AN EVALUATION OF THE POINT OPTION ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL PROGRAM

by

Gwendolyn Hankerson Porter

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APPROVED:

Dr. Glen I. Earthman, Chairman

Dr. Jimmie C. Fortune

Dr. Maude P. Goldston

Dr. Robert R. Richards

Dr. Wayne M. Worner

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(ABSTRACT)

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the Point Option Alternative School Program to determine the extent to which the program was effective in achieving its goals. The study, specifically, sought to answer the major research question: Is the Point Option Program successful in achieving its stated goals? and to answer two sub-questions: Did students improve academically? and Did students' self-concepts and attitudes improve?

Three instruments were constructed, validated by a panel of experts, field tested, then administered to the teachers and students in the Point Option Program and the students' parents. Data provided by these instruments were collected, and analyzed employing the Chi Square test of independence. One hundred percent of the teachers, seventy-three percent of the parents and ninety-one percent of the students completed the instruments. An alpha level of .05 was employed to determine whether the data being analyzed was statistically significant. Additionally, two standardized instruments were used. The Science Research Associates' pre and posttest scores were used to measure the students' academic improvement. A t-test was employed to determine the mean difference between the pretest and posttest scores. The students'

grade point averages and attendance records were examined to further assist the researcher in determining the students' academic improvement. Also, the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale was employed to assist the researcher in determining the extent of improvement in the students' self-concepts and attitudes.

The findings showed that teachers, parents and students perceived the Point Option Alternative Program as successful in achieving its goals. In addition, each of the three groups agreed that the students did improve academically, and that the students' self-concepts and attitudes did improve. The results of the students' SRA pre and posttest, grade point averages, attendance records and Tennessee Self-Concept Scale provided data to support the conclusions that: the Point Option Alternative School Program was successful in achieving its goals, the students did improve academically and the students self-concepts and attitudes did improve.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my sons, , for the considerable sacrifices they made during the final year of my graduate program. Their understanding and patience helped to provide the strength needed to endure this study. Additionally, this dissertation is dedicated to , whose encouragement, inspiration, faith in me, belief in me and constant support during my entire graduate experiences, helped to sustain me.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Historically, alternatives in education have existed in America since colonial times and for as long as public schools themselves have existed. However, these alternatives were limited to private schools, academies, preparatory schools and parochial schools for children whose parents could afford the tuition. Since colonial times, "the diversity and availability of alternatives have varied with time, location, social, political and economic conditions, and with race, religion and other cultural factors" (Smith et al., 1976:1).

By 1860, the concept of universal elementary education was accepted. However, it was not until 1940 that universal compulsory secondary education was firmly established with a majority of the fourteen to seventeen years old population enrolled in high school, with forty percent graduating. Prior to this time, about 1910, one of four students was enrolled in secondary school and only about ten percent of the total school-age population graduated (Smith, et al, 1976). The forties and fifties brought about increased interest in public schools due to growing world competition in politics and economics, and the growing educational needs of a technological society (Smith, 1974).

The turbulent sixties, however, brought about a number of changes, specifically the Civil Rights Movement and the Counterculture Movement. A growing number of educators, especially those in urban settings, became aware that the regular school curriculums were not fulfilling

their purposes for a number of their pupils. At the same time, the number of young people and their parents expressing dissatisfaction with the schools in their communities grew to alarming proportions (Hutchins, 1974). The schools were accused of being inattentive to the needs of all students specifically dropouts, the racially and culturally different, and the poor (Smith, 1976). Along with this awareness and dissatisfaction came an array of literature criticizing the nation's schools (Hutchins, 1974). As a result, according to Hutchins (1974:88):

> Federal and state legislatures, local school boards, universities, community and civic groups and educators were urged to find solutions to the problem of providing appropriate learning experiences for the various life and learning styles of their large numbers of students. The search for solutions lead many school districts to explore the role of alternative schools as a strategy for constructive changes within the system.

The concept of optional alternative public schools gained widespread national support when the 1970 White House Conference on Children recommended "immediate, massive funding for the development of alternative optional forms of public education" (Estes, Waldrip, 1978:110). Since that time more than a dozen other national reports on education have endorsed alternative public schools. By the late seventies, approximately 10,000 alternative schools had been established to provide choices in education to families and teachers in approximately 5,000 American communities (Estes, Waldrip, 1978).

According to Raywid (1982), from 1975 to 1981 alone, more than 1,200 new secondary public schools of choice opened. A study on The Current Status of Schools of Choice in Public Secondary Education

projected the opening of well over 3,700 secondary level alternative schools within the American public educational system by the 1988-89 school year (Raywid, 1982).

Alternative schools have been and still are being used to address many serious problems confronting public education. They have been used to assist in the desegregation of urban schools, reduce school violence, vandalism, and disruption; as experimental laboratories for field-testing and validating new educational concepts; as a way of increasing parent and community involvement, to explore the demands for effective learning and accountability and numerous other problems (Barr, 1981). Barr (1981:570) states that "no other idea has been used so effectively during the past decade to address so many disparate problems in education." However, despite the massive development of alternative schools, less than five percent of the students have had an opportunity to participate in these programs (Barr, 1981).

Currently, the most noted and discussed criticism involving alternative schools is inappropriate and ineffective evaluations or the absence of evaluations. Unfortunately, most alternative school advocates opposed evaluations, claiming philosophically that, "New concepts in schooling and learning require tender nurturing and sympathetic understanding rather than hostility and objectivity" (Smith, 1974:59). These advocates also opposed evaluation due to the lack of adequate measurement devices, and out of fear and a lack of understanding of the true purposes of evaluation (Bremer and Bremer, 1971). Rosen (1973) argued that the purpose of evaluation is the

generation of data for improving an enterprise (i. e. a school, program, class or student), not the generation of knowledge for the sake of knowledge.

Cooper and McCauley (1979:2) stated that "one of the major purposes of program evaluation is to help you decide if the alternative you have chosen is effectively meeting the purposes of the program." Advocates for evaluation, know and understand that another important purpose of evaluation, according to Stufflebeam (1970), "is to improve not to prove." It is the intent, purpose and process of evaluation, not the instrument utilized, that are the determining factors which deem a program, curriculum, project or school effective and successful or ineffective and unsuccessful (DeTurk, 1976).

According to Clarke (1973), just as research should be initiated to learn more about the effects of options as a change strategy for the public school systems, evaluations should be required to help participants arrive at better decisions about what to do next on the basis of what has already occurred. Therefore, if we hope to have success with alternative programs.... "we have no option but to seek the means for making the schools more effective for all children" (Cass, 1973:43). Evaluations then, must be conducted to determine not only the success of alternatives but their effectiveness as well.

The researcher chose to study the Point Option Alternative School Program, which is located in the Newport News, Virginia School Division. Point Option is a secondary school within a school which has been in operation for twelve years. Its aim is to provide flexible academic

curricula and teaching strategies. The program attempts to meet the unique needs of average and above average potential high school dropouts, who are functioning below their academic potential in the traditional school setting.

Statement of the Problem

The Point Option Alternative School has not had an external evaluation in the past nine years of its twelve years of existence. Hence, this study was conducted to evaluate the Point Option Program by researching the program and answering the following question and sub-questions:

Is the Point Option Alternative School Program Effective in Achieving Its Stated Goals?

Sub-Questions:

1. Did students improve academically?
2. Did students self-concepts and attitudes improve?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the Point Option Alternative School Program, to determine the extent to which the program was effective in achieving the stated goals of the program.

Significance of the Study

The development of the optional alternative public school seems to be, at present, one of the most effective strategies for providing a

total educational program that is responsive to the needs of students, who are unsuccessful in the traditional school program. This is an assumption that must be examined very carefully, since one of the major criticism of the alternative school is the inappropriate and ineffective evaluations of alternative programs.

By assessing and reporting the effectiveness of the Point Option Alternative School Program in achieving its stated goals, the results of such an evaluation may be instrumental in:

1. Establishing general strategies that will be efficient, effective and successful in keeping potential dropouts in school.
2. Facilitating growth within the program and encouraging staff to implement relevant changes where necessary.
3. Providing a basis for better and more appropriate decisions regarding the expansion of alternatives to more students who need this type of program.
4. Assisting other division personnel in developing effective techniques and skills in initiating new alternative programs or improving existing programs.

Limitations

Any conclusions or implications made from this study are limited by the following factors:

1. This program evaluation study cannot be generalized to other alternative school populations.
2. The study cannot be compared with other alternative programs to determine similarities of success.
3. The study is limited to only the Point Option alternative school program.

Definition of Terms

Although numerous definitions exist for alternative schools and educational evaluation, the following definitions will be utilized for purposes of this study:

> Alternative School - A school within a community which is designed to provide students with a choice of learning experiences and educational programs that are different from the traditional school program, at no additional cost to the family.

> Educational Program Evaluation - The process of delineating, obtaining and providing useful information for making judgements about the merit, value, or worth of educational programs for the purpose of: (1) Determining the extent to which a program has achieved its stated goals, (2) determining program strengths and weaknesses, (3) providing information for program improvement, (4) monitoring and improving student progress, and (5) helping to establish the credibility of the program.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 includes the introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, limitations, definition of terms, and the organization of the study. Chapter 2 reviews the literature as related to program evaluation and alternative programs. Chapter 3 describes the methodology, the alternative school and Point Option Program, stated goals of the program, operationalization of the goals, research design, the subjects, instrumentation, data collection procedures and data analysis. Chapter 4 analyzes the data and reports the findings, and

Chapter 5 contains the summary, discussion, recommendations, bibliography, appendices and vita.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Although a definitive history of program evaluation has yet to be written, it is important for those interested in evaluation to be aware of the field's roots and origins. Such an awareness should lead to a better understanding of how and why this field has begun to mature and develop (Madaus, Scriven, and Stufflebeam, 1983).

Before discussing the evolution of program evaluation, however, one must first gain some understanding of what evaluation is as related to other terms with similiar meanings. In addition, an understanding of how authorities in the field define evaluation, helps to expand one's knowledge of the field.

Terminology

Measurement in education is merely measuring or determining the degree to which an individual possesses a certain attribute or characteristic (Popham, 1975). By tradition and history, according to Wolf (1984:7), "measurement in education is undertaken for the purpose of making comparisons between individuals with regard to some characteristic." Wolf points out that measurement is directed toward describing and comparing individuals where as evaluation is directed toward describing effects of treatments. Popham (1975:9) prefers to differentiate measurement as status determination and evaluation as worth determination. In the final analysis, measurement is a part of

evaluation, not equivalent to evaluation. Hence, measurement should not be used synonymously with evaluation. Assessment is a determination of the worth or merit of something. Consequently, assessment may very well be used interchangeably with evaluation. Appraisal too has often been used as an equivalent for either evaluation or measurement. However, appraisal is more equated with evaluation than measurement, and it is used as a synonym for evaluation. Accountability "as an educational concept relates mainly to a concern for furthering the educational effectiveness of school systems (Anderson et al., 1975)." To supply evidence of accountability requires educational evaluation, but not all educational evaluations are carried out as part of an accountability program. Therefore, accountability cannot be used interchangeably or as a synonym for either evaluation, assessment or appraisal (Popham, 1975).

Defining evaluation is a difficult, complex task. Its meaning is often contingent upon the context in which it is employed. For example, in the sociological and medical contexts, evaluation refers to the extent to which an intervention produces a desired change. Program evaluation owes a great deal to the work done in the sociological and medical context of evaluation. In economics, evaluation is discussed in terms of cost-benefit analysis. In psychology and education, evaluation is usually discussed in the context of tests and measurement. As a result, evaluation does not enjoy a universal definition.

The Phi Delta Kappa Study Committee on Evaluation under the leadership of Daniel Stufflebeam (1970) defined evaluation as a process of delineating, obtaining, and providing useful information for judging

decision alternatives. Scriven (1971:69) states that "evaluation is an activity which consists of gathering and combining performance data with a weighted set of criterial scales to yield either comparative or numerical ratings; and in the justification of (a) the data gathering instruments, (b) the weightings, and (c) the selection of criteria." Worthen and Sanders (1973) define evaluation as the determination of the worth of a thing; it includes obtaining information for use in judging the worth of a program, product, procedure, objective, or the potential activity of alternative approaches. According to Cooley and Lohnes (1976), evaluation is a process rather than a product. It is a process by which relevant data are collected and transformed into information for decision making. Meyers (1981:1) states that "evaluation is the effort to understand the functioning and effects of a program, which is a planned sequence of activities intended to achieve some goal." However, as stated in the introduction, for purposes of this study, educational evaluation is defined as:

> The process of delineating, obtaining and providing useful information for making judgements about the merit, value, or worth of educational programs for the purpose of: (1) determining the extent to which a program has achieved its stated goals; (2) determining program strengths and weaknesses; (3) providing information for program improvement; (4) monitoring and improving student progress, and (5) helping to establish the credibility of the program.

Disparities Between Evaluation and Research

Although terminology has been a factor in mistakenly identifying evaluation, the activity most often mistaken for educational evaluation

is educational research. Perhaps, this is so due to their similarities. Educational evaluation and educational research both: (1) engage in discipline inquiry, (2) use measurement devices, (3) analyze data systematically, often with the same analytical techniques, (4) describe their endeavors in formal reports, and (5) rely on a technical set of tools (Popham, 1975). But, what distinguishes evaluation from any other research is its intent--the purpose for which it is conducted (Weiss, 1972). Borg and Gall (1983:737-738) describe three of the important differences between the two fields in the following way:

> First, evaluation research is usually initiated by someone's need for a decision to be made concerning policy, management, or political strategy. The purpose of research is to collect data that will facilitate decision making. Educational research in contrast is usually initiated by a hypothesis about a relationship between two or more variables. Research is then conducted to reach a conclusion about the hypothesis to accept or reject it. Of course, the findings of educational research can be used to guide decision making; and evaluation data may be relevant to testing of a research hypothesis. The critical difference between the two fields is in the emphasis that is placed on making practical decisions versus accepting, rejecting, or formulating a hypothesis.
>
> The second difference is in the extent to which findings can be generalized. Evaluation is often done for a limited purpose. Thus a decision maker may commission a site-specific evaluation study to collect data relevant to their specific concerns. In contrast, researchers are more likely to be interested in discovering widely applicable principles explaining relationships between variables. Researchers may use a particular set of curriculum materials or group of teachers to test a hypothesis, but they typically viewed these as samples of larger populations to which research findings will be generalized. The difference is not pure: some evaluation research is designed to yield generalizable results, and some basic research has extremely limited generalizability.

Isaac and Michael (1982), Popham (1975), and Stake (1969) agree that more than generalizability, the critical difference between education research and evaluation is that educational evaluation is concerned more with specific decisions rather than generalizable conclusions.

Although generalizations can be made from evaluations, it is extremely difficult due to the diversity of purpose structure and operation of alternative schools or programs.

> The third difference concerns judgements of value. Evaluators design their studies to yield data concerning the worth, merit, or value of educational phenomena. Their findings tend to be couched in such terms as "It appears that variable X is a determinant of variable Y" or "A moderate relationship between variables X, Y, and Z was observed." Educators may make value judgements and decisions based on research findings, but this is a secondary use of findings. The primary use is to contribute to our basic understanding of educational phenomena (Borg and Gall, 1983: 738).

