in NASSP Bulletin, 75(538), under the title, "The Influences of School Policies and Practices on Dropout Rates".

This copyright release will enable ^{me} to use the information in my dissertation. My research is a case study of dropouts in an alternative program. Quinn's (1991) categories will be noted in Table 1 of the Introduction of the dissertation where I discuss the factors that cause students to stop attending school before completing diploma requirements. The overall study will be a multi-site program evaluation of an alternative high school program that has been in use for over 20 years.

Let me thank you, in advance, for your support in fulfilling this copyright release request. If you have any questions, please contact me at work, (703) 506-2340, between 7:30 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

Yours truly,

Charline J. Barnes
 Charline J. Barnes

9794 Hagel Circle
 Lorton, VA 22079

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 PLEASE CREDIT MATERIAL APPROPRIATELY.

ROBERT MAHAFFEY, EDITOR
 NASSP

Appendix B

**REPORT OF DROPOUTS
1992-93****INTRODUCTION**

The Virginia Department of Education defines a dropout as a student who leaves school for any reason other than promotion, transfer to another school, death, or graduation and fails to return to school.

REPORTING METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

Dropouts are identified from the student population that includes all students in grades 7 through 12; elementary special education students in self-contained classrooms who were 12 years of age or older as of January 1; and adult education students who were less than 20 years of age as of August 1. The reporting requirement includes regular-term dropouts and summer dropouts.

A **regular-term dropout** is a student who leaves school for any reason other than promotion, transfer to another school, death, or graduation and fails to return to school by the last day of the regular school year. A student who satisfies this definition but successfully completes summer school is removed from the regular-term dropout status.

A **summer dropout** is a student who is in membership on the last day of the regular school year, but fails to return to school by October 31 of the following year for any reason other than transfer to another school, death, or graduation. Also, a regular-term dropout who successfully completes summer school but fails to return to school by October 31 for any reason other than transfer to another school, death, or graduation is reported as a summer dropout.

Note. From ---- Statistical Report of Dropouts, 1992-93. Virginia.

Appendix C

REASON CATEGORIES FOR DROPOUTS
1992-93

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Description</u>
Achievement Problems	Low achievement, low motivation, low interest, etc.
Behavioral Difficulties	Suspension or expulsion, incarceration, runaway, truancy, poor relationship with peers or adults, etc.
Employment	Took a job, joined armed forces, entered Job Corps or similar program, etc.
Family	Pregnancy, parenthood, marriage, needed at home, etc.
Financial Hardship	Extreme poverty, working to support self or family, etc.
Health Problems	Physical or mental illness, injury, substance abuse, etc.
Moved/Current Status Unknown	No longer resides in the area <u>and</u> current status is unknown after appropriate investigation by the attendance officer

Note. From ---- Statistical Report of Dropouts, 1992-93. Virginia.

Appendix D

ALTERNATIVE-ADULT HIGH SCHOOL SURVEY

DIRECTIONS: Please check or fill in the appropriate information for each question that applies to you. All information given will be kept confidential.

