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A Study of the Perceptions of Administrators and Faculty Regarding the Relevancy and Frequency of Effective Characteristics of Alternative Schools in Indiana

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A STUDY OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF ADMINISTRATORS AND FACULTY REGARDING THE RELEVANCY AND FREQUENCY OF EFFECTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS IN INDIANA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to conclude if there is a difference in the perceptions between alternative school directors and alternative school teachers with regards to the extent of existence of effective characteristics and the importance of effective characteristics in their alternative education programs throughout the state of Indiana. Lead directors and teachers were asked to rate the existence of 40 alternative school characteristics and the importance of these same characteristics in their respective alternative schools. Each characteristic was classified into one of seven categories: (1) School Climate, (2) Student Needs, (3) Instruction/Curriculum, (4) Student Services, (5) Faculty Needs, (6) Community Support, and (7) Leadership. The formation of these seven composite variables originated from the Perceptions of Alternative Schools Survey, in which 40 research-based questions were categorized into these seven ubiquitous elements that make the greatest impact upon the effectiveness of successful alternative schools. Demographic data about each school and biographic data on each lead director and teacher were also collected.

The research instrument, Perceptions of Alternative Schools Survey, was emailed to 141 lead directors. The directors were responsible for one or more alternative education programs that filed an annual program profile with the Indiana Department of Education. Upon completion the director electronically forwarded the same survey to three certified teachers, where applicable, who were employed in their respective alternative schools. Forty-three

percent of the lead directors returned the survey; while, approximately 20% of the teachers responded to the survey.

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for all statistical analysis. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for biographic and demographic data. Means and standard deviations were calculated for perceptions of existence and importance of the effective alternative school characteristics for both lead directors and certified teachers. Two MANOVA tests, one for existence and the other for importance, were conducted with the alternative school positions of lead directors and certified teachers as the two different levels of the independent variable and the mean scores of their perceptions of the seven composite alternative school characteristics as the dependent variables. After a multivariate effect was performed, follow-up ANOVA tests were conducted to compare lead directors with teachers on the existence and importance of each composite variable. If a significant univariate effect was discovered, then additional ANOVA tests were conducted to compare lead directors with teachers on the existence and on the importance of each subset of questions within the significant composite variable(s).

Both lead directors and teachers reported strong agreement that 83% of the research-based characteristics existed in their alternative schools; while, both groups agreed 95% of these characteristics were very important. With respect to existence and importance, significance was not found between the perceptions of lead directors and teachers across the seven composite alternative school characteristics. However, there existed perceptional differences between lead directors and teachers in the area of school climate, especially with class size and student conduct. Additionally, there were perceptional differences of importance

between lead directors and teachers in the area of instruction/curriculum, especially with high student-teacher academic expectations and individualized student instruction.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Illustrations of the degradation of society's moral compass and issues from the recent economic downturn are running rampant throughout America's public educational system with increasing percentages of school violence, at-risk students, teenage pregnancy rates, poverty rates, suspension and expulsion rates, absenteeism rates, and high school dropout rates. For example, the National Commission on Excellence in Education stated the following in its report, *A Nation At Risk,* "If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war" (as cited in Gardner, 1983, p. 3). This alarming statistical data has had a tremendous impact upon the nationwide educational goal of leaving no child behind. There has never been a more critical time period in our country for bold educational reform of our traditional public schools and of our alternative public schools. An emerging dilemma school officials are facing is student discipline and the examination of the effectiveness of traditional exclusionary consequences (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2000). With the increase of problematic student behavior, school administration's conscientious and creative methods of effective control should still provide continuing opportunities for student learning. As a result, the utilization of alternative education programs must continue to be emphasized and prioritized

instead of zero-tolerance policies, irrational practices, and uncompromising decisions (Skiba, 2004).

Instinctively, the proverbial question, 'What is the purpose of American education?' comes to the forefront of this national crisis. The answer should be to establish lifelong learners, productive workers, and dependable American citizens. In order to contribute to this resolution, the materialization of alternative education programs has been a beneficial supplement to the traditional public school because it can meet the academic, behavioral, and societal needs of at-risk students. Morley (1991) was the first researcher to define alternative education through the lens of socialization, by establishing the following description:

> Alternative education is a perspective, not a procedure or program. It is based upon the belief that there are many ways to become educated, as well as many types of environments and structures within which this may occur. Further, it recognizes that all people can be educated and that it is in the society's interest to ensure that all are educated to at least…[a] general high school…level. To accomplish this requires that we provide a variety of structures and environments such that each person can find one that is sufficiently comfortable to facilitate progress. (p. 8)

Unequivocally, a student's opportunity to learn, to pursue a desirable occupation, and to develop a strong quality of life is contingent upon their educational attempt and attainment (Reimer & Cash, 2003). As declared in recent and prominent federal enactments, *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) and *Free and Appropriate Public Education* (FAPE), this opportunity to learn should not be denied to students. However, according to Lucas, Steiger, and Gamble (2003),

> Young people come to alternative schools and programs for a variety of reasons – they are about to be expelled and this is their last chance; the judge requires it; they cannot

> handle the social or academic pressures of traditional school; they hate school and want to quit; they need to work. The list of reasons is long, but these students have something in common: they are failing in the system and the system is failing them. (Lucas et al., 2003, p. 19)

It is becoming more and more apparent that traditional methods of discipline (i.e. out-of-school suspensions and expulsions) are exacerbating school failure and student failure. Thus, school corporations that offer alternative education programs for all students are complying with legal requirements "to provide an equal access to education" (Reimer & Cash, 2003, p. 5).

For clarification and identification purposes, the United States Department of Education defined an alternative school in the following manner,

> a public elementary/secondary school that addresses needs of students that typically cannot be met in a regular school, provides nontraditional education, serves as an adjunct to a regular school, or falls outside the categories of regular, special education, or vocational education. (Young, 2002, p. 55)

Therefore, our troubled youth that don't succeed in the traditional school environment shouldn't be placed into some isolated and unproductive alternative setting, but they need to be encouraged and challenged to succeed in a high quality alternative education program that will train and equip them to compete in today's global economy and labor market. Herein constitutes the two philosophical differences of alternative education programs. One philosophy of alternative education focuses upon changing the student and the program seeks to develop interventions that will reform the student (Quinn, Poirier, Faller, Gable, & Tonelson, 2006). In contrast, if the alternative education philosophy believes that the system needs to be

changed, then alternative programming will provide innovative curriculum and differentiated instructional strategies that better address each individual's needs (Quinn et al., 2006).