Issac and Michael (1982) view the following as differences between research and evaluation: Research which originated in science, is oriented toward the development of theories, and it uses the experimental method in which hypotheses are logically derived from theory and tested under controlled conditions. Evaluation has its origin in technology rather than science. Its accent is on product delivery or mission accomplishment rather than theory building and its essence is to provide feedback leading to a successful outcome defined in practical and concrete terms. An excellent distinction between the two disciplines is outlined in figure 1.

CHARACTERISTIC:	Research	Evaluation
Purpose	New Knowledge, Truth	Mission Achievement, Product Delivery
Outcome	Generalizable Conclusions	Specific Decisions
Value	Explanatory and Predictive Power	Determining Worth and Social Utility
Impetus	Curiosity and Ignorance	Needs and Goals
Conceptual Basis	Cause and Effect Relationships	Means-Ends Processes
Key Event	Hypothesis Testing	Assessing Attainment of an Objective
Classic Paradigms	1. Experimental Method E T_1 X T_2 C T_1 T_2 2. Correlational Method r_{xy}	1. Systems Approach input → processing → output 2. Objectives Approach objectives → means → measures
Discipline	Control and Manipulation of Variance	Program Planning and Management
Criteria	Internal and External Validity	Isomorphism (fit between the expected and the obtained) and Credibility
Functional Types	Pure and Applied True Experimental Quasi-experimental	Formative - Summative Process - Product

Figure 1

Two Types of Discipline Inquiry

NOTE: From Handbook in Research and Evaluation (p. 3) by Stephen Isaac and William B. Michael, 1982, San Diego, CA: EDITS Publishers.

Evolution of Evaluation

Program evaluation will be described and summarized into six periods (Madaus, et al., 1983). The first period, 1800 to 1900, is referred to as the Age of Reform. This was the period of the Industrial Revolution which encompassed technological changes, social changes and a period marked by continued and often lengthy attempts to reform educational and social programs and agencies in Great Britain and the United States. Evaluations of these social agencies and functions were informal and impressionistic in nature. Often government appointed commissions, such as the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education, were set up to investigate aspects of an area under consideration. Royal Commissions are still used today in Great Britain to evaluate areas of concern. The United States' counterparts to the Royal Commissions are the presidential commissions, White House panels, and congressional hearings which have served as a means of evaluating human services programs. During this period, social inquiry stressing the scientific method was introduced; thus, creating the beginnings of an empirical approach to the evaluation of programs. In the United States, perhaps the earliest formal attempt to evaluate the performance of schools took place in Boston in 1845. This event began the long tradition of using pupil test scores as a principal source of data to evaluate the effectiveness of a school or instructional program. The first formal educational program evaluation recognized in America was conducted by Joseph Rice between 1887 and 1898 (Madaus, et al 1983).

The second period, from 1900 to 1930, is called the age of Efficiency and Testing. The application of scientific management became a powerful force in administrative theory and in educational and industrial circles. Systemization, standardization, and most importantly, efficiency were the emphasis of the scientific movement. Surveys done in a number of large school systems focused on school and or teacher efficiency. During this period, standardized achievement tests were developed. With the growth of standardized achievement tests after World War I, school districts began to use tests to make inferences about program effectiveness. Throughout its history, the field of evaluation has been closely linked to the field of testing which has often been the principal data source in evaluations. Evaluations of this period were addressed to localized questions which continued into the 1960s in spite of the fact that the audience for these evaluations was state or nationwide. This focus on localized questions resulted in many useless educational evaluations being carried out during the 1960s. It was not until the 1970s that educators and evaluators recognized the problem of generalizability and began to deal with it according to Madaus, Scriven and Stufflebeam (1983).

The Third period, 1930 to 1945, is referred to as the Tylerian Age. During this period Ralph W. Tyler, who coined the term "education evaluation" and who is often referred to as the father of educational evaluation, had a major influence on education, educational evaluation and testing. Tyler became involved in the progressive Education Movement when he was called upon to direct the research component of the

now famous Eight Year Study (1932-1940) which introduced educators throughout America to a new and broaden view of educational evaluation. The study, funded by the Carnegie Corporation, was the first and last study of the differential effectiveness of various types of schooling until after World War II. Tyler conceptualized evaluation as a comparison of intended outcomes with actual outcomes (Madaus, et al, 1983).

During the 1930s, a package of social programs known as the New Deal social programs were introduced. Subsequently, a mandate for the assessment of these programs evolved, but assessment information was not available at that time. It appeared that specific goals of the programs had not been established. The self-conscious planning of a set of goals and corresponding sets of alternative programs to achieve those goals was undertaken only in the most informal way. Similarly, what little evaluation research conducted was undertaken in the same informal way. As a consequence, very little was known about the effectiveness of the New Deal social programs. According to Moynihan (1969) during the time that the War on Poverty was designed, a search of the archives for studies that would provide some assessment of the effectiveness of programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps proved fruitless.

It was not until 1940 that the United States Census Bureau first began to collect detailed information on educational attainment and the Office of Education's statistical series later began to be regarded as high quality information. Reliable statistics on the educational system

just did not exist prior to the 1940's according to Rossi and Williams, (1972).

By the mid-1940s, Tyler had clearly laid the foundation for his enormous influence on the educational scene on testing and evaluation in particular for the next twenty-five years (Madaus, et al, 1983).

The Age of Innocence, 1946 to 1957, characterizes the fourth period. A period which according to Madaus, Stufflebeam and Scriven (1983) could have also been called the Age of Ignorance. This period was a time of poverty, racial prejudice and segregation. Also, during this period, there was an expansion of educational facilities, programs, and an increase in personnel. New buildings were erected, experimental and community colleges emerged, small school districts consolidated to provide a wider range of services, enrollments in teacher-education programs ballooned, and college enrollments increased dramatically. Madaus, et al., remarked that society had no particular interest in holding educators accountable - there was little call for educators to demonstrate efficiency and effectiveness. Educators did talk and write about evaluation and collected considerable amounts of data; however, there is little evidence that these data were used to judge and improve the quality of programs (Madaus et al, 1983).

The growth of standardized testing took place during this period. Many new nationally standardized tests were published, and schools purchased them by the thousands. The schools also subscribed to the machine scoring and analysis services also made available by this new technology. In 1947, the testing movement received another boost when

E. F. Lindquist, Ralph Tyler and others helped to establish the Educational Testing Service. In 1954, a committee of the American Psychological Association (APA) prepared Technical Recommendations for Psychological Tests and Diagnostic Techniques. In 1955, a joint committee of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and the National Council on Measurements Used in Education (NCMUE) prepared technical recommendations for Achievement Tests. The need for separate standards to deal with program evaluation was recognized in 1974 when the APA, AERA and NCMUE reports provided the basis for the Standards for Educational and Psychological Tests (Madaus et al., 1983).

Another development evolved when Lindquist (1953) extended and delineated statistical principals of the experimental design. In later years, evaluators and educators found insurmountable problems when trying to meet all of the required assumptions of the experimental design simultaneously. Technical developments related to the Tylerian view of evaluation evolved during this period. Since Tyler's approach in an evaluation required that objectives be stated explicitly, techniques were developed to help train staff (Tyler, 1967). Local agencies, foundations, voluntary associations and professional organizations funded evaluations inasmuch as state and federal agencies had not yet become deeply involved in program evaluation.

The fifth period, 1958-1972, witnessed the evaluations of large scale curriculum development projects funded by federal monies. Also, according to Madaus, et al (1983:11), this period "marked the end of an era in evaluation and the beginning of profound changes which saw

evaluation expand as an industry and into a profession dependent on taxpayer monies for support." The War on Poverty was launched, and billions of dollars were poured into programs by the federal government aimed at equalizing and upgrading opportunities for all citizens across the broad spectrum of health, social, and educational services. Concomitant to this effort to help the poor was the concern that the money invested in these programs might be wasted if accountability requirements were not imposed. To address this concern, Senator Robert Kennedy and some of his colleagues in Congress amended the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1964 (ESEA) to include specific evaluation requirements. Title I of the Act required annual evaluations using appropriate standardized test data to determine the extent to which Title I had achieved their objectives. When school districts began to respond to the evaluation requirements, they quickly found that the existing tools and strategies employed by their evaluators were largely inappropriate to the task (Madaus, et al., 1983). As a result of the growing anxiety with evaluation efforts and consistent negative findings, Phi Delta Kappa (1971), headed a National Study Committee on Evaluation which called for new theories and methods of evaluation and new training programs for evaluators. At approximately the same time, many new conceptualizations of evaluations began to emerge which recognized the need to evaluate goals, look at inputs, examine implementation and delivery of services, and measure intended and unintended outcomes of the program. These new concepts emphasized the need to make judgements about the merit or worth of the object

evaluated. Additional educational evaluation models were developed by Provus, Hammond, Glaser, Tyler, Popham, Stufflebeam, Scriven and Stake (Madaus, et al, 1983).

Prior to the mid 1960s, the federal government showed little or no interest in evaluating federal programs and funded very few. However, between 1967 and 1972, Congress passed approximately twenty-three Acts requiring the evaluation of federal programs. Since 1972, all Federal Executives are required to conduct program evaluations (Meyers, 1981).

Also, during this period and part of the sixth period of program evaluation (the mid-1960s and 1970s), alternative schools emerged as a major trend in public education; probably due to the Coleman Report (1966). Alternatives flourished considerably and were reflected in a variety of ways and descriptions.

Just as a myriad of descriptions evolved concerning alternative schools, so did a myriad of definitions. At present, there is no one succinct and universal definition accepted by all alternative educators. The most commonly used and accepted definition is that of the National Council on Options in Public Education which defines an alternative school as "any school within a community that provides alternative learning experiences to the conventional school program and that is available by choice to every family within the community at no extra cost" (Doob, 1977:4). Smith (1974) concurs with the National Council's definition of alternative school, but he characterizes alternative schools further as: providing options within public education for students, parents, and teachers; being more responsive to some community

needs; having more comprehensive goals and objectives; being more flexible and more humane to students and teachers.

Fantini (1973) describes alternative schools as public schools of choice which are either parallel schools, along side but not part of the public school system, or as separate schools devoted to some alternative. Duke (1978) and Raywid (1982) seem to agree with Fantini's description of public schools of choice, but add that such schools provide an option for students who do not succeed in the traditional school. Terrence E. Deal (1978) of Stanford University, defines alternative schools as those schools differing from conventional secondary schools on six dimensions: (1) who is involved in the learning process-role, (2) what is learned-curriculum, (3) why it is learned-authority, (4) how it is learned-methods, (5) where learning takes place-location, and (6) when learning takes place.

Due to the rapid growth of alternative schools and the confusion over the terminology used to describe alternatives, researchers in the field opted to use the generic title "alternative education" to encompass all types of alternative schools and still retain the concept of alternative education. Barr (1981) prefers the title "alternative schools;" Raywid (1981) and Fantini (1983) prefer "public schools of choice;" Smith, Gregory and Pugh (1981) alternate between "alternative schools" and "non-traditional education;" and Schlemmer (1981) chooses to use "magnet" or "collective" schools. Under this enormous umbrella of alternative education, amassed a wide variety of other names, some of which include: optional schools, open schools, free schools, schools

within schools, multicultural schools, schools without walls, street academies and numerous others. The concept of educational choice penetrated the educational system and made a profound impact on American education.

Perhaps, the most unique name among alternative schools is the magnet school which was originally designed to attract specifically the academically talented, college bound student for a specialized curriculum. Even though magnet schools continue to serve the same purpose, according to Smith, Barr and Burke (1976), the term "magnet school" has lost its original meaning in the sense that all alternative schools are magnet schools, inasmuch as all alternative schools are designed to attract specific types of students.

A 1982 survey by Raywid indicated that alternative schools were associated with all kinds of students: those posing special problems, the turned-off, disruptive, underachieving and dropout prone. Additionally, the survey revealed that alternatives were also used as a means for resolving such social problems as segregation, crime, youth and unemployment. Irrespective of the given names or purposes of alternative schools, they all seem to have one major goal in common-providing learning experiences that are responsive to the needs of their students.

Alternatives have been categorized into five distinct types of schools:

1. Alternatives that focus on instructional approaches: Montessori schools, open schools, behavior modification schools, individualized continuous programs.

2. Alternatives that focus on curriculum: multicultural schools, environmental study schools, learning centers, magnet schools.

3. Alternatives that focus on special clients: dropout centers, street academies, maternity schools.

4. Alternatives that focus on special resources and facilities: schools-without-walls, educational parks, career centers.

5. Alternatives that focus on administration and organization: schools-within-schools, mini-schools, complex alternatives, satellite schools etcetera (Barr, Colston, Parrett, 1977:2).

Educators maintain that the concept of alternative schools emerged as a primary means of reducing vandalism, violence, and disruption in schools. In large urban school districts, alternatives tended to be used as a major component in school desegregation. Additionally, educators maintained that students in these alternative schools were not learning the basics in reading and mathematics, students were not making systematic gains in achievement, and such alternative schools were risking the possibility of having students negative attitudes and behaviors reinforced (Barr, et al, 1977). Alternative school advocates opposed this latter view and maintained that alternative schools can and have increased academic achievements, improved self-concepts and attitudes of students.

According to Barr (1981:571), "the concept of alternatives emerged on a straightforward simple set of assumptions. Different people learn in different ways. Different teachers teach in different ways." Alternative schools may offer the most promising area of development in

all of public education. The four areas which seem to hold a great deal of promise according to Barr (1981:57) are:

1. Alternative Schools as a Strategy for School Reform. Barr contends that the effectiveness of the alternative school movement as an institutional change strategy is often overlooked. Public schools, using the concept of alternatives, can achieve enduring innovative educational programs based solidly on educational theory and research.

2. Alternative Schools as a means of reducing Violence, Vandalism, and Disruption. Research and evaluation data indicate a positive relationship between alternatives and declines in school violence, vandalism, and disruption. Interestingly, research reveals a lack of violence and vandalism in alternative schools, many of which are serving students who are labeled "hard-core" offenders. Additionally, alternative school research consistently shows a.) a high correlation between small school size and low teacher/student classroom ratios and reduction of school crime in alternative schools, b.) alternative teachers are more caring and seem to be more student-centered, c.) students experience a degree of academic success, d.) enhancement of student self-concepts, and e.) a decline in discipline problems when students are involved in decision-making.

3. Alternative Schools' Contribution to School Desegregation. Alternative schools emerged as one of the most promising remedies for correcting segregation, specifically, magnet schools in urban areas.

4. Alternative Schools' Contribution to Back-to-Basics Movement. Barr concludes that most alternative school students achieve at least as well, if not better, than in the comprehensive school available to them. A similiar conclusion was reported by the Educational Research Service (Barr, 1981:571-572).

Alternative schools have grown at tremendously rapid rates, and questions regarding their effectiveness have grown almost with equal or greater velocity. Hence, alternative schools have begun to undergo severe scrutiny due to the limited number of evaluations conducted on them. Evaluations of alternative schools have been opposed by some educators because they were considered an integral part of the traditional school, a concept from which alternative school educators have been divorcing themselves. Alternative educators have been opposed to evaluations because they represented a threat to their programs. These educators argued that alternative schools were having to prove their effectiveness when most comprehensive or traditional schools were assumed to be effective. In addition, alternative educators opposed evaluations due to inadequate measurement tools.