SECTION I: GENERAL INFORMATION

1. **Are you...?**

a. ___ FEMALE

b. ___ MALE

2. **What is your age group?**

a. ___ 16-19

e. ___ 36-40

b. ___ 20-25

f. ___ 41-45

c. ___ 26-30

g. ___ 46-50

d. ___ 31-35

h. ___ 51+

3. **What is your race/ethnicity?**

a. ___ WHITE/CAUCASIAN, NON-HISPANIC

b. ___ BLACK/AFRICAN-AMERICAN, NON-HISPANIC

c. ___ HISPANIC/LATINO

d. ___ AMERICAN INDIAN/NATIVE AMERICAN

e. ___ ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER

f. ___ ALASKAN NATIVE

g. ___ OTHER _____

4. **What is your marital status?**

a. ___ MARRIED

c. ___ DIVORCED/SEPARATED

b. ___ SINGLE

d. ___ WIDOW/WIDOWER

5. **When did you graduate?**

a. ___ FEBRUARY

19 ___

b. ___ JUNE

19 ___

SECTION II: WORK INFORMATION

6. **Are you presently employed?**
- a. YES
 b. NO (Go to Question #10)
7. **In your main job, are you employed...?**
- a. PART-TIME (Less than 35 hours per week)
 b. FULL-TIME (35 hours or more per week)
8. **In what geographical area do you work?**
- a. WASHINGTON, DC
 b. MARYLAND
 c. VIRGINIA (Give City/County) _____
 d. OTHER (Give State) _____
9. **What type of work do you do? (Examples are given)**
- a. ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT (computer operators, secretaries)
 b. AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY, FISHING (farmers, rangers, loggers)
 c. ARMED FORCES (active personnel)
 d. CONSTRUCTION TRADES (bricklayers, electricians, roofers)
 e. EXECUTIVE, ADMINISTRATIVE, MANAGERIAL (managers, buyers)
 f. HEALTH SERVICE (dental assistants, EKG technicians)
 g. MARKETING AND SALES (retail clerks, insurance agents)
 h. MECHANICAL AND REPAIRING (automotive, electronic)
 i. PERSONAL SERVICE (food/beverage, building/grounds)
 j. PROFESSIONAL SPECIALTY (engineers, physicians, teachers)
 k. PROTECTIVE SERVICE (firefighters, police officers)
 l. TRANSPORTATION (bus/truck drivers, rail operators)
 m. OTHER _____

SECTION III: POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION PLANS

10. **Have you continued your education since graduating?**
- a. YES
 b. NO (Go to Question #12)

11. **What kind(s) of education have you received since graduating?**
(Check ALL that apply)

- a. ON-THE-JOB TRAINING (Certificate Program)
- b. COMMUNITY/JUNIOR COLLEGE
- c. FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE
- d. MILITARY
- e. APPRENTICESHIP
- f. ADULT EDUCATION CLASSES
- g. OTHER _____

12. **What are your future career goals? (Briefly state)**

a. Short-Term (1-2 years) _____

b. Long-Term (3-5 years) _____

SECTION IV: ALTERNATIVE-ADULT HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

13. **What were the reasons you enrolled in the alternative-adult high school program? (Check the TWO IMPORTANT reasons)**

- a. GET HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA
- b. IMPROVE ACADEMIC SKILLS
- c. QUALIFY FOR COLLEGE
- d. BECOME A U.S. CITIZEN
- e. GET A JOB
- f. PERSONAL SATISFACTION
- g. GET INTO MILITARY
- h. OTHER _____

14. **How did you learn about the alternative-adult high school program? (Check ONE only)**
- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| a. ___ FRIEND | d. ___ SCHOOL GUIDANCE OFFICE |
| b. ___ FORMER STUDENT | e. ___ BROCHURE |
| c. ___ RELATIVE | f. ___ OTHER _____ |
15. **What were the MOST IMPORTANT services that were helpful to you during your alternative-adult high school experience? (Check the TWO IMPORTANT services)**
- a. ___ ADMINISTRATION (Principal/Assistant Principal)
 b. ___ GUIDANCE STAFF (Counselors)
 c. ___ TEACHING STAFF
 d. ___ CAREER CENTER
 e. ___ ACADEMIC LAB (Tutoring/Mentoring, Computer Lab)
 f. ___ OPEN WORKSHOPS (Guest Speakers, Special Events)
 g. ___ OTHER _____
16. **What did you liked about the program? (Check TWO IMPORTANT reasons)**
- a. ___ FLEXIBLE SCHEDULE
 b. ___ CARING STAFF
 c. ___ SMALL CLASSES
 d. ___ MULTI-AGE/GRADE LEARNING
 e. ___ COURSE OFFERINGS
 f. ___ CHILD CARE SERVICES
 g. ___ COST
 h. ___ OTHER _____
17. **If this program did not exist, what would you have done instead? (Check ONE reason)**
- a. ___ NOT GET A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA
 b. ___ TAKE GED TEST
 c. ___ ENROLL IN A LITERACY PROGRAM
 d. ___ RELOCATE NEAR A PROGRAM LIKE THIS ONE
 e. ___ OTHER _____

18. **How do you think this program could have improved?**

a. SERVICES

b. COURSES

Thank you for completing this survey.

Appendix E

ALTERNATIVE-ADULT HIGH SCHOOL STUDY**INFORMED CONSENT**

I am aware that the Alternative-Adult High School Study is being conducted by a graduate student at Virginia Tech for dissertation purposes. I also understand that approval to conduct study does not constitute commitment by ---- in resources or endorsement of study or its findings.

I agree to talk to the researcher and understand that any information given will be kept confidential.

Signature _____ Date _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Please check one:

I WILL allow the use of a tape recorder during interview.

I WILL NOT allow the use of a tape recorder during interview.