Regarding the state of Indiana's philosophy of alternative education, in 1997, Indiana lawmakers authorized legislation that provided significant funding for the development of alternative education programs to assist more at-risk students in attaining a high school diploma that weren't having success in a conventional school environment. Besides academic problems, other barriers or areas of difficulties that alternative school students face are behavior problems, social difficulties, health issues, and family dysfunctions. As a result, during the past two decades, there has been a significant increase in the number of alternative education programs. During the 2007-08 school year, the National Center on Education Statistics reported 10,300 public alternative schools serving approximately 646,500 students across the United States, compared to approximately 6,200 alternative schools in operation during the 1993-94 school year (Carver, Lewis, & Tice, 2010; Kleiner, Porch, & Farris, 2002). According to Smink and Schargel (2004), "Alternative schools have been shown to be successful with potential dropouts by reducing truancy, helping them accumulate high school credits, helping them to improve attitudes toward school, and reducing behavior problems" (p. 168).

Consequently, the perceptions of effectiveness and the differing fundamental philosophies of alternative education programs have created a profile of essential characteristics and vital practices. Research by Schargel and Smink (2001) discovered that successful alternative education schools possessed the following characteristics: (a) total commitment to have each student be a success, (b) maximum teacher/student ratio of 1:10, (c) small student base not exceeding 250 students, (d) clearly stated mission and discipline code, (e) caring faculty with continual staff development pertaining to students at-risk, (f) school staff that has

high expectations for student achievement, (g) learning program that is specific to the student's expectations and learning style, and (h) flexible school schedule with community involvement and support. Adherence to the aforementioned prescriptive characteristics of alternative education programs should increase student achievement, with respect to more adolescent youth attaining a high school diploma, and decrease student misconduct, with respect to less adolescent youth being expelled and/or suspended from school. This reduction of dropout rates, expulsion rates, suspension rates, and recidivism rates will, undoubtedly, develop more productive members of our society. As Reimer and Cash (2003) stated, "If we believe that all children can learn, we have the obligation to discover how we can help them to learn" (p. 4). As otherwise stated, one could surmise that the motto for alternative schools should be the following, Our method of teaching and learning is alternative, not our students. Thus, an effective alternative school epitomizes a caring and supportive community, an engaging and flexible curriculum guide, and a methodical and organized strategic plan for student success (Raywid, 1994).

This study replicated certain components of the research questions and methodology conducted by Gooden (2009). In addition, this study replicated the survey instrument originally designed by Wiseman (1996) with revisions performed by Dr. Leslie Clark, formerly known as McAffee (1999). In Gooden's (2009) study, alternative high schools in Missouri were used as her research population; while this study utilized alternative schools with various grade configurations throughout the state of Indiana as its population. The rationale for the replication of the research questions, methodology, and survey instrument was that this well-designed systematic process may lead to important data and results that Indiana public school corporations may use to develop or improve its alternative education programs.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to conclude if there is a difference in the perceptions between alternative school directors and alternative school teachers with regards to the extent of existence of effective characteristics and the importance of effective characteristics in their alternative education programs throughout the state of Indiana. These different types of effective characteristics were determined through the literature review on alternative education programs.

The effectiveness of alternative education programs in Indiana were measured using the perceptions of lead directors who are responsible for the daily management and visionary aspirations of their respective alternative schools, and the perceptions of teachers who are responsible for the daily instruction and maximization of student learning. Information from this research may be used by central office administrators to develop an effective alternative school that will meet the needs of these students attending these different types of alternative education programs. An additional application for this study may be for the proposal of effective professional development strategies for existing alternative education faculty. Lead directors and faculty may also use this study to formerly assess an alternative education program through the existence of the effective characteristics in their schools and establish any changes they may want to make to improve their effective traits and practices in their schools.

Research Questions

This study examined effective characteristics of alternative education programs as perceived by lead directors and teachers in alternative schools in the state of Indiana. It sought to conclude if there is a difference in perceptions of the existence of these characteristics and if

there is a difference in the perceived importance of these characteristics by the teachers and lead directors. The following were the research questions:

1) Is there difference between alternative school lead directors' and faculty members' perceptions on the linear composite of school climate, student needs, instruction/curriculum, student services, faculty needs, community support, and leadership, regarding the existence of these effective characteristics of alternative school programs?
2) Is there difference between alternative school lead directors' and faculty members' perceptions on the linear composite of school climate, student needs, instruction/curriculum, student services, faculty needs, community support, and leadership, regarding the importance of these effective characteristics of alternative school programs?

Null Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested:

1. There is no significant difference between alternative school lead directors' and faculty members' perceptions on the linear composite of school climate, student needs, instruction/curriculum, student services, faculty needs, community support, and leadership, regarding the existence of these effective characteristics of alternative school programs.

2. There is no significant difference between alternative school lead directors' and faculty members' perceptions on the linear composite of school climate, student needs, instruction/curriculum, student services, faculty needs, community support, and leadership, regarding the importance of these effective characteristics of alternative school programs.

Significance of Study

The significance of this study was to determine if currently established, alternative education programs in Indiana assist at-risk youth. The majority of alternative education programs in Indiana are designed to provide an education for troubled students in order to give them a second chance to acquire a high school diploma. Students who attend alternative education programs have a greater percentage of graduating from high school; thus, allowing them to become more productive members of our society and better educated citizens of our country (Shannon & Blysma, 2006). Alternative school teachers and directors need to monitor and evaluate their alternative schools on an annual basis to see if goals are being accomplished by all stakeholders.

Delimitations

The scope of this study had the following delimitations:

1. Participants and alternative schools in Indiana.
2. Alternative schools operated by public school districts as reported on the Indiana Department of Education's alternative education program website.
3. Only lead directors or their respective administrators and three certified teachers (where applicable) from each responding alternative education program for at-risk youth in Indiana during the 2009-10 school year were surveyed.

Limitations

The scope of this study was limited to the following:

1. Survey data depended on self-report and self-perceptions of study participants.
2. Since there were no email addresses listed for alternative school teachers on the IDOE's alternative education website, a complex web-based survey platform relied

on one individual, the lead director, to forward initial email, sent by the researcher, to three certified teachers in a purely randomized manner.

3. Technological complications ranged from inaccurate email addresses of lead directors, spam filters blocking sent emails, and some alternative schools not having email or internet access.

Definition of Terms

Alternative education can be defined as schools or programs that are set up by school corporations or other organizations to serve adolescents who, for a variety of reasons, are not succeeding in a traditional public school environment (Ruzzi & Kraemer, 2006). Alternative schools and programs focus on what they can offer the student, not on past problems that the student has encountered. Public alternative education serves to ensure that every young person may find a path to the community's educational goals (Aron, 2003).