Although the problem of evaluating innovative education programs is not new, the wide diversity of alternative schools has made the problem more difficult (Barr et al, 1977). Deal and Noland (1978) concluded that the alternative school movement was seriously lacking in well-designed evaluations. Realizing the need for new and different methodologies for evaluating nontraditional programs, professionals in the field of evaluation have developed a number of models and some research instruments for evaluating non-traditional programs (Barr et al, 1977). A review of several of the most prominent models will follow:

The Context, Input, Process, Product (CIPP) Model was conceptualized by Daniel L. Stufflebeam while he was chairman of the Phi

Delta Kappa National Study Committee on Evaluation. Stufflebeam along with the assistance of six co-workers, worked on this model for four years - which came about as a result of evaluation requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) of 1965. Because schools were neither accustomed to nor equipped to evaluate programs, the evaluation requirement created a crisis in the schools, thus, providing the stimulus for the development of the CIPP Model. This model according to Popham (1974:117) "was initially designed to assist school personnel in planning and successfully implementing evaluations of federal projects." The most unique characteristic of this model is its ability to serve decision-making in change efforts. The model has been extended to provide information both for decision-making and accountability (Popham, 1974).

Malcolm Provus Discrepancy Evaluation Model "compares performance against standards to determine whether to improve, maintain or terminate a program (Isaac and Williams, 1982:8)." This model employs Design, Installation, Process, Product, and Cost as the five stages through which a program or project must be assessed and discrepancies reported between the performance and standards at each stage as a basis for feedback and revision of objectives and or a program (Popham, 1974: Isaac and Williams, 1982).

Stake's (1967) Countenance Evaluation Model emphasizes two major operations, description and judgement. The purpose of this model is to describe and judge an educational program based on a formal inquiry process. This model is so formal that it does not allow for unplanned

events. It involves the progressive comparison of a program's intended and actual antecedents, transactions and outcomes in a well-organized and fully descriptive plan. According to Stake, this model was proposed because during the late sixties educators relied very little on formal evaluations, and they failed to perceive what formal evaluation could do for them. In fact, educators scorned formal evaluation because they were overly sensitive to criticism.

Michael Scriven (1967) has been very influential in the area of evaluation. His paper "The Methodology of Evaluation" describes evaluation as an activity which consists of "the gathering and combining of performance data with a weighted set of criterial scales to yield either comparative or numerical ratings, and in the justification of data-gathering instruments, weighting and selection of criteria (p. 6)." Scriven suggests that this kind of activity establishes and justifies the merit or worth of a program. Scriven's basic theme is that the evaluation of objectives should be a prerequisite for program evaluation.

Tyler's concept of evaluation is associated with and considered a Goal-Attainment model. Tyler was one of the first proponents of behaviorally stated objectives. He rationalized that ill-defined educational objectives were of little use in determining the degree to which a program's objectives had been achieved. While Tyler conceived evaluation as the process of determining whether or not objectives have been achieved, the process does not assess the effectiveness of the

objectives. However, the process does provide data related to the stated objectives.

In this era of accountability, there is an increased emphasis on evaluation in all phases of education. Evans (1974) concluded, in his attempt to determine whether progress was being made in assessment efforts, that progress is being made, but serious problems threaten that progress. Evans charged that academic social scientists are concerned more with disciplinary issues and basic research rather than the evaluation of ongoing programs. According to Chabotar (1975) evaluation was often embarked upon with an incomplete or inaccurate understanding of what was being evaluated or what methodology should be used in evaluation.

In Hammond's paper "Evaluation at the Local Level," Hammond stated that:

> The need for a systematic approach to evaluation of innovations has become one of education's most pressing problems. Only by systematic evaluation can education avoid the fads, pressures, pendulum-swingings of educational practice and address itself to the basic question concerning an educational innovation: Is it really effective in achieving its expressed objectives (1969:1)?

During the sixth period (1973 to present). Alternative schools continued to expand very rapidly. The field of evaluation crystallized and emerged as a distinct profession, related to but distinct from its forebearers of research and testing. The progress made by educational evaluators has moved with great momentum. Even though the gains over the past fifteen years are impressive, problems still exists.

Problems in Evaluation

One of the main problems of evaluation is vague program goals. Through the years, since the earliest attempt to evaluate social programs, specific and clearly stated goals have been seriously lacking in many programs. Goals were either assumed or supposely self-evident. If stated, they were stated in very broad and often ambiguous terms. Broad and ambiguously stated goals present the problem of evaluating any changes that may occur in the program. In other words, a program which does not have clearly defined goals cannot be evaluated without specifying some measurable goals. Additionally, programs that are directed at transforming individuals who are relatively autonomous, are more difficult to evaluate successfully (Rossi and Williams, 1972) due to the complexity of human behavior which cannot adequately be described or measured by a single dimension. Individuals are more difficult to change as opposed to changing a program or institution. Therefore, when individuals are the targets of change, in a program, it can be anticipated that the success of that program will be more difficult to achieve (Rossi and Williams, 1972). Simply stated, it is easier to change variables that can be controlled. Human behavior is not a variable that can be controlled. It is a variable that must be manipulated. It requires not only clearly defined, measurable objectives but a myriad of descriptors and activities to achieve those objectives.

A second problem of evaluation is the utilization of evaluation results. The ultimate purpose of evaluation is a contribution to the

effectiveness of a program. Therefore, the implementation of results is a critical phase in the evaluation process. Yet, even the most carefully designed and executed evaluative efforts do not automatically lead to or insure meaningful action (Caro, 1971). A number of constraints may be attributed to the nonuse or limited use of evaluation results. Weiss (1972) lists five constraints: 1.) the evaluator's perception of his role in the utilization process as uninvolved, if the facts are not obvious and the evaluator has little or no intention of following through, 2.) the organization's resistance to change, for a number of reasons. A few of these reasons are: the lack of necessary funds to institute needed changes, satisfaction with the status quo, and fear of the side effects of instituting new practices, 3.) inadequate dissemination of evaluation results to appropriate administrators, 4.) the gap between evaluation findings and clear courses of action for the future, and 5.) the tendency of some evaluations to show little or no positive effect. An additional reason for the non-utilization of evaluation results is the fear of losing financial support which are, at times, related to political factors.

A third problem of evaluation is the publication of results. Very few evaluation reports are published due to the following basic reasons: the Agency's fear of negative reports which may lower their image or status, limit the agency's access to funds, cause a reduction in staff or threaten the total existence of the agency. Many times evaluation results are not published due to disagreements between the evaluator and the administrator about publication credits (Caro, 1971).

Evaluation of Alternative Schools

In recent years, the effectiveness of alternative schools has been a matter of controversy, both in the technical literature and in the popular media. Barr, et al (1977:27), analyzed six alternative school evaluations in terms of their effectiveness and provided insight into four basic questions raised concerning alternative schools. Three of the questions are pertinent to this study and are discussed below.

1. How effective are alternative schools in the area of student cognitive achievement?

   Results of the evaluations that measured cognitive achievement showed that most students were learning at a rate consistent with or higher than the district norm. Students' grade point averages increased, their scholastic aptitude test scores increased, and they gained in their reading and math levels. It appeared that most students achieved as well, if not better, than in the comprehensive school.

2. How effective are alternative schools in the development of student attitude and self concepts?

   The evaluations consistently indicated that students attitudes toward themselves and school tended to be higher in the alternative setting. Students assumed an increased level of interest in basic skills and overall curriculum development. Students exhibited high positive feelings toward their teachers, peers, administrators and the overall instructional philosophy.

3. How effective are alternative schools in developing positive behavior in the areas of attendance, suspensions and school disruption?

   Attendance and enrollment data showed a decrease in student dropout rates and an increase in school and classroom attendance. Discipline problems appeared to be at a minimum, thereby, drastically reducing the rates of suspension.

Duke and Muzio (1978) reviewed nineteen evaluations and reports dealing with the effectiveness of alternative schools and found that fourteen of the documents contained some reference to objectives in their descriptive sections. Five of the documents contained no specific reference to objectives, and none of the evaluations were conducted on the achievement of alternative school objectives. Duke and Muzio did find that the one characteristic shared by the alternative schools was their small size and stated "if alternatives as a group are ever found to produce similar effects on students, this factor may be more influential than others (1978:466)."

Odell (1984) reviewed seventy-three alternatives school evaluative studies and found that while many of the evaluations indicated that alternative schools were effective, none of the studies were conducted specifically for the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of alternative schools in achieving program goals or objectives. Odell encountered seven categories or types of evaluative studies and reported that of the seventy-three studies reviewed forty-one percent were Program Evaluations, eighteen percent were Surveys, twenty-three percent were Descriptive Studies, seven percent were Single Case investigations and the remaining eleven percent were divided between Clinical Studies, Historical Reviews and Self-Report designs, all of which made some positive contributions to evaluation efforts.

A position paper commissioned by the National Institute of Education (Barr, 1977) reported that a survey of alternative school publications and evaluations showed that students experienced

significant and often dramatic changes in the affective area. Specifically, students self-concepts appeared to have improved; students appeared happier, more open minded and had better attitudes about school; students appeared to have more control over their own desires, felt more secure and greater self identity; students appeared to have higher attendance rates, lower suspension and disruption rates and less vandalism and violence (Arnove, 1977).

Summary

The literature revealed that there were six periods of history associated with evaluation. During the first period, the Industrial Revolution (1800 to 1900), social inquiry was emphasized: thus it created the beginnings of an empirical approach to the evaluation of programs. The second period (1900 to 1930) referred to as the period of Efficiency and Testing, introduced the development and growth of standardized achievement tests. School districts began using tests to make inferences about program effectiveness thus linking the fields of testing and evaluation with tests providing the principal data source for evaluations. The third period (1930 to 1945) was referred to as the Tylerian Age because of Ralph Tyler's major influence on education, educational evaluation and testing. Tyler became involved in the progressive Education Movement and directed the research component of the now famous Eight-Year Study (1932-1940) which introduced educators throughout America to a new and broader view of educational evaluation. The fourth period (1946 to 1957) was characterized by the expansion of

educational offerings, personnel and facilities. Society had no particular interest in holding educators accountable and little was done to urge educators to demonstrate efficiency and effectiveness. The fifth period (1958 to 1972) referred to as the Age of Expansion, called for evaluations of large scale curriculum development projects funded by federal monies. Evaluation expanded as an industry and as a profession. The War on Poverty was launched and billions of federal dollars were poured into programs aimed at equalizing and upgrading opportunities for all citizens across the broad spectrum of health, social, and educational services. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1964 (ESEA) was amended to include specific evaluation requirements. Many new conceptualizations of evaluations and alternative schools began to emerge. Alternatives flourished considerably and were reflected in a variety of ways and descriptions. Finally, during the sixth period (1973 to Present), evaluation crystallized and emerged as a distinct profession and alternative schools continued to expand.

Some of the problems associated with evaluation were vague program goals, the non-utilization of evaluation results, and sparse publications of evaluation results. The literature indicates that more and more program and school personnel have become cognizant of the need to have clearly stated goals as well as complete and accurate data related to the achievement of those goals. As a result, more decision-makers are becoming more concerned with the evaluation process and the utilization of the results.

In recent years the effectiveness of alternative schools has become a matter of controversy. However, a review of alternative school evaluative studies revealed that alternative schools are effective in improving students' attitude, self-concept, school attendance and academic achievement.

Chapter 3

PROGRAM DIMENSIONS

Evaluating the effectiveness of any program requires a basic knowledge of the program and the goals and objectives of that program, in order to ascertain the success of the program and its impact on the subjects and the community for which it was implemented. Hence, this evaluation was conducted on the Point Option Alternative School Program. This chapter describes the: Optional School, Point Option Alternative Program, stated goals of the program, operationalization of the goals, evaluation design, the subjects, instrumentation, data collection procedures and data analysis.

The Point Option Alternative School Program

Description of the School

The Optional School Program is located in the Newport News, Virginia School Division and consists of four components: Point Option, Project Stay, Project Care, and Project Prevention/Rehabilitation. These programs are centralized at the Deer Park Center and operate under the supervision of an Optional School Program Administrator. The Optional School Program is an extension of the regular or traditional school program for students who for economic, psychological, academic, or other reasons cannot respond in a positive way to programs offered in the traditional school setting. This structure provides flexibility of

time, content, and teaching strategies to meet the unique needs of those individuals enrolled in the school.

Description of the Program

The Point Option Program is an alternative secondary school program with one hundred six (106) students enrolled in grades nine through twelve. There are eight teachers, one counselor and two administrators. The Point Option Program is designed to meet the needs of students with average and above-average ability who are capable of completing school but are functioning below their potential in the regular school program. Students are referred for admission by the home school counselors, self referrals and community agencies. The program is operated on the quarter system rather than the semester system used at the city's four high schools. In addition to the regular high school course offerings of math, English, history, physical education, science, and art, students may select such courses as basic psychology, Greek mythology, marriage and family, peer I & II and several other courses not offered in the regular high school program. The curriculum contains provisions for both remediation and enrichment. Community resources are utilized to enhance learning experiences. Emphasis is placed on affective areas such as self-concept, values, attitudes and responsibility. To achieve these ends, the entire staff is involved in personal, career, and academic counseling with the students. All students are assigned to an advisory group, also referred to as "Unit Group". The advisor of each group is a staff member who assists students individually and in a group with scheduling, academic, personal and social problems, and any other

concerns of the students. Students remain enrolled in their home schools, graduate and receive their diplomas from the home school.

The Point Option Program is a program of choice. Teachers apply to work there and students apply to attend. Students are free to make independent decisions in regards to returning to the regular school program, whether or not to pursue a diploma, GED certificate or to enter a work program or vocation for future employment. Students then choose curriculums based on their goals and needs - they are responsible for their own progress. Additionally, students are involved in the decision-making processes as related to their perceived needs and interests, as well as the school program and its operation.

Program Goals

The Point Option Program Manual states that Point Option will provide:

1. Flexibility and choice to secondary students in a setting smaller than that in the traditional secondary school.

2. Experiences that will result in an improved self concept by students who attend the school.

3. An opportunity for parents, students, and teachers to experience the democratic process by participating in the operation of the school.

4. Opportunities to preview career options through experiential learning opportunities in the community for those students who exhibit a readiness and desire to explore areas beyond the scope of the traditional curriculum.

5. Classes, counseling, and resources which will assist in establishing and meeting goals to function as responsible citizens.

6. Classes in areas where diagnostic tests indicate students need to update or upgrade their basic skills.

7. Opportunities for students to learn to make wise use of their leisure time.

8. Enrichment opportunities to those students who exhibit a readiness for such experiences.

9. Experiences that will assist in bringing about positive attitudinal changes toward education, individuals, and society.

10. Services to the school, community and the community at large by utilization of trained student volunteers in areas of human services.

11. Opportunities for teachers and students to design alternative curriculum offerings to meet the students needs and interests.

In order to evaluate any program, the goals must be measurable. The goals of the Point Option Alternative Program as currently stated are not measurable. Therefore, the researcher, with the approval of the decision-maker, changed the stated goals of the Point Option Program into the following eleven operational goals.

1. Courses will be conducted in a community setting that contains fewer people and a smaller physical space than that offered by the regular school.

2. Students' self-concepts will improve as a result of positive encouragement and comments from staff, participating in individual and group activities, and improved grade reports.

3. Students, parents, and teachers will participate in meetings and will be given an opportunity to provide suggestions and or comments on the operation of the school program.

4. Students will explore career options and gain experiences in the Point Option Program that are different than those in the traditional school.