Appendix F

**ALTERNATIVE-ADULT HIGH SCHOOL STUDY
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS****History/Background of Program**

1. What year did you begin working with this program?
2. What main factors (social, political, educational influences) lead to the initial creation?
3. Under what circumstances were key persons (civic leaders, consultants, businesses, community agencies) involved in the establishment of the program?
4. What were the major constraints or obstacles in the establishment of the program and how were they managed?
5. What other kinds of programs served dropouts during the existence of this program? How was the alternative-adult high school (AAHS) related to these other programs?

Characteristics of Program

1. What was the program's mission? Did it changed over a period of time and why?
2. What was the organizational setup for the program?
 - a. Where was the program physically located?
 - b. What were the hours of operation?
 - c. What special materials/equipment were needed (if any)?
3. Describe program components (vocational, counseling, student activities, etc.) and how students participated.
4. What other services were available for participants?

Characteristics of Student Population

1. How did students get into the program?
 - a. Who was the program intended to serve?
 - b. How were students recruited or informed about the program's existence?
 - c. How were students selected and their needs diagnosed?
2. How did students leave the program?
 - a. When did students successfully complete the program?
 - b. Under what circumstances were students asked to leave without completing the program?
 - c. How were those who dropped out of the program followed up?

Characteristics of Staffing and Management

1. What special qualities were expected of the staff and administrators hired for the program?
2. Describe any special staff training that was needed for serving students in the program?
3. How was the program administered/managed? (Ex: program autonomy or organizational structure)
4. Describe the external staff resources and support services?
 - a. What were the roles of the central office and school board in the operation of the program?
 - b. How were the business community, community agencies, and students' parents or spouses involved?
5. How was the program funded?

Evaluation/Assessment of Program

1. What evidence existed that the program met its mission?

2. What program components contribute most to the success of the mission?
3. Where was the program replicated? Briefly describe the circumstances.

Note.

1. Adapted with permission from Orr, M. T., Keeping Students in School: A Guide to Effective Dropout Prevention Programs and Services, Appendix B, pp. 209-217. Copyright 1987 by Jossey-Bass, Inc., Publishers. All rights reserved.
2. Adapted with permission from Raywid, M. A., The current status of schools of choice in public secondary education: Alternatives, options, magnets, Appendix A, pp. 29-32. Hempstead, NY: Project on Alternatives in Education, Hofstra University.

Appendix G

JOSSEY-BASS INC.

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9794 Hagel Circle
Lorton, VA 22079

September 23, 1993

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Lorri Wimer
Permissions Coordinator

Charline J. Barnes
Name
Charline J. Barnes 9/29/93
Signature Date



Appendix H

HOFSTRA HEMPSTEAD, NEW YORK 11550-1090
UNIVERSITY



October 4, 1993

Ms. Charlene Barnes
9794 Hagel Circle
Lorton, Va. 22079

Dear Ms. Barnes:

I write to confirm my telephone assurance that you are free to use and adapt my survey form as included in The Current Status of Schools of Choice in Public Secondary Education.

Good luck with your project and I hope you will remember my request for a copy when your study is completed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Anne Raywid".

Mary Anne Raywid
Administration & Policy Studies

VITA

CHARLINE J. BARNES

510 7th Avenue South #14; Brookings, SD 57006; DOB - February 16, 1961.

EDUCATION

- 1995 Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech), Blacksburg, Virginia.
- 1993 CAGS in Curriculum and Instruction, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia.
- 1985 M.A. in Education and Human Development, Major: Reading Management: Classroom and Clinic, The George Washington University, Washington, DC.
- 1982 B.A. in English Education and Psychology, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York.

PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT

South Dakota State University, Brookings, South Dakota.

- 1994-present Assistant Professor. College of Education and Counseling. Department of Undergraduate Teacher Education.

Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS), Fairfax, Virginia.

- 1991-94 English Teacher/Reading Specialist. Pimmit Alternative High School.
- 1988-91 Reading Specialist (Chapter One). Sandburg Intermediate School.
- 1985-88 English Teacher. Sandburg Intermediate School.

The George Washington University, Washington, DC.

- 1988 Instructor. Reading Center.

Northern Virginia Community College, Alexandria Campus, Virginia.

- 1985-86 Adjunct. Humanities Division.

Potomac Job Corps Center, Washington, DC.

- 1984-85 GED Instructor.

PUBLICATION

- 1993 "Keeping the Torch Aflame" in Experienced Teachers Handbook. New York: Impact II: The Teachers Network, contributor.

Charline J. Barnes