An *alternative school* is an established environment that is separate from the traditional school. With policies and guidelines, objectives, staff, and resources designed to accommodate student needs, an alternative school provides a comprehensive education consistent with the goals established by the supporting school corporation (Aron, 2003).

Alternative school faculty and *alternative school teacher* are used interchangeably referring to those who are employed as certified teachers.

Alternative school lead director and *alternative school administrator* are used interchangeably referring to the individual who is responsible for the direction, management, and evaluation of alternative school faculty members.

An *at-risk student* is any child who is unlikely to graduate within four years with both the skills and self-esteem necessary to exercise meaningful options in the areas of work, leisure, culture, civic affairs, and inter/intra personal relationships (Sagor & Cox, 2003).

An *expulsion* is a disciplinary action taken by a building-level administrator to remove a student from the traditional school setting for the remainder of the semester, school year, or calendar year dependent upon the severity of the infraction. Indiana code 20-33-8-3 defines an expulsion as a disciplinary action whereby a student is separated from school attendance for a period exceeding 10 school days, is separated from school attendance for the balance of the current semester or current year, or is separated from school attendance which may include an assignment to attend an alternative school, an alternative educational program, or a homebound educational program (Indiana General Assembly, 2009).

IDOE is an acronym for Indiana Department of Education, which is the governmental agency that provides oversight, support, and leadership for all Indiana public school corporations.

An *out-of-school suspension* is a disciplinary action taken by a building-level administrator to deprive a student from the privilege of attending school from one to 10 consecutive school days. Indiana code 20-33-8-7 defines a suspension as a disciplinary action that does not constitute an expulsion, whereby a student is separated from school attendance for a period of not more than 10 school days (Indiana General Assembly, 2009).

A *traditional school* is an established environment designed to provide a comprehensive education to the general public to which assignment of students is made more on the basis of geographical location than on unique educational need (Aron, 2003).

Zero-tolerance policies are policies that address school safety and student discipline by requiring expulsion of students who are in possession of weapons, drugs, or commit violent acts during the school day or at a school-sponsored event.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Related Literature

In a society defined by immense pressures of family dissolutions, violence, drugs, and revolutionary technology, traditional approaches to discipline have become futile in most public school systems. The current practice of student discipline, especially regarding out-of-school suspensions and expulsions, needs to be closely scrutinized and monitored for their effectiveness and value in the production and maturation of young adolescent youth into competent and well-educated, adult citizens of our society. As Davidow (2006) stated, "the challenge for educators is to encourage difficult students to change instead of simply disciplining or suspending them" (p. 34). Even though it is tempting for educators to dispose of high school students, there will always be other students waiting to take their place. Thus, the vicious cycle of expulsions and out-of-school suspensions stands in stark contrast to the idealistic values of all children can and will learn and no child left behind.

This ethical dilemma of suspension versus tolerance affects every public school administrator and is observed by the American taxpayers from annual school performance report cards published by the local, state, and national media outlets. In particular, the trend data, retrieved from the Indiana Department of Education, for the past three years regarding school suspensions in the state of Indiana are as follows:

1) In the 2007-08 school year, there were 6,026 expulsions and 317,078 total suspensions.
2) In the 2006-07 school year, there were 6,095 expulsions and 332,168 total suspensions.
3) In the 2005-06 school year, there were 6,656 expulsions and 313,322 total suspensions. (Indiana Department of Education Alternative Education Statistics, 2009)

This statistical data represents the total number of expulsions and suspensions that occurred throughout each respective school year; while, it does not account for the total number of students receiving expulsions or suspensions because of recidivism possibilities. In other words, a student may receive multiple suspensions during a school year, or a student may get expelled once each semester, resulting in two expulsions for the school year. A recent educational policy brief ranked Indiana first in expulsions (as percent of student enrollment) and ninth in suspensions (Washburn, Stowe, Cole, & Robinson, 2007). These suspension and expulsion numbers are astonishing and are clearly not declining at an acceptable percentage. Research confirms that students who are suspended, are eventually expelled, then drop out of school, which means they are more likely to be unemployed, endure poverty, experience divorce, and incur poor health (Lucas et al., 2003). In addition, these uneducated students are more susceptible to substance abuse and criminal activity. It is definitely an understatement to state that student discipline is a concern and that different alternative education programs need to be discussed and implemented.

Consequently, alternative education programs have emerged as one of the most critical factors in improving America's public education system. Maintaining effective student

discipline requires school officials to develop new techniques for many at-risk students who have become disengaged with the conventional educational setting, since "the old ways don't work with today's problems" (Ramsey, 1994, p. 3). Historically, the two most common practices of enforcing appropriate student conduct are the distribution of out-of-school suspensions and the recommendation of expulsions (Sautner, 2001). As alternative schools are expanding across the country due to increasing student misconduct, Neeld (1998) stated the following dilemma, "Chronic truants, teenage moms, or exceptional education students were previously served in alternative education; however, with the wave of zero tolerance a wider range of disruptive student is joining the new path being forged" (p. 25). The traditional methods of administering out-of-school suspensions and expulsions to disruptive and unruly students over the past decade have not enhanced our society but, more importantly, has deprived learning from occurring in those adolescents of portentous need. As Holland (2005) stated, "Suspensions serve a double edged sword…which may make the school climate enjoyable for a short period of time, but removal from the school environment does not remedy the situation for the student on a long term basis" (p. 2). This perplexing conundrum of trying to meet the societal needs of disenfranchised youth can be enhanced through the effective implementation and utilization of alternative education programs, of which this study attempted to emphasize some essential characteristics that are successful in a non-traditional educational environment.

This research synthesis is organized into the following sections: (a) to examine a brief history of alternative education programs; (b) to emphasize legal context impacting alternative education programs; (c) to identify different types of alternative education programs; (d) to analyze student impact factors affected by alternative education programs; and (e) to evaluate

effective characteristics of alternative education programs. The last section is a review of the Gooden (2009) study.

A Brief History of Alternative Education Programs

The historical perspective of alternative education began with student discipline as the impetus for public school officials to evaluate the effectiveness of their customary methods of correction. Traditionally, schools dealt with inappropriate student behavior through corporal punishment, detention, community services, and school suspensions (Holland, 2005). Young (1990) asserted that even among these traditional schools the history of alternative education has existed since the origin of public education in America. The historical foundation of our educational system differed based upon race, gender, and social status, which continues to set the precedent of our ever-evolving American public education system (Young, 1990). For example, the educational system of colonial America was conducted by a variety of religious groups and independently wealthy bureaucrats (Reimer & Cash, 2003). During the first century of our country's existence, the evolution of our educational system was greatly influenced by Horace Mann's beliefs and practices of the common school. However, during the last quarter of the 19th century and the first quarter of the 20th century, another prominent educational figure, John Dewey, arose with a contrasting educational epistemology from Horace Mann.