5. Students will be enrolled in classes, counseled, informed of and exposed to resources that will help them to function as knowledgeable citizens.

6. Students will be placed in classes in areas where diagnostic tests indicate the need to upgrade their basic skills.

7. Students will be taught how to schedule their time wisely.

8. Students will participate in field trips and attend special interest programs.

9. Students will participate in planned activities that will encourage positive attitudes toward education, individuals and society.

10. Students trained in a vocational skill will volunteer their services to the school and community.

11. Teachers and students will plan curriculum offerings, within the guidelines of the Newport News school system, to meet the needs and interest of the students.

The following procedure was utilized to operationalize the stated goals of the Point Option Program (see Figure 2):

> The researcher met with the decision-maker to discuss what each goal meant and how it was to be achieved.
>
> The researcher then operationalized the goals, returned to the decision-maker and discussed each new operationalized goal, and the decision-maker approved the eleven operationalized goals.
>
> The researcher developed questions for three instruments from the operationalized goals after which a matrix was set up to insure that each goal was address by one or more questions. Additionally, the matrix was expanded to address the activities that would be utilized to achieve those goals, and list the evidences that would determine each goal achieved (See Figure 3).
>
> The researcher shared the questions contained in the instruments with the decision-maker for comments and to determine if the questions were addressing his

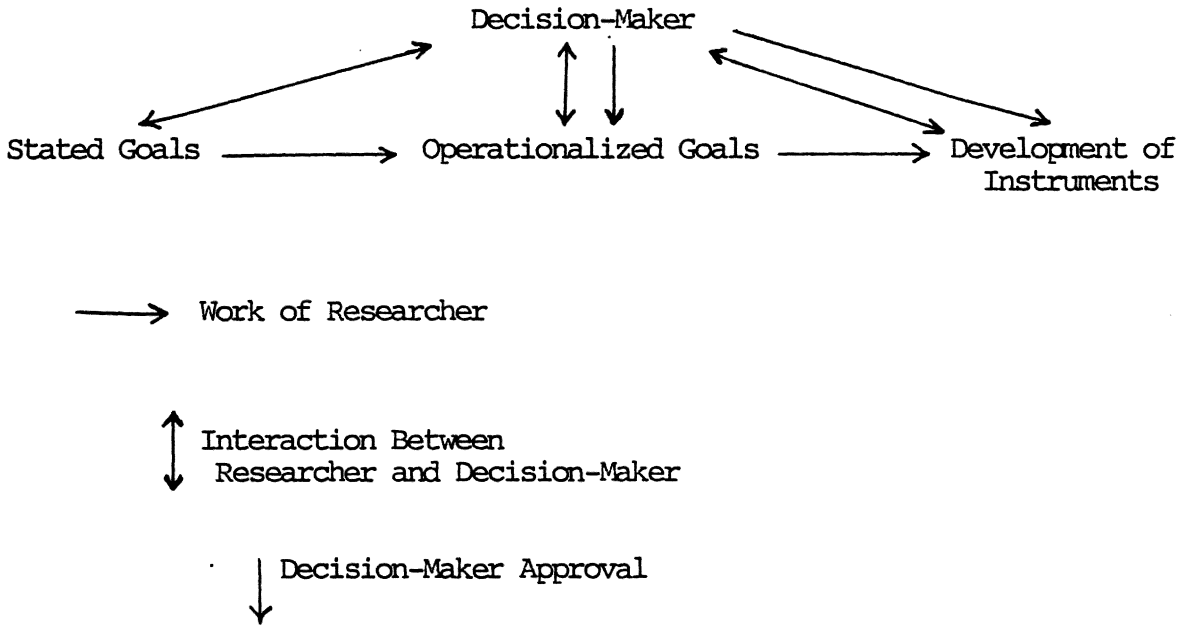

Figure 2

Goal Operationalization Process

Goals	Activities	Evidence of Goal Achievement and Program Success
1. Courses will be conducted in a community setting that contains fewer people and a smaller physical space than that offered by the regular school. Question #1 on instruments and 2 on students'	-Students attend classes in a smaller bldg. structure than regular school. -Students coming in contact with fewer students and staff than in the regular school.	-Smaller building. -Fewer students and staff.
2. Students self-concepts will improve as a result of: positive encouragement and comments from staff, participating in individual and group activities, and improved grade reports. Questions #2 on parent and teachers, #'s 3 and 4 on students	-Positive encouragement and comments from staff. -Students participation in individual and group activities. -Improved grade reports.	-Results of pre and post test Tennessee Self-Concept Scale. -Students report that self-concepts have improved. -Parents and teachers report changes observed in students. -Students report participation in individual and group activities. -Students list positive changes made -Records show improvement in grade reports.
3. Students, parents, and teachers will participate in meetings and will be given an opportunity to provide suggestions and/or comments on the operation of the school program. Questions #3 and 4 parents and teachers, #'s 5 and 6 students	-Students, parents, and teachers attend school meetings. -Students, parents, and teachers participate in discussion on operation of school program.	-Records of students, parents, and teachers attendance at school meetings. -Students, parents, and teachers report participation in discussions during meetings.

Figure 3

Goal Evaluation Description

Goals	Activities	Evidence of Goal Achievement and Program Success
4. Students will explore career options and gain experiences in Point Option that are different than those in the traditional school. Questions #5 parent, #'s 5 and 6 teachers, #7 students	-Students explore careers. -Students experience careers through community programs.	-List of careers in Point Option that are different from those of regular school. -Students, parents, teachers report participation. -Students and school reports of career experiences.
5. Students will be enrolled in classes, counseled, informed of and exposed to resources that will help them to function as knowledgeable citizens. Questions #6, 7, 8 on parent, teacher, student respectively	-Students learn about citizenship. -Students expose to and learn about voting process.	-Students attended classes. -Students exposed to resources related to citizenship. -Students, parents, teachers report students ability to function as knowledgeable citizens.
6. Students will be placed in classes in areas where diagnostic tests indicate the need to upgrade their basic skills. Questions #7, 8, 9 on parents, teahcers, students instruments, respectively	-Student placement in classes based on diagnostic test results. -Students taught basic skills.	-Students attended classes. -Students, parents, teachers report improved basic skills. -Results of pre and post-test of diagnostic skills.
7. Students will be taught how to schedule their time wisely. Question #8 parents and #10 teachers and students	-Students taught how to schedule time.	-Students, parents, teachers report students know how to schedule time.
8. Students will participate in field trips and attend special interest programs. Questions #9 parents, #11 teachers and students	-Students participation in field trips. -Students attend special interest programs.	-Students, parents, teachers reports on students involvement in field trips and special interest programs.

Figure 3 (Continued)

Goals	Activities	Evidence of Goal Achievement and Program Success
9. Students will participate in planned activities that will encourage positive attitudes toward education, individuals, society, and self. Questions #10 parents, #12 teachers and students	-Students participation in planned activities.	-Students, parents, teachers reports on students change in attitudes toward education, individuals, society, and self.
10. Students trained in a vocational skill will volunteer their services to the school and community. Questions #11 parents, #13 teachers and students	-Students attend vocational classes and learn skills. -Students volunteer services to school and community.	-Attendance in vocational skills classes. -Students learning a skill. -Students volunteering services. -Students, parents, teachers reports on skills learned and services to school and community.
11. Teachers and students will plan curriculum offerings, within the guidelines of the Newport News School System, to meet the needs and interests of the students. Questions #12 parents, #14 teachers and students	-Students and teachers plan curriculum to meet students needs and interests.	-Students, parents, teachers report on curriculum planning to meet students needs and interests.

Figure 3 (Continued)

needs. The decision-maker approved the questions as addressing his needs. The instruments were refined and printed.

Evaluation Design

The goal of this study was to evaluate the Point Option Alternative School Program in the Newport News School Division. One of the major purposes of evaluating a program is to help the decision-maker determine if the alternative program that he has chosen is effectively achieving the goals or objectives of that program (Cooper, 1972). To make that determination an evaluation has to be conducted, and convincing evidence of the program's success must be presented. In order to present evidence of success for the Point Option Program, a descriptive research case design was employed. Descriptive research has been defined as being primarily concerned with existing conditions or situations. As such, it is a structured attempt to obtain facts and opinions about those existing conditions (Sowell and Casey, 1982; Verma and Beard, 1981). A case design is typically used to examine a single, cohesive group and answer questions that ask for a description of a program's goals, participants, activities, and results (Fink and Kosecoff, 1980). A significant feature of the descriptive research case design is its ability to provide useful data, which if confirmed, can be studied in more controlled situations using an experimental design.

Subjects

The subjects for this study consisted of the total population of one hundred six (106) students in the Point Option Alternative Program, in grades nine through twelve. The subject's ages ranged from fifteen to twenty, and they reflected varying socioeconomic and racial backgrounds. The subjects were students who are capable of completing school but are functioning below their potential. The students applied for participation in Point Option or were referred by the home school counselor or a community agency. The subjects in Point Option represented the four high schools in the Newport News School Division. Other subjects for this study included eighty-six parents of the participating students and eight teachers of Point Option students.

Instrumentation

The eleven goals of the Point Option Program are summarized into two basic categories: student achievement and student self-concepts and attitudes. This section of Chapter three addresses instrumentation relevant to the two categories.

Student Achievement

Even though student achievement is not overtly stated as a goal, it is implied in goals numbers five, six, and nine of the program. Additionally, the program utilizes Science Research Associates' (SRA) Tests for determining appropriate classroom placement. The pre and posttest achievement data obtained from these instruments and the achievement

data obtained from the devised questionnaires were examined for similarities and differences.

Student Self-Concepts and Attitudes

Program goals numbers two and nine addressed student self-concepts and attitudes. Well established and recognized instruments for measuring students' self-concepts and attitudes were selected by the Program administrator and teachers. Therefore, the pre and posttest data of the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale and self-concept and attitude data from the questionnaire survey were examined for similarities and differences.

Interviews

Sixty percent (N = 58) of the Point Option students were interviewed on the open-ended questions of the written survey. Seventy-eight percent of the interviews were taped, seven percent were manually recorded and fifteen percent of the interviews were conducted by telephone. The students were interviewed during their lunch hour and study period.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection procedure for the Point Option Program included administering the questionnaires to students by classes. Forty-five percent of the questionnaires were returned from the classes. Forty-six percent of the questionnaires were administered to and collected from the students individually, making a total student response rate of

ninety-one percent. The teacher questionnaires were administered to all of the teachers and a one-hundred percent response rate was attained. Parent questionnaires were mailed initially on April 19, 1986 and thirty-two percent of the questionnaires were returned. Follow-up post cards reminding parents to return their questionnaires were mailed to non-responding parents on May 12, 1986 and an additional thirty-five percent of the questionnaires were returned. Follow-up telephone calls on May 17 brought an additional six percent responses, making a total of seventy-three percent parental responses.

During the period of April 19 through June 26, the researcher examined the students files and the school files for testing, achievement and attendance data. During the May 19 through June 12 period the researcher randomly interviewed fifty-eight students on the open-ended questions of the survey. Interviews for teachers were optional. Teachers did not select this option.

In general, the student questionnaires were filled out completely and most of the open-ended questions were filled out in detail. However, there were instances in which parents omitted answering the open-ended questions. Those parents who did not respond to the open-ended questions stated, on the instruments, that they lacked sufficient knowledge to answer the questions and in a few cases parents stated that they just did not know about the particular aspect of the program being questioned.

Data Analysis

A statistical analysis of the data was conducted to answer the following major research question and two sub-questions:

Major Question

Is the Point Option Alternative School Program Effective in Achieving its Stated Goals?

Sub-Questions

Did students improve academically?

Did students' self-concepts and attitudes improve?

To answer the aforementioned research questions, the t-test of independence was employed to compare the pretest-posttest results. The Chi Square (X^2) test was conducted to determine if participant responses were significantly different at a probability level of less than or equal to .05. The data are reported in narrative and tabular form in Chapter 4.

Data were collected from a total of ninety-six students (91 percent) participating in the Point Option Alternative Program, eight teachers (100 percent) and sixty-three parents (73 percent) of the Point Option students. Table 1 illustrates the return rate for the program participants included in the study.

Table 1

Participants in the Study

Participants	Total Population	Number Responding	Percent of Return
Teachers	8	8	100
Parents	86	63	73
Students	106	96	91

Chapter 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the data and results of the study. The data for this study were collected to answer the major research question: Is the Point Option Alternative School Program Effective in Achieving its Stated Goals? and two additional sub-questions: Did students improve academically? and Did students' self-concepts and attitudes improve?

This is a descriptive case study, hence, caution is suggested in generalizing these findings beyond this research population and program. The statistical analyses and findings are organized and presented under the major research question and each sub-question.

Major Research Question: Is the Point Option Alternative School Program Effective in Achieving its Stated Goals?

A Chi Square (X^2) analysis was conducted on the distribution of teachers, parents and students responses to twenty one items on a survey questionnaire. Following are the questions and the results.

Question 1 (Goal 1): Were students placed in a curriculum that met their needs and interests? Table 2 shows a Chi Square value of 29.33 with 6 df and a probability level of less than .05 which indicates that there was a significant difference between the responses of teachers, parents and students. Thirty-eight percent (N = 3) of the teachers, three percent (N = 2) of the parents and three percent (N = 3)

Table 2

Summary of Frequency Responses of Teachers, Parents and Students Perceptions of the Achievement of the Point Option Alternative School Program Goals Using Chi Square

Question 1: Were students placed in curricula that met their needs and interests?

Frequency and Percentage Responses

	Yes	No	No Responses	Multiple Responses	Total
Teachers	5.0	3.0	—	—	8.0
	62.5	37.5			4.8
Parents	55.0	2.0	6.0	—	63.0
	87.3	3.2	9.5		37.7
Students	88.0	3.0	1.0	4.0	96.0
	91.7	3.1	1.0	4.2	57.5
Total	148.0	8.0	7.0	4.0	167.0
	88.6	4.8	4.2	2.4	100.0

$X^2 = 29.33$; df = 6; $p < .000$*

*Statistical Significance ($p \leq .05$)

of the students disagreed or were unsure whether or not students were in curricula that met their needs and interests, while sixty-three percent (N = 5) of the teachers, eighty-seven percent (N = 55) of the parents and ninety-two percent (N = 88) of the students agreed.

Question 2 (Goal 4): Did students explore more career options at Point Option than in the regular school? Table 3 shows a Chi Square value of 24.21 with 6 df and a probability level of less than .05 which indicates that there was a difference greater than chance in the responses of each of the three groups. Although eighty-four percent (N = 53) of the parents and eighty-one percent (N = 78) of the students agreed that students explored more career options in Point Option than students did in the regular school, sixty-three percent (N = 5) of the teachers tended not to agree with the parents and students.

Question 3 (Goal 5): Were students informed of and exposed to resources to help them function as knowledgable citizens? Table 4 shows a Chi Square value of 4.9 with 6 df and a probability level equal to .551 which shows that there was not a statistically significant difference in the responses of teachers, parents and students. Thus, the groups were more in agreement than not. One hundred percent (N = 8) of the teachers, ninety-one percent (N = 57) parents and ninety-six percent (N = 91) of the students agreed that students were informed of and exposed to resources that helped them to function as knowledgable citizens. Question 4 (Goal 10): Were students trained in a vocational skill through the Point Option Program? Table 5 reveals a Chi Square value of 46.05 with 3 df and a probability level of less

Table 3

Summary of Frequency Responses of Teachers, Parents and Students Perceptions of the Achievement of the Point Option Alternative School Program Goals Using Chi Square

Question 2: Did students explore more career options in Point Option than in the regular school?