Differing from Mann's traditionalistic philosophy, John Dewey asserted that social life and education would begin to change due to the recent evolution of America's industrialization (Cremin, 1961). Two of Dewey's most prominent and popular beliefs were that education must endure a complete transformation in order to have any purpose in one's life and that education shouldn't create a disconnect from reality and practicality compared to current traditional methodology (Cremin, 1961). Hence, Dewey's philosophy became the foundation of the

progressive school movement of the 1920s. The underlying premise of these progressive schools believed in student individuality, freedom, flexibility, and sociality (Ozmon & Craver, 1992). The daily practice and operation of these progressive schools consisted of coordinating and aligning curriculum and subject matter in relation to the particular interests of each student and of the surrounding community (Cremin, 1961). The culmination of the progressive school movement lasted until the beginning of World War II. However, Dewey's viewpoint of social education continued, especially in inner cities, because he emphasized that "humans are social beings who must learn to participate in and direct their own affairs" (Gregory, 1998, p. 4).

As a result of John Dewey's influence upon America's public education system, he has been considered to be the father of the modern alternative school movement because of his recognition that all children have different learning styles (Reimer & Cash, 2003). He wanted to establish alternative schools with mission and vision statements that would depart from Mann's ideological departures that everyone can learn in the same manner. Dewey's progressive philosophy was to individualize student learning and to encourage schools to get away from the factory-like model of education (Reimer & Cash, 2003). His message of applicable teaching methods and germane content, now classified as differentiated instruction, was more than just suppositional theory, as it became instrumental for the survival of modern education. Reaffirmation of this assertion that alternative education has always existed in America and Dewey's emergence of differentiated instructional practices are connected to the following statement about America's disparity by Wald and Losen (2003), "The public school system in the United States, like the country as a whole, is plagued by vast inequalities – that all too frequently are defined along lines of race and class" (p. 9). In accordance with this declaration, alternative education continued to evolve and expand within the first two centuries

of our nation due to the increasing dilemma of the civil rights movement (Lange & Sletten, 2002).

In fact, during the 1950s and 1960s, America's public education system was condemned as being segregated, racist, and elitist (Lange & Sletten, 2002). It was also during this historical era that educational reform ideas, such as longer school days, site-based management, achievement testing, better assessment practices, and alternative education strategies began to be discussed throughout our nation (Gregory, 1998). An accurate description of America's public schools during this time period came from Raywid (1981) who depicted schools as "cold, dehumanizing, irrelevant institutions, largely indifferent to the humanity and the 'personhood' of those within them" (p. 551). Concurrently in history, America was dealing with alarming issues of poverty, in conjunction with the authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, which enhanced further social stratification by emphasizing excellence over equity (Lange & Sletten, 2002). According to Young (1990), it was at this historical point in our educational system that the focus on excellence was substituted by the humanistic goal of equity. In order to accommodate these vacillating values of excellence versus equity, the United States government began to develop alternatives to education throughout our nation by implementing alternative schools that would provide an equal and appropriate education to disadvantaged and minority students (Lange & Sletten, 2002).

Thus, the development of formal alternative education programs began to emerge across the country, especially for minority and disadvantaged students. Near the end of the 1960s, the following types of alternative education existed: those programs outside of public education and those programs within the public school system (Lange & Sletten, 2002). Two categories of outside alternative education programs were *Freedom Schools* and the *Free School*

Movement (Lange & Sletten, 2002). These *Freedom Schools* were established by community people who focused on improving the quality of education for minority students who were receiving a poor public education by removing them from that environment and placing them in school settings ranging from church basements to store fronts (Lange & Sletten, 2002). According to Graubard (1972), community control of education progressed as groups of vanguarded and oppressed people fought for and took control of their children's education through the implementation of these newly formed alternative schools. Popular in the southeast, the preeminent mission and philosophy of these freedom schools was to educate African-American students into well-respected and productive citizens through the enculturation of black history and unique power structures combined with effective reading, writing, and speaking skills (Quinn et al., 2006).

The second type of alternative education that opposed the existing educational system was referred to as the *Free School Movement*. The foundation of this movement was based upon the principles of individual achievement and fulfillment rather than equity and community (Lange & Sletten, 2002). This free school movement was credited to A. S. Neill, an innovative educator who established a private residential school called Summerhill in Great Britain who believed that conventional schools restricted students learning capacity and personal freedoms (Quinn et al., 2006). In other words, students of Free Schools were encouraged to think and learn freely without any restrictions or hindrances. As noted by Hopkins (1979), Free Schools possessed the following characteristics:

1) There was no required learning and no set discipline or controls imposed on students (natural consequences were assumed to prevail).

2) The only moral value taught was that 'everyone has an equal right to self-determined fulfillment.'
3) Evaluation did not consist of assessing progress toward learning goals, but of the 'learning environment in its ability to facilitate the investigations the students desire and find rewarding.' (p. 48)

Both of these alternative schools emphasized that a uniform and rigid educational system that isolated certain demographic and socio-economic groups wouldn't be endured (Lange & Sletten, 2002). In addition, these types of alternative education pursued the freedom to learn without placing restrictions upon the students (Tissington, 2006). According to Tissington, "Educational choice and the notion that not all students learn in the same way may be attributed to the Freedom Movement" (p. 19). Another valid point of emphasis regarding the emergence and characterization of alternative education emanated from Raywid (1994):

> Despite the ambiguities and the emergence of multiple alternatives, two enduring consistencies have characterized alternative schools from the start: they have been designed to respond to a group that appears not to be optimally served by the regular program, and, consequently have represented varying degrees of departure from standard school organization, programs, and environments. (p. 26)

These alternatives outside of the public school system were the first initiatives of transforming the traditional educational system and of inspiring educational reform for the past quarter century. Their contribution to the alternative education growth resonated in the emphasis of educational choice and varying classroom instructional strategies for students. In reaction to this social crisis of racism and school segregation, alternative education emerged with goals of providing more student freedom, decreasing adult supervision, decreasing bureaucracy issues,

and personalizing educational instruction (McKee & Conner, 2007). The inspiration of these alternatives outside of the public education system produced an introspective approach to educational reform within the public school system.

In comparison, alternative education programs that existed within the public school system were described as *Open Schools* (Lange & Sletten, 2002). These alternatives were distinguished by choices from parents, students, and teachers, self-paced learning, non-competitive learning, and a student-centered curriculum (Young, 1990). Additional expansion opportunities of the Open School concept transpired the following types of public alternatives at all educational levels:

1) Schools without walls which invited community members to come in and teach particular concepts to students.
2) Schools within a school which developed smaller learning communities inside of large high schools.
3) Multicultural schools which integrated culture and ethnicity into the curriculum.
4) Continuation schools which created options for students struggling in school due to academic and/or social reasons.
5) Learning centers which incorporated vocational education, special education, and other special student resources into the school environment.
6) Fundamental schools which focused on improving academic rigor for the highly intellectual and high performing students.
7) Magnet schools which offered an integrated curriculum attracting a racially and culturally diverse group of students. (Young, 1990)

These public alternative options were not just an extension of democracy but viewed as a necessary instrument for rejuvenating the American education system. According to Raywid (1981), there were five main reasons for the increase in alternative schooling: (1) growing vandalism, violence, and truancy issues, (2) more cooperation with juvenile justice and crime prevention programs, (3) increasing desegregation mandates, (4) escalating public school criticism, and (5) declining student enrollment in the public schools. These reasons were validated and endorsed during the 1980s with the decline of the urban setting and the sudden influx of people moving to the suburban locations, prompting large urban school districts to create alternative magnet schools that would offer everything equivalent to that of the wealthy suburban school, private academy, or parochial school while still being supported by public tax dollars (Barr, 1981). During this time period, a controversial document, *A Nation At Risk*, published in 1983, prompted discussion about the quality of our national education and redirected attention towards the need to restructure our current educational system (Aron, 2006). These open schools flourished in its first decade of existence, then, as the definition of alternative education narrowed, they reverted back to operating as conventional and remedial programs due to below average academic performance (Tissington, 2006).

Based upon Young's (1990) research, an increasing number of alternative schools focused on assisting those students who had behavioral issues or academic issues. During the 1980's, the transformation of alternative education focused on students who were in danger of failing and dropping out of school. Several schools experimented with changing curriculum guides and improving standards with the desire to increase student motivation and student interest in school (McKee & Conner, 2007). As a result, school officials and local community stakeholders attempted to create alternative schools with vocational and business partnerships,

college and university connections, and incorporating no-grade coursework and policies (McKee & Conner, 2007).

Over the past two decades, America's traditional public schools began to receive intense scrutiny, being labeled dropout factories, violent war zones, narcotic and drug centers, and disrespectful and disengaging institutions. Hence, alternative education programs have evolved into a popular educational alternative for many at-risk students across the nation (Lange & Sletten, 2002). For example, by the 2007-08 school year, over 64% of public school districts had at least one type of alternative school (Carver et al., 2010). Overall, there were over 10,300 alternative schools servicing over 646,500 at-risk, American students (Carver et al., 2010). In 2003, "According to the Indiana Department of Education, 71% of Indiana (compared to only17% in 1996) school corporations offer some form of alternative education for students who are not successful in traditional education settings" (Lucas et al., 2003, p. 3). Powell (2003) attributed the increase in alternative schooling, over the past decade, to students who were transferred from their general education studies because of possession, distribution, or use of alcohol or drugs, physical attacks or fights, chronic truancy, possession or use of a weapon other than a firearm, possession of a firearm, continual academic failure, and/or disruptive verbal behavior.

Legal Context Issues

Over the last half of the 20th century, the judicial system rendered some landmark decisions regarding the operation of America's public school system, especially concerning student discipline which, in turn, greatly impacted the growth of alternative education. Before these historic court cases are reviewed, the transfer of limited control over the discipline of public school students from parents to school officials is called *in loco parentis*, and this must

be addressed. This doctrinal, "in place of the parent," concept of giving school personnel a prescribed measure of control over parents' children while at school emanated from the common law practices of our forefathers from Great Britain (Alexander & Alexander, 2005). *In loco parentis* does not mean that teachers and administrators have the same amount of control over children as do their respective parents; nevertheless, this principle allows schools to maintain a safe and orderly environment through reasonable and practical control of students (Yell & Rozalski, 2008). Schools have the right and responsibility to develop and to enforce reasonable rules and expectations that clearly state which behaviors are appropriate rules and which ones are prohibited. Therefore, "If students violate reasonable school rules by behaving in ways that are prohibited, they should be held accountable. Such accountability usually implies that student violators will be subject to disciplinary sanctions" (Yell & Rozalski, 2008, p. 8).

Regarding the evolution and interpretation of student discipline in the public school system, the following court cases have played a significant role: *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*, *Goss v. Lopez*, *Wood v. Strickland*, and *Honig v. Doe*. First, in the *Tinker v. Des Moines* case, school officials suspended five students for wearing black armbands during the school day because they were silently protesting the Vietnam War (as cited in Alexander & Alexander, 2005). The U.S. Supreme Court decided that students do not shed their constitutional rights at the school door because they have the First Amendment right of free expression, as long as they don't interfere or disrupt the educational process of student learning (Alexander & Alexander, 2005). In addition, the High Court resolved that students' speech and freedom of expression could only be regulated if there were legitimate and verifiable constitutional reasons of substantial student disorderly conduct (Taylor, 2001). This

fundamental ruling was pertinent because it didn't sacrifice the authority of school officials in administering appropriate student conduct, yet still protected students' rights of freedom of expression.

Second, in the *Goss v. Lopez* case, Ohio school administrators temporarily suspended several students for less than 10 days without providing them a reason or a hearing prior to or within a reasonable time period after the suspension (as cited in Alexander & Alexander, 2005). Even though this action was legitimate with Ohio's constitution, the Supreme Court ruled that a suspended student must be given written and/or oral notice of their misconduct and be provided an opportunity to explain their rationale, as this decision respects the individual property and liberty interests that are protected by the Due Process Clause of the 14th Amendment (Yell & Rozalski, 2008). From this court case, two general types of due process rights are proffered to students: procedural due process and substantive due process (Yell & Rozalski, 2008). Procedural due process is a fair and consistent process providing students the opportunity to explain, respond, or defend their actions; while, substantive due process protects students' rights yet establishing reasonableness for certain disciplinary procedures (Yell & Rozalski, 2008). The establishment of reasonableness refers to ensuring school rules are clearly communicated to students and parents with sound, school board approved rationale. Once again, this judgment still permitted school officials the authority to perform their administrative duties to maintain a safe and orderly environment, via the issuance of potential short-term student suspensions, which must be dependent upon the proper adherence of students' due process rights.