Frequency and Percentage Responses

	Yes	No	No Response	Multiple Response	Total
Teachers	3.0	5.0	____	____	8.0
	37.5	62.5			4.8
Parents	53.0	6.0	4.0	____	63.0
	84.1	9.5	6.3		37.7
Students	78.0	12.0	1.0	5.0	96.0
	81.3	12.5	1.0	5.2	57.5
Total	134.0	23.0	5.0	5.0	167.0
	80.2	13.8	3.0	3.0	100.0

$X^2 = 24.21$; df = 6; $p < .000$*

*Statistical Significance ($p \leq .05$)

Table 4

Summary of Frequency Responses of Teachers, Parents and Students Perceptions of the Achievement of the Point Option Alternative School Program Goals Using Chi Square

Question 3: Were students informed of and exposed to resources to help them function as knowledgeable citizens?

Frequency and Percentage Responses

	Yes	No	No Response	Multiple Response	Total
Teachers	8.0	—	—	—	8.0
	100.0				4.8
Parents	57.0	2.0	4.0	—	63.0
	90.5	3.2	6.3		37.7
Students	91.0	3.0	1.0	1.0	96.0
	94.8	3.1	1.0	1.0	57.5
Total	156.0	5.0	5.0	1.0	167.0
	93.4	3.0	3.0	0.6	100.0

$X^2 = 4.9$; df = 6; $p < .551$

Table 5

Summary of Frequency Responses of Teachers, Parents and Students Perceptions of the Achievement of the Point Option Alternative School Progam Goals Using Chi Square

Question 4: Were students trained in a vocational skill through the Point Option Program?

Frequency and Percentage Responses

	Yes	No	No Response	Multiple Response	Total
Parents	14.0	43.0	6.0	___	63.0
	22.2	68.3	9.5		39.6
Students	68.0	22.0	1.0	5.0	96.0
	70.8	22.9	1.0	5.2	60.4
Total	82.0	65.0	7.0	5.0	159.0
	51.6	40.9	4.4	3.1	100.0

$X^2 = 46.05$; df = 3; $p < .000$*

*Statistical Significance ($p \leq .05$)

than .05. This indicates that parents' and students' responses to this question were significantly different. Sixty-eight percent (N = 43) of the parents responded negatively that students were not trained in a vocational skill through Point Option while seventy-one percent (N = 68) of the students responded positively.

Although the next two questions were not stated goals of the Point Option Program, they were asked to: (1) ascertain what impact the Point Option Program had on keeping students in school, and (2) to determine how teachers, parents and students viewed the success of the Point Option Program.

Question 5: Do you feel that the Point Option Program has kept students in school? Table 6 shows a Chi Square value of 3.29 with 6 df and a probability level equal to .770 which is not greater than chance at the .05 probability level. This indicates that teachers, parents and students generally agreed on their responses to this question. Hence, the data support the agreement between the groups in which ninety percent (N = 151) agreed that Point Option has kept students in school.

Question 6: Would you summarize the Point Option Program as successful? Table 7 reveals a Chi Square value of 9.62 with 6 df and a probability level equal to .141 which indicates that there was not a significant difference in the responses between each of the three groups. Consequently, this result indicates that ninety-five percent (N = 158), of the teachers, parents and students agreed that the Point Option Alternative School Program can be considered successful.

Table 6

Summary of Frequency and Percentage Response of Teacher, Parents and Student Perceptions of the Achievement of the Point Option Program Goals Using Chi Square

Question 5: Do you feel that Point Option Program kept students in school?

Frequency and Percentage Responses

	Yes	No	No Response	Multiple Response	Total
Teachers	7.0	1.0	—	—	8.0
	87.5	12.5			4.8
Parents	57.0	5.0	1.0	—	63.0
	90.5	7.9	1.6		37.7
Students	87.0	5.0	1.0	3.0	96.0
	90.6	5.2	1.0	3.1	57.5
Total	151.0	11.0	2.0	3.0	167.0
	90.4	6.6	1.2	1.8	100.0

$X^2 = 3.29$; df = 6; $p < .770$

Table 7

Summary of Frequency Responses of Teachers, Parents and Students Perceptions of the Achievement of the Point Option Alternative School Program Goals Using Chi Square

Question 6: Would you summarize the Point Option Program as successful?

Frequency and Percentage Responses

	Yes	No	No Response	Multiple Response	Total
Teachers	8.0	___	___	___	8.0
	100.0				4.8
Parents	56.0	1.0	6.0	___	63.0
	88.9	1.6	9.5		37.7
Students	94.0	___	1.0	1.0	96.0
	97.9		1.0	1.0	57.5
Total	158.0	1.0	7.0	1.0	167.0
	94.6	0.6	4.2	0.6	100.0

$X^2 = 9.62$; df = 6; $p < .141$

Research Sub-Questions

Sub-question 1: Did students improve academically? To answer this question, the researcher utilized the Science Research Associates' (SRA) test scores and the students' grade point averages to measure academic improvement. Pre-admission SRA test scores (pretest) and post-admission SRA test scores (posttest), after one year's participation in the program, were analyzed. A two-tailed t-test was conducted to test the mean difference between the pretest and posttest. Table 8 shows a mean difference of 43.92, a t-value of 4.65 and a probability level of less than .05 which denotes a significant difference between the pretest and posttest result. Thus, we can assume that students improved academically.

Grade Point Averages (GPA's) of the students were examined one year prior to student enrollment in the program (pre-GPA) and one year after enrollment (Post-GPA). The t-test was conducted to determine if there were significant differences between the pre-GPA's and post-GPA's. Table 9 reveals a mean difference of .46 and a t-value of 4.33 with 1 df and a probability level of less than .05 which indicates a significant difference between pre and post-GPA's. Thus, Grade Point Averages further support the notion that students improved academically.

In addition to the SRA tests and GPA's, a survey was conducted to ascertain teachers, parents and students opinions on students academic improvement. Two questions related to sub-question one were asked. Question 1 (Goal 6): Do you feel that Point Option students are placed in classes based on diagnostic test results to improve basic skills?

Table 8

Mean Pretest-PostTest Scores of the
Science Research Associates Test
Using t-Test

Measure	N**	$\bar{X}$	$\bar{X}$ Difference	SD	t-value
SRA Pretest	30	480.80			
			43.93	51.79	4.65
SRA Post test	30	524.73			
	df = 1	p < .000*			

* Statistical Significance ($p \leq .05$)

** represents the actual number of students who completed both the pretest and posttest. The number of cases varied based on the students' point of entry into the Point Option Program.

Table 9

Mean Academic Performance of Point Option Students as Measured by the Actual Grade Point Average+ Using t-Test

Measure	N	$\bar{X}$	$\bar{X}$ Difference	SD	t-value
Pre-GPA	98	1.26			
			.46	1.06	4.33
Post-GPA	98	1.72			
df = 1; p <.000*					

+ Grade Point Average Scale

A = 4.0 C = 2.0

B = 3.0 D = 1.0

* Statistical Significance ($p \leq .05$

Table 10 shows a Chi Square of 44.54 with 6 df and a probability level of less than .05 which depicts a significant difference in the responses. Teachers, sixty-two percent (N = 5), and parents, twenty-two percent (N = 14), responded negatively that students were not placed in classes based on diagnostic test results as compared to ninety-five percent (N = 91) of the students who responded positively that they were placed in classes based on diagnostic test results.

Question 2 (Goal 6): Do you feel that the Point Option Program has helped students academically? Table 11 reveals a Chi Square value of 15.51 with 6 df and a probability level equal to .016 which shows a difference greater than the .05 probability level in the responses between each of the three groups. Thirteen percent (N = 1) of the teachers, three percent (N = 2) of the parents and three percent (N = 3) of the students responded, that Point Option did not help students academically, while eighty-eight percent (N = 7) of the teachers, eighty-three percent (N = 52) of the parents and ninety-four percent (N = 90) of the students agreed that Point Option did help students academically. However, data from both questions appear to further substantiate that students were believed to have improved academically even though there were some differences between group responses.

Additionally, an examination of the students' attendance records was conducted to determine the impact, if any, that students' school attendance may have had on their academic achievement. A t-test was conducted on the number of days students were absent prior to attending Point Option and the number of days students were absent one year after

Table 10

Summary of Frequency Responses of Teachers, Parents and Students Perceptions of the Achievement of the Point Option Alternative School Program Goals Using Chi Square

Question 1: Do you feel Point Option students are placed in classes based on diagnostic test results to improve basic skills?

Frequency and Percentage Responses

	Yes	No	No Response	Multiple Response	Total
Teachers	3.0	5.0	____	____	8.0
	37.5	62.5			4.8
Parents	42.0	14.0	7.0	____	63.0
	66.7	22.2	11.1		37.7
Students	91.0	2.0	1.0	2.0	96.0
	94.8	2.1	1.0	2.1	57.5
Total	136.0	21.0	8.0	2.0	167.0
	81.4	12.6	4.8	1.2	100.0

$X^2 = 44.54$; df = 6; $p < .000$*

*Statistical Significance ($p \leq .05$)

Table 11

Summary of Frequency Responses of Teachers, Parents and Students Perceptions of the Achievement of the Point Option Alternative School Program Goals Using Chi Square

Question 2: Do you feel that Point Option has helped students academically?

Frequency and Percentage Responses

	Yes	No	No Response	Multiple Response	Total
Teachers	7.0	1.0	___	___	8.0
	87.5	12.5			4.8
Parents	52.0	2.0	9.0	___	63.0
	82.5	3.2	14.3		37.7
Students	90.0	3.0	1.0	2.0	96.0
	93.8	3.1	1.0	2.1	57.5
Totals	149.0	6.0	10.0	2.0	167.0
	89.2	3.6	6.0	1.2	100.0

$X^2 = 15.51$; df = 6; $p < .016$*

* Statistical Significance ($p \leq .05$)

attending Point Option. Table 12 reveals a mean difference of 4.56 days, a t-value of 2.43 and a probability level equal to .018 which indicates a significant decrease in students' absentees after attending Point Option.

Sub-question 2: Did students' self-concepts and attitudes improve? The Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS) was employed to assist in answering this question. The TSCS scores, one year prior to student enrollment in the program (pretest) and one year after enrollment (post test), were examined. Table 13 reveals a mean pretest score of 311.86 and a posttest score of 325.90 with a mean difference of 14.03 and a t-value of 4.44 with 1 df and a probability level of less than .05 which means that there was a significant difference between the pre and posttest scores on the TSCS. The posttest scores indicates a significant increase in students' self-concepts and attitudes.

Three questions on the survey provided further information relative to positive changes made in students' self-concepts and attitudes. Question 1 (Goal 2): Do you feel that the Point Option Program has helped students to make positive changes in their thinking and self-expression? Table 14 reveals that a Chi Square value of 3.30 with 4 df and a probability level equal to .507 shows that there was not a statistically significant difference between group responses. Ninety percent (N = 151) of the teachers, parents and students agreed that Point Option has helped students to make positive changes in their thinking and self- expression.

Table 12

Mean Days Absent
of Point Option Students

Source	N	$\bar{X}$	$\bar{X}$ Difference	SD	t-value
Average Days Absent Prior to Point Option	69	19.34			
			4.56	12.59	2.43
Average Days Absent 1 Year After Point Option	69	14.78			
df = 1 $p < .018$*					

*Statistical Significance ($p \leq .05$)

Table 13

Mean Pretest-Post test Scores on the
Tennessee Self-Concept Scale Using t-Test

Measure	N	$\bar{X}$	$\bar{X}$ Difference	SD	t-value
Pretest	83	311.86			
			14.03	28.78	4.44
Post test	83	325.90			
df = 1; $p < .000$*					

* Statistical Significance ($p \leq .05$)

Table 14

Summary of Frequency Responses of Teachers, Parents and Students Perceptions of the Achievement of the Point Option Program Goals Using Chi Square

Question 1: Do you feel that the Point Option Program has helped students to make positive changes in their thinking and self expression?

Frequency and Percentage Responses

	Yes	No	No Response	Multiple Response	Total
Teachers	8.0	—	—	—	8.0
	100.0				4.8
Parents	56.0	4.0	3.0	—	63.0
	88.9	6.3	4.8		7.7
Students	87.0	8.0	1.0	—	96.0
	90.6	8.3	1.0		57.5
Total	151.0	12.0	4.0	—	167.0
	90.4	7.2	2.4		100.0

$X^2 = 3.30$; df = 4; $p < .507$

Question 2 (Goal 9): Do you feel that students have acquired a positive attitude toward education? Table 15 shows a Chi Square value of 25.21 and a probability level of less than .05 which indicates a significant difference in the responses between the groups. Thirty-eight (N = 3) of the teachers, ten percent (N = 6) of the parents and four percent (N = 4) of the students tended to disagree that students acquired a positive attitude toward education. While sixty-three percent (N = 5) of the teachers, seventy-six percent (N = 48) of the parents and ninety-four percent (N = 90) of the students agreed that students did acquire a positive attitude. Question 3 (Goal 9): Do you feel that students have acquired a positive attitude toward themselves? Table 16 shows a Chi Square value of 10.25 with 6 df and a probability level equal to .114 which indicates that the responses of each of the three groups are not statistically significant. Teachers, parents and students agreed that students have acquired a positive attitude toward themselves as a result of participating in Point Option.

Question 4 (Goal 2): Do you feel that positive encouragement and comments from staff, participation in individual and group activities and improved grade reports have helped students to improve their self-concepts? Table 17 shows a Chi Square value of 12.85 with 6 df and a probability level equal to .045 which indicates that the responses between each of the three groups were significantly different. Thirteen percent (N = 1) of the teachers disagreed, ten percent (N = 6) of the parents did not respond and three percent (N = 3) of the students disagreed that the aforementioned variables in question four helped to

Table 15

Summary of Frequency Responses of Teachers, Parents and Students Perceptions of the Achievement of the Point Option Alternative School Progam Goals Using Chi Square

Question 2 (Goal 9): Do you feel that students have acquired a positive positive attitude toward education?

Frequency and Percentage Responses

	Yes	No	No Response	Multiple Response	Total
Teachers	5.0	3.0	—	—	8.0
	62.5	37.5			4.8
Parents	48.0	6.0	9.0	—	63.0
	76.2	9.5	14.3		37.7
Students	90.0	4.0	1.0	1.0	96.0
	93.8	4.2	1.0	1.0	57.6
Total	143.0	13.0	10.0	1.0	167.0
	85.6	7.8	6.0	0.6	100.0

$X^2 = 25.21$; df = 6; $p < .000$*

* Statistical Significance ($p \leq .05$)

Table 16

Summary of Frequency Responses of Teachers, Parents and Students Perceptions of the Achievement of the Point Option Alternative School Program Goals Using Chi Square

Question 3 (Goal 9): Do you feel that students have acquired a positive attitude toward themselves?