A third landmark court case, *Wood v. Strickland*, involved the local school board of education expelling three high school students who had poured liquor in punch and served it at

a school function to students and parents (as cited in Alexander & Alexander, 2005). The students' expulsion took place at a board meeting without an invitation to attend offered to the students and their parents (Alexander & Alexander, 2005). The Supreme Court's verdict was that school officials were subject to civil liability if they suspended students in an unconstitutional manner (as cited in Zirkel, Richardson, & Goldberg, 1995). Similar to the *Goss v. Lopez* case, the court system rendered that school officials who act appropriately within the realm of their duties and responsibilities should not fear the possibility of litigation, otherwise known as qualified immunity. Furthermore, according to Yell and Rozalski (2008), "with respect to discipline in the school and classroom, students have two primary areas of legal rights: (a) students' right to privacy and freedom from unreasonable searches and (b) students' right to due process" (p. 8). If necessary, public schools can still evoke short-term and long-term suspensions as long as they don't deprive any person of life, liberty, or property interests without due process of the law.

Fourth, in the *Honig v. Doe* case, there were two special education students who were suspended: one, for engaging in a physical altercation with another student and the other for making inappropriate sexual comments towards another student (as cited in Alexander & Alexander, 2005). The Supreme Court concluded that school districts may not suspend a special education student for more than 10 cumulative days without substantive due process procedures, which was in accordance with the Section 504 Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (as cited in Zirkel et al., 1995). This court resolution described the discipline guidelines regarding special education students recommended for expulsion and their potential change of educational placement. As a result, school officials felt restricted and confused with the new regulations and procedures required when disciplining special education students for serious infractions

(Yell & Rozalski, 2008). Within the past decade, revisions to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 1997 and 2004 have created a better understanding of disciplining students with disabilities. Schools would still able to effectually discipline students with special needs by following a pre-determined set of procedures and meetings and by providing educational services to them during any long-term suspension/expulsion (Yell & Rozalski, 2008). Consequently, with the interpretation of *Honig v. Doe* and with the evolution of IDEA over the past couple of decades, there has been an increasing demand for the expansion of alternative education programs across the nation.

Types of Alternative Education Programs

Through the historical perspective and the landmark court case studies, alternative education has evolved into a high quality educational component complete with small class sizes, differentiated and personalized instruction, specific and unique curricular offerings, and a highly qualified and dedicated faculty. In fact, alternative education is comprised by the following qualifications:

1. alternative schools, both public and private;
2. alternative programs for students to pursue common goals through varying approaches within the same schools; and
3. a set of teaching strategies, beliefs, and support services that facilitate growth in academic, personal/social, and career development initiatives. (Morley, 1991, p. 9)

Regarding the proper qualifications of an alternative education program, Indiana Code 20-30-8-6 has defined it in the following manner, "To qualify as an alternative education program, the program must be an educational program for eligible students that instructs the eligible students

in a different manner of instruction available in a traditional school setting" (Indiana General Assembly, 2009, p. 2).

According to the U.S. Department of Education, an alternative education school is defined as a public school that addresses students' needs in a different setting from a regular school and offers nontraditional educational services different from regular education, special education, vocational education, high ability education, or magnet schools (Young, 2002). In 1997, Indiana developed the School Alternative Program Study Committee to begin discussion about issues relating to the education of adolescent youth (Lucas et al., 2003). This committee proposed to the state legislation to include additional funding for school corporations to offer more educational alternatives for at-risk youth, and this proposition was well received by the legislature as they enacted Indiana Code 20-30-8, which defined alternative education, defined student eligibility, and created a funding formula (Lucas et al., 2003).

The typology of alternative education has been categorized into three different levels by Raywid (1994). Since the 1990s, Raywid (1994) identified the following three types of alternative education programs:

1) Type I alternatives seek to make school challenging and fulfilling for all involved. Type I alternatives virtually always reflect organizational and administrative departures from the traditional, as well as programmatic innovations. Type I alternatives are schools of choice and are usually popular. They are likely to reflect programmatic themes or emphases pertaining to content or instructional strategy.
2) Type II alternatives are programs to which students are sentenced, usually as one last chance prior to expulsion. They include in-school suspension programs, cool-out rooms, and longer term placements for the chronically disruptive. Type II

programs focus on behavior modification, and little attention is paid to modifying curriculum or pedagogy. In fact, some of these programs require students to perform the work of the regular classes from which they have been removed.

3) Type III alternatives are for students who are presumed to need remediation or rehabilitation, academic, social/emotional, or both. The assumption is that after successful treatment students can return to mainstream programs. Type III alternatives often focus on remedial and on stimulating social and emotional growth. (p. 27)

A fourth type, or hybrid, of alternative education program has been declared as a 'second chance' program by incorporating school choice, remediation, and innovation for students who have incurred some problem or failure while in a conventional school setting (Lange & Sletton, 1995).

Therefore, Type I schools are considered innovative programs or schools of choice for students with special needs; Type II schools are viewed as last-chance opportunities for students with short-term behavior problems; and Type III schools are classified as remedial courses for students with serious emotional or behavioral problems (Raywid, 1994). However, in the past decade, there have been numerous changes and reconfigurations in the educational structure of school systems across the nation, which prompted Raywid (1998) to restructure her three main components of alternative education programming. This restructuration contained three distinct levels:

1. Change the student – alternatives that attempt to fix the student.
2. Change the school – highly innovative schools that focus on changing the curriculum and instructional approaches to traditional education.

3. Change the educational system – alternatives that attempt to make system-wide change in educational systems. (as cited in Quinn et al., 2006, p. 12)

The effectiveness of these alternative education programs fluctuated as the change-the-student programs became more permanent placements instead of temporary ones for students; the change-the-school programs demonstrated student success when they became immersed into the alternative program but overwhelmingly failed when they returned to the traditional school environment; and the change-the-educational system programs have been implemented in urban school settings with current data validating optimistic outcomes (Raywid, 1998).

Additional research by Hefner-Packer (1990) identified five categories for alternative education programs. The first model described an alternative classroom as a self-contained classroom within a traditional school that contained varied instruction and programs for students. The second model explained the school-within-a-school concept in which students had specifically-assigned teachers for some of their individualized learning needs throughout the school day in a separate classroom, while also being able to attend some elective courses in the traditional classroom. The third model was a completely separate alternative school from the traditional school that possessed different academic and social behavior programs. This type of alternative education program contains their own location, distinct faculty, and separate administration. The fourth model assisted the needs of students who had already dropped out of school. These continuation schools created alternative education programs focused on career-readiness and social-readiness skills, such as parenting skills, job-related training, child-rearing skills, and other important life skills. The fifth model identified magnet schools as self-contained alternative programs that offered specialized curriculum instruction in areas like

science, medicine, or fine arts. This last model is a direct comparison to Raywid's Type I alternative school program.

Similar to Hefner-Packer's alternative education models, Chalker (1996) recommended four distinctive settings for alternative educational programming. First, an alternative school format is in a self-contained, isolated building, completely separate from a traditional school environment that provides services to continually disruptive students and to students involved in the criminal justice system. Second, a school-within-a-school concept allows students to attend some specialized instructional programs for part of the day, while still having access to attend to some traditional school resources. Third, a continuation school is an evening or summer program that serves students who have dropped out of school and need additional coursework or training in order to obtain a GED certificate or a high school diploma through an online course of study. Fourth, alternative classroom settings are self-contained classrooms in a conventional school that provide differentiated instruction, varied structural methods, and flexible timelines and guidelines.

A final description of successful dropout prevention programs that illustrate a wide variety of current alternative schools throughout the United States has been compiled by the National Dropout Prevention Center since 1988 via the maintenance of a Model Programs Database (Reimer & Cash, 2003). A categorization of nine different types of alternative education programs were developed by the Center (Schargel & Smink, 2001). Below is a review of these nine different types of alternative education programs:

1) School-within-a-school is established for students needing a separate location within the traditional school. They are usually held in a separate wing with different staff, for academic or social behavior.

2) Schools without walls are for students requiring educational and training programs. Services are delivered from various locations within the community and offer flexible student schedules.
3) Residential schools are for special-case students who are usually placed by the courts or the family with special counseling and educational programs offered.
4) Separate alternative learning centers feature a specialized curriculum such as parenting skills or unique job skills. They are in a separate location from the traditional school, many times located in businesses, churches, or remodeled retail centers with excellent transportation services.
5) College-based alternative schools use a college facility but are intended for students needing high school credits and are operated by public school staff. The college setting enhances the student's self-esteem and offers other services that benefit the student's growth.
6) Summer schools are either remedial for academic credits or enhance a student's special interests, perhaps in science, computers, the arts, or other fields.
7) Magnet schools focus on selected curriculum areas with specialized teachers and with student attendance usually by choice.
8) Second-chance schools are for students who are judged to be troubled and placed in the school by the courts or the school district as a last chance before being expelled or incarcerated.
9) Charter schools are autonomous educational entities operating under a contract negotiated between the state agency and the local school sponsors. (Schargel & Smink, 2001, p.115-116)

As each of these distinct types of alternative education programs have been epitomized, there are explicit characteristics that are discovered in effective alternative schools that are validating student learning, student engagement, student motivation, and student success. Thus, in turn, these effective alternative schools have created and established programs that are meeting students' individual needs, keeping them in school, and helping them achieve a high school diploma. A discussion of these student impact issues and effective characteristics ensues.

Student Impact Factors of Alternative Education Programs

School suspensions are currently the most widely administered form of discipline used in U.S. public schools. According to Rosen (1997), the top 10 reasons for high school students receiving an out-of-school suspension are the following: defiance of school authority, failure to report to after-school detention or Saturday School, classroom disruption, truancy, fighting, use of profanity, damage to school property, dress code violations, theft, and absence from campus without permission. Students who are repeatedly suspended from school suffer academically and are more likely to be retained and drop out of school (DeRidder, 1991). In fact, the British Columbia Ministry of Education (as cited in Sautner, 2001) conducted research on students who receive an out-of-school suspension and found the following results: less effective upon students compared to the past due to the changing nature of our society, contributes to a student's alienation from school, increases dropout rates, contributes to academic failure, appears to be a factor for student involvement in antisocial behaviors, may precipitate more serious crimes in the community, may increase the likelihood of the behavior recurring rather than reducing the problem behavior, and may increase aggressive or avoidance behaviors.

The ability of school personnel to meet the psychological, social, and behavioral needs of today's students is increasingly difficult. In fact, the risk of violence to students and teachers

is greater now than at any point in public school history (Harris, 2000). In the past decade, school violence has received greater attention in our society primarily because of the recent occurrence of extreme acts of violence in schools across the country. These chronic acts of violence occur in the form of verbal threats, cursing, name-calling, insults, racial slurs, pushing, grabbing or shoving, punching or kicking, and fighting (Bastian &Taylor, 1991). Violence and conflict are prominent throughout all schools.

Alternative education is an integral part of our public school system because it provides second chance opportunities for students to fulfill local and state graduation requirements with the goal of acquiring a high school diploma. In analyzing the student achievement factors of alternative education programs, this section of the literature review will solely concentrate on the impact of alternative schools upon student graduation rates. Before we can measure the academic achievement of students in alternative schools, the amount of time that an alternative student needs to complete their graduation requirements should be addressed. Time is a critical factor for students assigned to alternative schools because some may need more of it to master the English language, master the specific course(s) that they have had difficulty with over the last several years, or adapt and overcome personal conflicts or health-related problems (McKee & Conner, 2007). Consequently, alternative schools should not be held to the same standard as traditional schools when calculating the newly-established graduation rate, otherwise known as a four-year completion rate (McKee & Conner, 2007).

As previously stated, an alternative school's primary direction and purpose should be to provide flexibility in timing, structure, and organization. An example of a flexible alternative school is the Stanley Hall Enrichment Center in the Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corporation, which "encourages students to earn high school diplomas and develop attitudes

that will help them remain lifelong learners while becoming productive community members" (Lucas et al., 2003, p.14). According to Lucas et al. (2003), "Stanley Hall operates as an open-concept alternative education program using self-paced curricula, computer lessons, a student-operated branch bank, job shadowing, internships, service learning, and pilot programs to meet the needs of diverse learners" (p. 14).

The analysis and comparison of graduation rates is a direct correlation to the number of students dropping out of our traditional public schools. There are many reasons that students provide as to why they drop out of school. Some of the reasons can be controlled by the school; while others are completely out of the school's control. Two of the most widely researched reasons for students dropping out of school are motivation and mobility (Hardre & Reeve, 2003; Rumberger & Larson, 1998). During the past decade, there has been a resurgence of discussion pertaining to the high school dropout rate. Specifically in Indiana, a closer look at the statistics of high school graduation rates boasting 95% to 100% caused many independent research firms and media outlets, even *Time* magazine, to discover and publish contradictory rates averaging 70% to 75% (Thornburgh, 2006). As a result, beginning with the graduating class of 2006, the Indiana Department of Education issued a change in calculating high school graduation rates to reflect a four-year completion rate, in which students were issued identification numbers allowing for cohort classification. Even though this new graduation rate formula represents a more accurate number of high school dropouts, it is meaningless data unless it is used to take proactive steps in assisting more students to acquire a high school diploma, such as creating successful alternatives to educational instruction in conjunction with providing adequate funding, necessary resources, and less political bureaucracy.