Frequency and Percentage Responses

	Yes	No	No Response	Multiple Response	Total
Teachers	8.0	—	—	—	8.0
	100.0				4.8
Parents	55.0	2.0	6.0	—	63.0
	87.3	3.2	9.5		37.7
Students	88.0	3.0	1.0	4.0	96.0
	91.7	3.1	1.0	4.2	57.5
Total	151.0	5.0	7.0	4.0	167.0
	90.4	3.0	4.2	2.4	100.0

$X^2 = 10.25$; df = 6; $p < .114$

Table 17

Summary of Frequency Responses of Teachers, Parents and Students Perceptions of the Achievement of the Point Option Alternative School Program Goals Using Chi Square

Question 4 (Goal 2): Do you feel that positive encouragement and comments from staff, participation in individual and group activities and improved grade reports have helped students to improve their self-concepts?

Frequency and Percentage Responses

	Yes	No	No Response	Multiple Response	Total
Teachers	7.0	1.0	___	___	8.0
	89.5	12.5			4.8
Parents	57.0	___	6.0	___	63.0
	90.5		9.5		37.7
Students	91.0	3.0	1.0	1.0	96.0
	94.8	3.1	1.0	1.0	57.5
Total	155.0	4.0	7.0	1.0	167.0
	92.8	2.4	4.2	0.6	100.0

$X^2 = 12.85$; df = 6; $p < .045$*

Statistical Significance ($p \leq .05$)

improve students' self-concepts while ninety percent (N = 7) of the teachers, ninety-one percent (N = 57) of the parents and ninety-five percent (N = 91) of the students agreed.

Teachers, parents and students were asked several other goal related questions to help determine how successful the Point Option Program was in achieving its goals. Question 1 (Goal 1): Do you feel that the Point Option Program offers a smaller setting and fewer people than the regular school? Table 18 shows a Chi Square of 4.81 with 6 df and a probability level equal to .567 which indicates that there was not a statistical difference in the responses between the three groups. Therefore, teachers, parents and students agreed that the Point Option Program did offer a smaller setting and fewer people than the regular school.

Question 2 (Goal 3): Have you participated in meetings to discuss the Point Option Program operations? Table 19 shows a Chi Square of 94.14 with 4 df and $p \leq .05$ which indicates that the responses between the three groups were significantly different. Ninety-five percent (N = 60) of the parents and twenty-one percent (N = 20) of the students stated that they had not participated in meetings to discuss operations of the Point Option Program, while one hundred percent (N = 8) of the teachers and seventy-eight percent (N = 75) of the students responded that they had participated. Question 3 (Goal 3): Have you been asked for your suggestions or opinions regarding the Point Option Program? Table 20 shows a Chi Square of 71.06 with 4 df and probability level of less than .05. This indicates that a significant

Table 18

Summary of Frequency Responses of Teachers, Parents and Students Perceptions of the Achievement of the Point Option Alternative School Program Goals Using Chi Square

Question 1: Do you feel that the Point Option Program offers a smaller setting and few people than the regular school?

Frequency and Percentage Responses

	Yes	No	Responses	Responses	Total
Teachers	8.0	___	___	___	8.0
	100.0				4.8
Parents	58.0	3.0	2.0	___	63.0
	92.1	4.8	3.2		37.7
Students	85.0	6.0	1.0	4.0	96.0
	88.5	6.3	1.0	4.2	57.5
Total	151.0	9.0	3.0	4.0	167.0
	90.4	5.4	1.8	2.4	100.0

$X^2 = 4.81$ df = 6; $p < .567$

Table 19

Summary of Frequency Responses of Teachers, Parents and Students Perceptions of the Achievment of the Point Option Alternative School Program Goals Using Chi Square

Question 2: Have you participate in meetings to discuss the Point Option Program operations?

Frequency and Percentage Responses

	Yes	No	No Response	Multiple Response	Total
Teachers	8.0 100.0	—	—	—	8.0 4.8
Parents	2.0 3.2	60.0 95.2	1.0 1.6	—	63.0 37.7
Students	75.0 78.1	20.0 20.8	1.0 1.0	—	96.0 57.5
Total	85.0 50.9	80.0 47.9	2.0 1.2	—	167.0 100.0

$X^2 = 94.14$; df = 4; $p < .000$*

*Statistical Significance ($p \leq .05$)

Table 20

Summary of Frequency Responses of Teachers, Parents and Students Perceptions of the Achievement of the Point Option Alternative School Program Goals Using Chi Square

Question 3: Have you been asked for your suggestions or opinions regarding the Point Option Program?

Frequency and Percentage Responses

	Yes	No	No Response	Multiple Response	Total
Teachers	8.0 100.0	___	___	___	8.0 4.8
Parents	12.0 19.0	48.0 76.2	3.0 4.8	___	63.0 37.7
Students	80.0 83.3	15.0 15.6	1.0 1.0	___	96.0 57.6
Total	100.0 59.9	63.0 37.7	4.0 2.4	___	167.0 100.0

$X^2 = 71.06$; df = 4; $p < .000$*

*Statistical Significance ($p \leq .05$)

difference between the responses of each group existed. Seventy-six percent (N = 48) of the parents and sixteen percent (N = 15) of the students disagreed that they had been asked for their suggestions or opinions, while one hundred percent (N = 8) of the teachers and eighty-three percent (N = 80) of the students agreed.

Question 4 (Goal 7): Do you feel that students have learned and know how to schedule their time wisely? Table 21 shows a Chi Square of 44.52 with 6 df and a probability level of less than .05, which means that the three groups differed in their responses. Sixty-three (N = 5) of the teachers, ten percent (N = 6) of the parents, and four percent (N = 2) of the students disagreed that students learned and know how to schedule their time wisely. Ninety-three percent (N = 89) of the students felt the most confident with learning to schedule time while seventy-six percent (N = 48) of the parents and only thirty-eight percent (N = 3) of the teachers believed that this learning occurred.

Question 5 (Goal 8): Did students participate in field trips? Table 22 shows a Chi Square of 16.89 with 3 df and a probability level of less than .05. This means that a significant difference existed between the group responses. Fourteen percent (N = 9) of the parents and twenty-seven percent (N = 26) of the students disagreed that students participated in field trips while seventy percent (N = 44) of the parents and sixty-nine percent (N = 66) of the students agreed. Question 6 (Goal 8): Did students attend special interest programs? Table 23 shows a Chi Square of 14.78 with 3 df and a probability level equal to .003. This means that a significant

Table 21

Summary of Frequency Responses of Teachers, Parents and Students Perceptions of the Achievement of the Point Option Alternative School Program Goals Using Chi Square

Question 4: Do you feel that students have learned and know how to schedule their time wisely?

Frequency and Percentage Responses

	Yes	No	No Response	Multiple Response	Total
Teachers	3.0	5.0	____	____	8.0
	37.5	62.5			4.8
Parents	48.0	6.0	9.0	____	63.0
	76.2	9.5	14.3		37.7
Students	89.0	2.0	1.0	2.0	96.0
	92.7	4.2	1.0	2.1	57.6
Total	140.0	15.0	10.0	2.0	167.0
	83.8	9.0	6.0	1.2	100.0

$X^2 = 44.52$; df = 6; $p < .000$*

*Statistical Significance ($p \leq .05$)

Table 22

Summary of Frequency Responses of Teachers, Parents and Students Perceptions of the Achievement of the Point Option Alternative School Program Goals Using Chi Square

Question 5: Did students participate in field trips?

Frequency and Percentage Responses

	Yes	No	No Response	Multiple Response	Total
Parents	44.0	9.0	10.0	0.0	63.0
	69.8	14.3	15.9	0.0	39.6
Students	66.0	26.0	1.0	3.0	96.0
	68.8	27.1	1.0	3.1	60.4
Total	110.0	35.0	11.0	3.0	159.0
	69.2	22.0	6.9	1.9	100.0

$X^2 = 16.89$; df = 3; $p < .000$*

*Statistical Significance ($p \leq .05$)

Table 23

Summary of Frequency Responses of Teachers, Parents and Students Perceptions of the Achievement of the Point Option Alternative School Program Goals Using Chi Square

Question 6: Did students attend special interest programs?

Frequency and Percentage Responses

	Yes	No	No Response	Multiple Response	Total
Parents	41.0	13.0	9.0	0.0	63.0
	65.1	20.6	14.3	0.0	39.6
Students	60.0	32.0	1.0	3.0	96.0
	62.5	33.3	1.0	3.1	60.4
Total	101.0	45.0	10.0	3.0	159.0
	63.5	28.3	6.3	1.9	100.0

$X^2 = 14.78$; df = 3; $p < .002$*

*Statistical Significance ($p \leq .05$)

difference existed between the groups. Twenty-one percent (N = 13) of the parents and thirty-three percent (N = 32) of the students disagreed that students attended special interest programs while thirty-six percent (N = 58) of the parents and sixty-three percent (N = 60) of the students disagreed. Teachers were asked this question differently. However, sixty-three percent (N = 5) of the teachers responded that students did participate in field trips and attend special interest programs, while thirty-seven percent (N = 3) responded that students did not participate.

At the request of the decision-maker teachers, parents and students were asked other questions on the survey for additional information. Those questions have been included as additional information in Table 24 of Appendix A.

Teachers, parents and students were asked in an open-ended question, on the survey, to list other positive changes that they had observed in students. Teachers responded that students appeared to have accepted responsibility more, to have more self-confidence in their ability to study and pass courses, to have more self-esteem, to have developed more openness, to have better attitudes and understanding, to have more concern for others and they seem to be more vocal. Parents responded overwhelmingly that they observed the following positive changes: improved school attendance, grades, attitude, self-esteem and improved behavior. In addition, parents stated that students seemed to be more responsible, independent, mature and more motivated to attend classes and complete school. Students responded that they attended

school more; felt more important and happier; have more self-confidence and self-esteem; communicated better with teachers, family and friends; they listened more and understood better and they became more responsible, polite, friendlier, caring, respectful of others and themselves.

Interviews, on the open-ended questions of the survey, were conducted with the students. Their oral responses corroborated, in detail, their written survey responses.

Summary

Chapter 4 contains the statistical analyses and findings of the study. The Chi Square test was used to determine if teachers, students and parents responses were significantly different at an alpha level of .05. The t-test of independence was used to compare the pretest-posttest results of the Science Research Associates' test and the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale and the student interview was used to confirm the students written survey responses.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the Point Option Alternative School Program. It was designed to determine the extent to which the program was effective in achieving its goals. Chapter 5 contains a summary of the study, a discussion of the findings, conclusions and recommendations.

SUMMARY

Because there is no agreed-upon definition for alternative schools and educational evaluation, few alternative school evaluation studies appear to be based on the same set of postulates. Vague goals, lack of follow-through on or the use of evaluation results and the lack of adequate publication of the results, have been on-going problems for evaluations of alternative education programs. Research efforts related to the evaluation of alternative school goals and or objectives are rare; thus, providing the stimulus for the current study which was conceived to examine the goals of the Point Option Alternative School Program.

Three instruments, one each for teachers, students, and parents, were constructed for the study. The instruments were analyzed and validated by a panel of experts. To test the instrument for readability, objectivity and clarity, a pilot study was conducted in a similiar alternative school program located in a school division other

than the subject school division. Twenty-one students and two teachers were randomly selected to participate in the pilot study. The validated instruments were administered to the teachers and students in the Point Option Program. Parents were mailed their questionnaires. Data were collected from one hundred percent of the teachers, seventy-three percent of the parents and ninety-one percent of the students. Because instruments that are based on perceptions are relatively weak, two standardized tests were utilized: the Science Research Associates Tests (SRA) and the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS). Pretest and posttest scores of the SRA tests and the TSCS were examined. Additionally, grade point averages and students' school attendance data were used as other measures to help substantiate data obtained from the instruments. Sixty percent of the students were interview on the questionnaires' ten open-ended questions. The student responses corroborated, in detail, their original written responses on the questionnaire.

To analyze the data, two statistical tests were applied: the Chi Square test of independence and the t-test. An alpha level of .05 was employed to determine whether the data being analyzed was statistically significant. Data from the findings suggested that: (1) the Point Option Program appeared to be effective in achieving its stated goals, (2) students seemed to have improved academically, and (3) students' self-concepts and attitudes appeared to have improved.

DISCUSSION

Alternative school educators have maintained that alternative schools can increase student academic achievement, student self-concepts and attitudes and student attendance. Several studies (Barr, et al., 1977, Duke and Muzio, 1978 and Odell, 1984) have been conducted in this area. The findings of these studies support alternative educators' claims that alternative schools can increase student academic achievement, student self-concept and attitudes and student attendance. This study further supports alternative school educators' aforementioned claims and reaffirms the notion that alternative schools can have a positive impact on students.

Conceivably, the most important contribution of this study was the delineation of differences shown between teachers', parents' and students' perceptions of the success of the Point Option Alternative School Program in achieving its goals. Marked areas of agreement existed between the three groups, as substantiated by the examination of the Chi Square and t-test results.

Student Academic Achievement Outcome

(1) The measures of achievement (GPA & SRA) and the degree to which students experienced positive academic change over a one year school period have to be approached with caution due to internal and external validity factors.

(2) When measures of academic achievement were compared, the pretest and posttest of the SRA tests and GPA's showed

pronounced significant differences in achievement gains. It seems plausible that part of this difference can be accounted for by the significant increase in students' school attendance as supported by the t-test analysis. The results of the survey revealed that teachers, parents, and students agreed that students had improved academically. A review of the students'records generally showed that students continued to improve academically beyond the initial year of their entrance into the Point Option program.

Student Self-Concepts and Attitudes

The Tennessee Self-Concept Scale measures self-perceptions and as such, it is open to errors associated with self-report procedures. Given this limitation, and the fact that self-concept has yet to be clarified sociologically and psychologically, caution must be taken regarding the interpretation and generalization of self-concepts and attitudes. However, the mean difference, standard deviation and t-value on pre and posttest results of the TSCS showed a significant improvement in students self-concepts. A survey showed that students generally felt that their self-concepts had improved.

The survey also revealed that students felt that they had improved because of the individual attention and concern they received from the teachers and staff at Point Option. Parents and teachers stated that they observed positive changes in the students' thinking and self-expression. The findings of this study are supported by a National

Institute of Education report which showed that students in alternative schools often experience significant and positive dramatic changes in the affective area, specifically, in the area of self-concepts and attitudes (Arnove, et al., 1977).

The resulting data show that students' academic achievement, their self-concepts and attitudes, and their attendance did improve. Consequently, the test results are strong indictors that the Point Option Alternative School Program was successful in achieving its goals.

CONCLUSIONS

Problems apparent in evaluation studies and the scarcity of data on goal evaluation have made the development of generalizable conclusions about alternative education difficult. "Additional data need to be gathered in the area of alternative school effectiveness (Barr, et al., 1977)."

However, based only on the data presented in this study it can be concluded that:

1. The Point Option Alternative School Program was successful in achieving its goals.
2. Students did improve academically, and
3. Students' self-concepts and attitudes did improve.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This research project was a descriptive study which dealt with a specific alternative school program. As a result of the findings in

this study, it is apparent that evaluative studies of alternative program goals and or objectives are needed. The following recommendations are divided into two categories -- Progammatic and General. Programmatic recommendations consist of recommendations specific to the Point Option Program. General recommendations refer to recommendations regarding further research needed in the area of alternative education programs.

Teachers, parents and students discussed, in response to an open-ended question on the survey, the weaknesses they considered inherent in the Point Option Program. As a result of that data, the following programmatic recommendations are made:

Programmatic

1. It is recommended that positive and renewed efforts be made to clarify the Point Option Program and it's goals -- to the school community and the community at large. Such efforts will assist in strengthening the program image.
2. It is recommended that a comprehensive information system be developed, routinely monitored and updated. Such a system can be used to support administrative decision-making and at the same time, it could enhance program evaluation efforts.
3. It is recommended that a consistent system of discipline be enforced and adhered to. Enforcing and adhering to such a system will assist in minimizing discipline problems and at the same time strengthen the program image.

4. It is recommended that community based classes and the vocational emphasis be reactivated since both are stated in the goals of the program.
5. It is recommended that students be strongly encouraged and expected to perform at their highest level of achievement.
6. It is recommended that the Point Option Program be expanded to include more minority students who could benefit from such a program.
7. It is recommended that more parental communication and involvement be incorporated into the program.
8. It is recommended that larger plant facilities be considered in order to provide Point Option and the other existing programs more space and a completely separate section of the facility for each program. This would help to minimize the confusion with other existing programs.

General: Further Research

1. It is recommended that a state-wide longitudinal study be conducted on a random sample of alternative schools' program goals and or objectives. Such a study will enable the assessment of long term gains of students who participate.
2. It is recommended that comparable alternative education program models be identified and evaluated to at least provide a comparative analysis of similar programs with compatible methods and goals and or objectives.

3. It is recommended that a longitudinal study be conducted on Point Option students who have completed the program from the point of entry to their current status.
4. It is recommended that a study be conducted on the effects the program has on teachers and administrators who have worked in the program five or more years.
5. It is suggested that the administrators of the Newport News School Division and the Point Option Alternative School Program study and implement the above programmatic recommendations.

Evaluator's Annotations

When the term "evaluation" is mentioned in public and private educational circles, it appears to create reactions of fear and suspicion. These reactions may be logical since many evaluations in the past were fault-finding. As a result, evaluation became synonymous with fault-finding. Contrary to the above reactions, evaluations are conducted for the purpose of providing useful information for personnel and or program improvement. Because there are negative connotations associated with evaluations, it is imperative that the evaluator be able to clearly communicate the intent or purpose of the evaluation to be conducted. It is important that the evaluator be prepared to explain what evaluation, is, what it does, the evaluation process to be used and the differences between evaluative research and other types of research. Finally, it is important that the evaluator address all concerns prior to the evaluation.

In reviewing the results of this evaluative study, there were several instances where there were significant differences in the responses of the Point Option teachers, parents and students. In those instances where teachers differed significantly from parents and students, the evaluator suspects that the teachers responses were based on their access to and knowledge of supporting data, in addition to their records and classroom observations. Whereas, parents and students responses were based primarily on their perceptions and limited observations.

The evaluator observed, among the Point Option students, what appeared to be a geniune concern for not only their academic success, but also, the academic success and emotional support of their peers. The evaluator also observed that students had great concern about the negative image, of the program, held by "outsiders" (non-participants in the program from the regular school community at large). However, when questioned about the negative image, the students did not see themselves as contributing to the negative image held by "outsiders." The students perceived themselves and the Point Option Program as successful and accordingly, the overall evaluation results supported this perception.

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APPENDIX A

ADDITIONAL DATA

Table 24

Additional Information

Question 7: Do you feel that students have acquired a positive attitude toward other individuals?

Frequency and Percentage Responses

	Yes	No	No Response	Multiple Response	Total
Teachers	8.0	___	___	___	8.0
	100.0				4.8
Parents	46.0	8.0	9.0	___	63.0
	73.0	12.7	14.3		37.7
Students	79.0	13.0	1.0	3.0	96.0
	82.3	13.5	1.0	3.1	57.5
Total	133.0	21.0	10.0	3.0	167.0
	79.6	12.6	6.0	1.8	100.0

$X^2 = 15.79$; df = 6; $p < .014$*

*Statistical Significance ($p \leq .05$)

Table 24 (Continued)

Question 8: Do you feel that students have acquired a positive attitude toward society?

Frequency and Percentage Responses

	Yes	No	No Response	Multiple Response	Total
Teachers	7.0	1.0	____	____	8.0
	87.5	12.5			4.8
Parents	52.0	3.0	8.0	____	63.0
	82.5	4.8	12.7		37.7
Students	89.0	6.0	1.0	____	96.0
	92.7	6.3	1.0		57.5
Total	148.0	10.0	9.0	____	167.0
	88.6	6.0	5.4		100.0

$X^2 = 11.22$; df = 4; $p < .024$*

*Statistical Significance ($p \leq .05$)

Table 24 (Continued)

Question 9: Do you feel that Point Option has helped students socially?

Frequency and Percentage Responses

	Yes	No	Response	Response	Total
Teachers	8.0	—	—	—	8.0
	100.0				4.8
Parents	42.0	13.0	8.0	—	63.0
	66.7	20.6	12.7		37.7
Students	78.0	15.0	1.0	2.0	96.0
	81.3	15.6	1.0	2.1	57.5
Total	128.0	28.0	9.0	2.0	167.0
	76.6	16.8	5.4	1.2	100.0

$X^2 = 15.15$; df = 6; $p < .019$*

*Statistical Significance ($p \leq .05$)

Table 24 (Continued)

Question 10: Do you feel that Point Option has helped students physically?

Frequency and Percentage Responses

	Yes	No	No Response	Multiple Response	Total
Teachers	7.0	1.0	____	____	8.0
	87.5	12.5			4.8
Parents	41.0	13.0	9.0	____	63.0
	65.1	20.6	14.3		37.7
Students	57.0	34.0	1.0	4.0	96.0
	59.4	35.4	1.0	4.2	57.5
Total	105.0	48.0	10.0	4.2	167.0
	62.9	28.7	6.0	2.4	100.0

$X^2 = 19.27$; df = 6; $p < .003$*

*Statistically Significant ($p \leq .05$)

Table 24 (Continued)

Question 11: Do you feel that Point Option has helped students mentally?

Frequency and Percentage Responses

	Yes	No	No Response	Multiple Response	Total
Teachers	8.0	___	___	___	8.0
	100.0				4.8
Parents	54.0	4.0	5.0	___	63.0
	85.7	6.3	7.9		37.7
Students	84.0	7.0	1.0	4.0	96.0
	87.5	7.3	1.0	4.2	57.7
Total	148.3	11.0	6.0	4.0	167.0
	87.4	6.6	3.6	2.4	100.0

$X^2 = 9.06$; df = 6; $p < .170$

APPENDIX B

SUMMARY OF OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

SUMMARY OF TEACHERS RESPONSES TO OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

1. Positive Changes Teachers Observed in Students at Point Option

One hundred percent of the teachers responded to the four open-ended questions on the teacher questionnaire. Teachers reported that they have observed the following positive changes in students attending Point Option: students seem to accept responsibility more; have more self confidence in their ability to study and pass courses; students self-esteem is enhanced; they often develop more openness with results; they are usually more vocal; dress better, have better attitudes and understanding; and have more concern for others.

2. Strengths of the Point Option Program

Teachers feel that the strengths of the program are: the caring teachers, relaxed atmosphere, personal attention, individual concern, individual instruction, small student body, informality of the program, a more comprehensive curriculum, and students learning to be more sensitive to others, to communicate better, and get along with adults.

3. Weaknesses of the Point Option Program

There was only one non-response to this question. However, teachers responding identified weaknesses of the program as: inconsistency in discipline, too lax, low black student enrollment, too few community based classes, insufficient "pressure" on students to perform up to their ability levels, too much freedom

for some students, limited understanding of each students' quirks and needs, defining Point Option, and too many programs in one school.

4. Changes Teachers Would Like To Make In The Point Option Program

Teachers reported that they would basically change the weaknesses reported in question number three. Additionally, teachers stated that they would enforce stricter adherence to student contracts and dismissal for students who do not live up to contract obligations; encourage the administration to place more emphasis on helping teachers to require better academic achievement of some students and help other students to live up to their academic potential; they would balance the school population in regards to race, remove some freedoms that students now enjoy, have separate location for programs, return to community classes; and would require more consistency among staff on attendance, more consistent handling of administrative duties, and clarify policies and procedures.

SUMMARY OF PARENTS RESPONSES TO THE OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

1. What positive changes have you observed in your child/ren since their participation in the Point Option Program?

Parents overwhelmingly ranked, in the order given, the following positive changes they observed in their child/ren: improved school attendance; improved academics; improved attitude; improved self-concept, self-awareness, self-confidence and self-esteem; better communications with others; more responsible, independent and mature. Other positive changes parents said they observed were: more motivation to attend and complete school, improved behavior, and less tension. Six percent of the parents did not respond to this question.

2. What do you feel are the strengths of the Point Option Program?

Parents listed the following as strengths of the Point Option Program: rapport between students and teachers; positive influence of teachers; smaller, shorter, more flexible classes; smaller teacher/student ratio; first name basis between students and staff; individual attention from teacher; program instills self-worth, self-esteem and responsibility in students; less structured atmosphere; a variety of subject matter; the availability of the teachers, counselors, and principal for counseling and assistance; better communication between teachers and parents; program teaches independence; the program provides a second opportunity for failing students; promotes better attitudes; and permits students to make

their own decisions. Six percent of the parents did not respond to this question.

3. What do you feel are the weaknesses of the Point Option Program?

In response to the question of weaknesses of the Point Option Program, parents listed the following as weaknesses: too casual, too much freedom, need more parent involvement, program presents less academic challenges, need bigger and better school, lack of fully publicized career/vocation program, need support from the school division (moral and financial), not enough direct supervision. Other statements of weaknesses included: lack of a cafeteria, not strict enough, presents problems for students who are not self-motivated, scheduling classes, lack of extra curricula activities, incomplete credits, guidance and counseling, students need to pull together to keep Point Option open, no report card, program appears a microcosm of normal high school without the demands, child not in the program long enough to evaluate weaknesses. Twelve percent of the parents did not see any weaknesses in the program. Twenty-four percent of the parents did not respond to this question?

4. What changes would you make in the Point Option Program?

Parents stated that they would like to make the following changes in the Point Option Program: have more parent involvement, introduce career/vocation selections to students early in the program, have more restrictions and a more structured environment, plan more publicity, expand the curriculum, add more staff and

additional funds. Single responses included: set up supervised study, institute a stricter acceptance program and group counseling program, make students more accountable for their time, include more extra-curricula activities, give students less free time, stress more respect for adult authority. Fifteen percent of the parents stated they would make no changes in the program and thirty three percent, did not respond to this question. Due to the large percentage of non-responses to this question, a random sample of the parents was asked why they did not respond to this question and they revealed that leaving the question blank indicated that they (parents) would make no changes in the program.

SUMMARY OF STUDENTS RESPONSES
TO OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

1. Why did you choose to participate in the Point Option Program?

Forty-one percent of the students stated that they chose Point Option because: they did not like their regular schools, they had problems coping, their regular schools were too impersonal, had too many rules, crowded and the staff did not care about them. Fifteen percent stated that they chose Point Option because of the freedom, pleasant atmosphere, fewer rules, individual attention, and smaller environment. Another twelve percent stated that Point Option gave them a second chance to do better because they were failing in regular school. The remaining students gave the following reasons for choosing to participate in Point Option: because friends or siblings participate; you can be yourself; you have to take responsibility for your actions; less dictatorship, pressures, criticisms; need to earn more credits; referred by parent, school psychologist, guidance counselor or significant other; could learn at my own pace; provides a different learning opportunity. Less than one percent of the students did not respond to this question.

2. List positive changes you have made since attending Point Option.

Twenty-nine percent listed better grades and more positive attitudes; twenty-four percent stated that they like and enjoy school now, they attend for themselves not for their parents or the system, and they don't mind attending school. Twenty-one percent stated that they feel more important, happier and have more self-

esteem. Twenty-one percent said that they communicated better with family, friends and, teachers. They listened better, and understood better. Seventeen percent said they are more responsible, another twelve percent said they are more self-confident. The remaining students listed the following changes students are: more polite, friendlier, caring and respectful of others and self; staying in school to graduate spending their time wisely; changing their study habits; becoming non-judgmental of others; using drugs less or not at all; and changing their appearance for the better. Less than one percent of the students did not respond to this question.

3. How has Point Option helped you to function as a knowledgeable citizen?

Fifty-one percent of the students responded that Point Option helped them to learn to respect people and their opinions; learn more about current events on a local, state, national and international level; learn to make decisions and accept responsibility for those decisions; learn to understand the system, how it works and expectations of citizens; they have become more involved in city programs, fundraisers, and community activities. Twenty-eight percent were uncertain of how Point Option had helped them to function as a knowledgeable citizen and twenty-one percent did not respond to this question.

4. In what area or field have you received vocational training?

The vocational training program was neither emphasized nor encouraged during the 1985-86 school year. However, six students

from the previous year continued their training in computer operations, cosmetology, and office work.

5. What bugs you at School?

Fifteen percent of the students responded that failing (knowing that they did not do their best) bug them. Thirteen percent said negative attitudes of new and old students, people who do not respect the program, and students participating in other programs that are housed in the same school bug them. The remaining responses varied less than one percent and included some of the following answers: students taking advantage of teachers, students who skip classes, teachers, drugs, long classes, homework, students from other programs in the building, and the immaturity of some of the students. Several students did not know what bugged them and several students did not respond to this question.

6. What makes you feel good at school?

Twenty-five percent of the students responded: Getting special or individual attention from teachers and staff who listen, care, and are considered your friends. Twenty-five percent responded: getting good grades, doing well and knowing that they are learning. Twenty-five percent said being with other students and friends and twenty-five percent responded: friendly people, family type atmosphere, getting along with everybody and closeness of staff and students. Less than one percent said achieving their goals, attending classes, receiving praise or good compliments from teachers, freedom of choice, making their own decisions, and a few

students did not know what made them feel good. Several students did not respond to this question.

7. What are the strengths of the program?

Thirty percent of the students responded that the friendliness, willingness of staff to help anytime, one on one individual attention given and shown by teachers are the greatest strength of the program. Twenty-eight percent of the students stated that the small, close, friendly, family type atmosphere with fewer people and smaller classes is another strength of the program. Eighteen percent responded that getting along, togetherness, caring about each other and freedom to choose classes were also considered strengths. Thirty-six percent listed other strengths as: the student-teacher relationship, students learning responsibility, building character, happier students, better attendance, more privileges learning respect for self and others, program provide students with a second chance, fosters independence, participating in field trips. Four students did not respond to this question.

8. What are the weaknesses of the Point Option Program?

Twenty-two percent of the students responded that there were no weaknesses in the Point Option Program. Twenty-one percent responded: students who do not try, care or have bad attitudes and students who take advantage of the program (thinking its a "copout"). Thirty-seven percent of the students gave the following responses: too many programs in one building, lack of community

support, slackness in punishing skippers, selling and using drugs, hard work, need more money, relaxed atmosphere, and the need for a hot lunch program. Twenty percent of the students did not respond.

9. What are the changes that you believe need to be made in the Point Option Program?

Twenty-nine percent of the students stated that no changes were needed in the program. Eleven percent indicated the need for a separate and larger school building just for Point Option students. Thirty percent of the responses were largely single responses that could not be categorized thematically, such responses as the need for: better public relations, financial assistance, enforcing attendance and other school policies, more activities, restrictions and teachers. Twenty one percent of the students did not respond to this question.

10. What makes you proud of Point Option?

Twenty-three percent of the students responded: the caring people, the togetherness, and the family type atmosphere. Another twenty-three percent responded: teachers and staff. Thirty percent stated academic progress, change in negative attitude toward schools and education, self-esteem, the special and individual attention, the freedom the students, reaching my goals and working to the best of my ability, maturing and becoming more responsible. The remaining percentage varied widely in their responses. Some of the responses were: respect for each other's individual rights, the way in which the school is operated, being able to graduate, and making their own decisions. Less than five percent of the

students said everything makes them proud of Point Option and less than five percent did not respond to this question.

APPENDIX C

CORRESPONDENCE

March 5, 1986

, Instructional
Specialist for Program Evaluation
and Central Records
Newport News School Division

Newport News, Virginia 23606

Dear :

I am currently a doctoral candidate at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, interested in evaluating an alternative school program which meets the following characteristics:

1. Designed for potential dropouts with average to above average abilities who are not functioning successfully in the traditional school.

2. Provides an educational program that is responsive to the needs of students who are unsuccessful in the traditional program.

3. Has been in existence five or more years with the same administrator.

4. Has fifty or more students.

5. Is located in a structure separate from the traditional school.

6. Is located in the Hampton Roads Area.

A review of alternative school programs in the Hampton Roads Area revealed that the Point Option Alternative School Program seems to meet all of the above characteristics. Hence, I am requesting your permission along with the permission of the Point Option Program Director to evaluate the program.

Enclosed are: an abstract, which gives the purpose and significance of the evaluation; a copy of the parents' letter and permission slip for your approval; and other information as required by your office. The evaluation will involve the distribution of the

questionnaires to students, teachers, and parents, however, all participants will remain anonymous. Your permission to conduct this evaluation will be greatly appreciated. If you have any questions, please contact me at .

Sincerely yours,

Gwendolyn H. Porter

Enclosures: 5

NEWPORT NEWS PUBLIC SCHOOLS
DATA PROCESSING & PROGRAM EVALUATION SERVICES

APPLICATION FOR RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY
1. Date Application Rec'd: _____
2. Permission Granted: YES NO
3. Date Final Results Rec'd: _____

1. Name of Applicant: Gwendolyn H. Porter

Address: _____ Phone Number: _ ___

2. School/Employment Affiliation: Doctoral Candidate - Virginia Polytechic Institute and State University
3. Sponsor and/or Motivation for Project: Chairman: Dr. Glen I. Earthman
I am interested in the effectiveness and success of alternative schools.
4. Title of Proposed Project:
An Evaluation Of The Point Option Alternative School Program.
5. Statement of Problem to Be Researched:
Lack of adequate evaluation research on the effectiveness of alternative school programs.
6. Listing of Resources and Support Being Requested: Point Option students and staff, parents and students addresses, access to student and school records and support from the Newport News School Division.
7. Estimate of Inclusive Calendar Dates Required to Complete the Project:
March 24 - June 13, 1986
8. Specify Benefits Projected for Newport News Public Schools: In depth study of the Point Option Program, data on the effectiveness and success of the program, and results that can be used to improve and/or expand the program.
9. Please Attach a one-page Abstract of the Research Proposal.
10. I acknowledge that any approval that may be granted for this request will be contingent upon acceptance of the following limitations:

A. Teacher/student/parent participation will be on a volunteer basis. Solicitation for volunteers will be made in accordance with guidelines established by the Instructional Specialist for Program Evaluation and Central Records, Newport News Public Schools.

B. All information and findings related to this project will be held in the strictest confidence by the investigator, until that information and findings have been reviewed by the Instructional Specialist for Program Evaluation and Central Records, Newport News Public Schools.

C. Final approval for initiation of this research project will not be in effect until one complete copy of the research proposal, a copy of each evaluative instrument to be used in the course of the project, and a copy of the informed consent form have been received by the Instructional Specialist for Program Evaluation and Central Records, Newport News Public Schools.

11. I do hereby affirm that responses to items 1-9 above are true and accurate to the best of my knowledge. Additionally, in the event that this application is approved, I agree to and accept, without reservations, the limitations listed in item 10 above.

_____
Applicant's Signature

March 5, 1986
Date

Please complete two copies. Return one copy to Data Processing & Program Evaluation, Attn.: Katherine Divine, Instructional Specialist for Program Evaluation and Central Records.

March 5, 1986

, Superintendent
Hampton City School Division

Dear :

I am currently a doctoral candidate majoring in Eduational Administration at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. I will be conducting an evaluation of the Point Option Alternative School Program in the Newport News School Division, however, before conducting the evaluation I need to have my instruments validated and tested. The instruments are currently in the process of being validated by a panel of experts, subsequently, I will need to test the instruments. Therefore, I am writing to request your permission to test the instruments on twenty of your alternative school students and two of your alternative school teachers on or before March 20.

Your consideration and cooperation will be greatly appreciated. If this request is approved, please inform me of the name and telephone number of the person I should contact to set a date and time to test the instruments.

I am thanking you in advance for your attention to this request. Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me at .

Sincerely yours,

Gwendolyn H. Porter

Hampton, Virginia 23663
March 24, 1986

Dear Parents:

I am currently a doctoral candidate at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University interested in studying alternative school programs that are effective and successful in keeping students in school.

I have been given permission by the Newport News School Division to evaluate the Point Option Alternative School Program, in which your child participates. In order to successfully evaluate the program, I need your permission and assistance in the following ways: (1) your participation in the evaluation as a parent and (2) your permission to review your child's records to determine academic and personal progress, if your child chooses to participate.

The purpose of this study is to determine the effectiveness and success of the Point Option Program in achieving its stated goals. It is hoped that the results of this study will not only facilitate growth within the program, but will be instrumental in providing information for decisions regarding the expansion of alternatives to more students who need this type of program.

The study will require that you answer the enclosed short questionnaire. Neither you nor your child will be identified in any way with the questionnaire that you complete, nor will your child's academic and personal progress be identified, and publication of the results will not be made without the permission of the Newport News School Division. If you have questions please call .

Please check your response on the attached permission slip, fill out the questionnaire, and return both in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope on or before April 30.

I am thanking you in advance for your consideration and cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Gwendolyn H. Porter

PERMISSION SLIP

Please check your response below and fill out the attached questionnaire and return both in the enclosed envelope on or before April 30.

_____ Yes, you have my permission to review my child's record for his/her academic and personal progress, if he/she chooses to participate in the study.

_____ No, permission is denied.

_____
Parent's Signature

_____
Child's Name

LETTER TO EXPERTS

March 5, 1986

Dear

Thank you for consenting to use your expertise to validate the enclosed instruments. These instruments, if validated, will be administered to students, teachers, and parents to ascertain their perceptions of the effectiveness and success of the Point Option Alternative School Program in achieving its goals.

Please judge the instruments for item clarity, objectivity, reliability, and content validity, and return to me with your comments and suggestions on or before March 14. I have enclosed a copy of my Goal Evaluation Description to aid you in judging content validity. If you need any other information, please call me .

Sincerely yours,

Gwendolyn H. Porter

APPENDIX D

PANEL OF EXPERTS

PANEL OF EXPERTS

, Chairman

Psychology Department

Hampton (Institute) University

Hampton, Virginia

, Director

The Norfolk Area Health Education

Center

Norfolk, Virginia

Research Professor (Retired, 1985)

Hampton (Institute) University

Hampton, Virginia

APPENDIX E

INSTRUMENTS

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Directions: Read each statement and question and circle your answer. Please make sure that you answer each item.

1. Did you choose to participate in the Point Option Program? Yes No
   Why? _____

   _____

   _____

2. Do you feel that the Point Option Program offers a community setting that contains fewer people and a smaller physical space than that offered by the regular schools? Yes No

3. Do you feel that the Point Option Program has helped you to make some positive changes in the way you think about yourself and express yourself? Yes No

   List the positive changes that you feel you have made since attending Point Option. _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

4. Do you feel that positive encouragement and comments from staff, and participating in individual and group activities have helped you to improve your self-concept? Yes No

5. Have you participated in meetings to discuss decisions on the operation of the Point Option Program? Yes No

6. Have you been asked for suggestions or your opinions on issues involving the Point Option Program? Yes No

7. Do you feel that you have explored different careers in Point Option than you did in the regular school program? Yes No

8. Do you feel that the Point Option Program has helped you to function as a knowledgeable citizen? Yes No
   How? _____

   _____

   _____

9. Do you feel that you have been placed in classes that have helped to improve your basic skills? Yes No

10. Do you feel that you have learned and know how to schedule your time wisely as a result of being taught in Point Option? Yes No

11. Do you participate in:

    a. Field trips? Yes No

    b. Attend special interest programs? Yes No

    c. Are the field trips and special interest programs any different from the regular schools? Yes No

12. Do you feel that you have participated in activities that have helped you to acquire a positive attitude toward:

    a. Education? Yes No

    b. Individuals? Yes No

    c. Society? Yes No

    d. Yourself? Yes No

13. Do you feel that you have received training through the Point Option Program? Yes No

    a. In what area or field? _____

    b. Have you volunteered your services to the school and community since your training? Yes No

14. Do you feel that you are in classes that meet your needs and interests? Yes No

    a. Did you help plan these classes? Yes No

    b. Did you choose these classes? Yes No

15. Do you feel that the Point Option Program has helped you:

    a. With your grades? Yes No

    b. With your social life? Yes No

    c. With your health? Yes No

    d. To get your head straight? Yes No

16. Do you feel that the Point Option Program has kept you in school? Yes No

17. When you are bugged at school, what bugs you? _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

18. When you feel good at school, what makes you feel good?

    _____

    _____

    _____

19. Are you proud to be in the Point Option Program? Yes No

20. What do you feel are the strengths of the Point Option Program? _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

21. What do you feel are the weaknesses of the Point Option Program? _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

22. What changes do you believe need to be made in the Point Option Program? _____

_____

_____

23. Would you summarize the Point Option Program as successful? Yes No

24. Would you recommend the Point Option Program to other students? Yes No

25. What makes you proud of the Point Option Program? _____

_____

_____

_____

TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Directions: Read each statement or question and circle your answer. Please make sure that you answer each item.

1. Do you feel that the Point Option Program offers a community setting that contains fewer people and a smaller physical space than that offered by the regular school? Yes No

2. Since you have been teaching in the Point Option Program, have you observed any positive changes in the way students think and/or express themselves? Yes No

   a. List some of the major changes you have observed: _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   b. Do you feel that Point Option students' participation in individual and group projects, receiving positive encouragement from staff and improved grade reports helped to contribute to the positive changes in Point Option students? Yes No

3. Have you participated in meetings to discuss the operation of the Point Option Program? Yes No

4. Were you given an opportunity to make suggestions and/or comments to help improve the Point Option Program? Yes No

5. Do you feel that Point Option students have the opportunity to explore career options through experiential learning opportunities in the community? Yes No

6. Are the career options in the Point Option Program different from the career options offered in the traditional school program? Yes No

7. Do you feel that Point Option students have been exposed to resources that will help them to function as knowledgeable citizens? Yes No

8. Do you feel that Point Option students are placed in classes based on diagnostic test results? Yes No

9. Do you assist in Point Option's student class placement? Yes No

10. Do you feel that Point Option students have learned how to schedule their time wisely as a result of being taught in Point Option? Yes No

11. Do you feel that Point Option students participation in field trips and attending special interest programs have been successful? Yes No

12. Do you feel that Point Option students have participated in planned activities that have encouraged positive attitudes toward:

    a. Education? Yes No

    b. Individuals? Yes No

    c. Society? Yes No

    d. Themselves? Yes No

13. Do you feel that the vocationally trained Point Option students have volunteered their skills to serve the:

    a. Community? Yes No

    b. School? Yes No

14. Have you assisted students in planning curriculums to meet their needs and interests? Yes No

15. Do you feel that the Point Option Program has helped its students:

    a. Academically? Yes No

    b. Socially? Yes No

    c. Physically? Yes No

    d. Mentally? Yes No

16. Do you feel that Point Option has been successful in keeping its students in school? Yes No

17. What do you feel are the strengths of the Point Option Program? _____

_____

_____

_____

18. What do you feel are the weaknesses of the Point Option Program? _____

_____

_____

_____

19. What changes would you make in the Point Option Program?

_____

_____

_____

_____

20. Would you summarize the Point Option Program as successful? Yes No

21. Would you recommend the Point Option Program to other:

a. Teachers? Yes No

b. Students? Yes No

c. Parents? Yes No

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Directions: Read each statement or question and circle your answer. Please make sure that you answer each item.

1. Do you as a parent feel that the Point Option Program offers a community setting that contains fewer people and a smaller physical space than that offered by the regular school? Yes No

2. Since your child has been participating in the Point Option Program, have you seen a positive change/s in the way he/she thinks and/or expresses him/herself? Yes No

   a. List the changes that you have seen in your child since attending Point Option:

   _____

   _____

   _____

   b. Do you feel that the Point Option Program contributed to the positive change/s in your child? Yes No

3. Have you participated in meetings to discuss decisions on the operation of the Point Option Program? Yes No

4. Have you as a parent been asked for suggestions or your opinions on issues involving the Point Option Program? Yes No

5. Do you feel that your child has explored different careers in Point Option than he/she did in the regular school? Yes No

6. Do you feel that the Point Option Program has helped your child to function as a knowledgeable citizen? Yes No

7. Do you feel that your child has been placed in classes that have helped to improve his/her basic skills? Yes No

8. Do you feel that your child has learned and knows how to schedule his/her time wisely as a result of being taught in the Point Option Program? Yes No

9. Does your child participate in:

   a. Field trips? Yes No

   b. Attend special interest programs? Yes No

10. Do you feel that your child has participated in activities that have helped him/her to acquire a positive attitude toward:

   a. Education? Yes No

   b. Individuals? Yes No

   c. Society? Yes No

   d. Themselves? Yes No

11. Has your child been trained in a vocational skill through the Point Option Program? Yes No

   a. In what area or field? _____

   b. Has your child volunteered services to the school and/or community since his/her training? Yes No

12. Do you feel that your child is in classes that meet his/her needs and interests? Yes No

13. Do you feel that the Point Option Program has helped your child:

   a. Academically? Yes No

   b. Socially? Yes No

   c. Physically? Yes No

   d. Mentally? Yes No

14. Do you as a parent feel that you have been kept up-to-date

   a. On your child's progress at school? Yes No

   b. On your child's problems at school? Yes No

15. Do you feel comfortable contacting the school about your child? Yes No

16. Do you feel that the Point Option Program has kept your child in school? Yes No

17. What do you feel are the strengths of the Point Option Program? _____

_____

_____

_____

18. What do you feel are the weaknesses of the Point Option Program? _____

_____

_____

_____

19. What changes would you make in the Point Option Program?

_____

_____

_____

_____

20. Would you summarize the Point Option Program as successful? Yes No

21. Would you recommend the Point Option Progam to other parents? Yes No

APPENDIX F

STUDENT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

STUDENT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Why did you choose to participate in the Point Option Program?
2. What positive changes do you feel that you have made since participating in the Point Option Program?
3. How has Point Option helped you to function as a citizen?
4. What are some of the things at school that bug you?
5. What are some of the things at school that make you happy?
6. What do you feel are the strengths of the Point Option Progam?
7. What do you feel are the weaknesses of the Point Option Program?
8. What changes do you believe need to be made in the Point Option Program?
9. What makes you proud of the Point Option Program?
10. Why would you recommend the Point Option Program to other students?

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