Undoubtedly, high school reform is in high demand, as there is a pressing need for higher achievement levels for students in order to better prepare them for success at the post-secondary level and for success in a more competitive, global job market. Under the idealistic purpose of No Child Left Behind, high school reform initiatives that ignore the dropout problem are unproductive and unsuccessful (Barton, 2006). As Barton (2006) stated, "We face a hard battle on two fronts – one to make high school more rigorous, and the other to keep more students in high school through graduation" (p. 18).

Effective Characteristics

Thus far, the history of alternative education programs have been discussed, the legal context of alternative schooling has been analyzed, the typology of alternative education has been identified, and the student impact factors of alternative programs has been explained, a study of the effective characteristics of alternative education programs must be examined. So, how effective have alternative schools been at educating and graduating at-risk youth with a high school diploma and why should there be a local, state, and national priority on improving alternative education programs? According to Barr (1981), "It is important not simply to match learners with teachers but to develop an educational system in which parents, students, and teachers can choose the type of program they believe to be in their best interests" (p. 571). For example, effective alternative schools have forced local school systems to revise some of their traditional pedagogical practices in order to best serve the individual needs of disenfranchised youth (Barr, 1981). Furthermore, Dynarski and Gleason (1998) made the following proclamation,

> If we as a society want to encourage more students to complete high school, we need to continue trying new approaches and ideas that may work better. A starting point for a

> new approach is to consider why some programs have an effect while others do not…. Programs that succeed simply may be the right blend of activities, approaches, and supports for their students. Using a specific program approach, such as creating a school within a school or an alternative school, is fundamentally a one-size-fits-all solution that is in conflict with the many different kinds of students and the many different reasons they have for dropping out. We should not have much confidence in a dropout-prevention program that treats all students in the same way. (p. 2)

Consequently, when evaluating the effectiveness of alternative education programs, careful consideration of each student's intellectual, physical, emotional, and social characteristics should be enhanced by some particular intervention component of the alternative school.

Effectiveness simply means evaluating or measuring the performance of an organization in order to obtain a positive or negative result. The examination of determining effectiveness of alternative education programs is a complex dilemma because the quantification of data should be comparing the performance of alternative education programs with each other not necessarily with the comparison of performance from the traditional schools. However, as the number of alternative education programs and schools increase throughout our country, we live in a society that is fixated upon achievement testing, graduation rates, and accountability measures, thus permitting enhanced methods of data analysis, making cursory assumptions and incorrect generalizations, and categorizing all educational programs into a pass/fail or a report card system, excluding critical factors that differentiate the traditional school from the alternative school. This concern over the paucity of evaluation tools for alternative education program effectiveness originates from insufficient methodology, limited control groups, internal evaluators which skew validity and reliability of any instrument, and minimal long-

term outcomes (Lehr & Lange, 2003). Other issues that arose during early evaluation of alternative schools were biased sample randomization and improper pre- and post-testing techniques (Kellmayer, 1995). Recently, Henrich (2005) stated that research has depicted dominant indicators such as improved student attendance, student performance, graduation rates, and decreased behavior problems will positively affect the success of alternative education programming.

Before alternative education program characteristics are defined and different standardized assessment tools are discussed, questions with respect to measuring effectiveness need to be addressed. For those involved in the alternative education environment, the greater question, Is the narrow focus of student success dependent upon academic results or is a more expansive measurement of effectiveness needed (Lange & Sletten, 2002)? Additional questions posed are the following: 1) Is keeping the students in an educational program a measure of effectiveness? 2) Is the students' demonstration of appropriate school behaviors a measure of effectiveness? and 3) Is successful return to the traditional school program a measure of effectiveness? (Lange & Sletten, 2002).

In analyzing these questions, academic performance and student growth should undoubtedly be evaluated both systemically and systematically; however, it also apparent that alternative education programs exist for different purposes, which warrants the impetus to judge its effectiveness with different standards than to those of traditional school systems. Duke and Griesdorn (1999) conducted research on effectiveness of alternative schools in Virginia, and they concluded that using one specific instrument to judge the effectiveness of alternative schools was unfair and inconsistent. They believed that since alternative schools exist for different reasons then it is counterproductive to compare them to the same standards as a

traditional school, and serious consideration should be given to evaluate more subjective outcomes like "student interest, ability, and motivation to learn" (Duke & Griesdorn, 1999, p. 89). They concluded that one prototypical alternative school model will not produce effective and substantial learning for at-risk students.

The assessment of a traditional educational system consists of factors relating to academic achievement, graduation rates, attendance rates, and suspension/expulsion rates. In contrast, measuring alternative education effectiveness definitely requires different methods of assessment because the ignorance of "nontraditional outcomes for alternative students may negate the positive outcomes that have emerged in the areas of increased satisfaction, self-esteem, and connection to school" (Lange & Sletten, 2002, p. 22). Additional documentation has evidenced the effectiveness of alternative education programs and student success in the following conclusions: a significant decrease of violent behaviors, fewer high school dropouts, improved academic achievement, better self-esteem and attitudes about learning and school, increased personal and intrinsic motivation, and greater appreciation for ethnic diversity and harmonious living (Barr & Parrett, 1997). In addition, research has demonstrated that these at-risk youth evolve in their commitment stages, motivation levels, and their investment time accomplishing more than they ever imagined when they are allowed to make a selection to participate in an effective alternative education program (Barr & Parrett, 1997). Thus, an effective alternative school epitomizes a caring and supportive community, an engaging and flexible curriculum guide, and a methodical and organized strategic plan for student success (Raywid, 1994).

In defining essential characteristics of alternative education programs, a substantial amount of research has been derived as successful factors in the assessment of highly-effective

alternative schools (Henrich, 2005; Lange & Sletten, 2002). Throughout these studies, common characteristics have emerged as preeminent features of typical alternative education programs (Table 1). In addition, Kellmayer (1995) cited 10 characteristics of effective alternative education programs:

1) Size. Smaller class sizes produce positive benefits.
2) Location. The environment has a profound impact on a student's academic state.
3) Volunteerism. When students and faculty elect to attend alternative education programs, this increases loyalty to the school.
4) Participatory decision making. Stakeholder involvement addresses real needs.
5) Student-focused curriculum. Alternative assessment strategies, such as portfolios and community service projects, are beneficial.
6) Separate administrative units. It is imperative that leaders are good managers and instructors as they work with teachers and students.
7) Clear mission. Mission statements should be succinct and reflect community norms.
8) Flexibility. Allows faculty to serve in multiple roles for their students.
9) Social services. Alternative programs serve at-risk students and provide arrangements for families to receive the services they need.
10) Technology. Students have access to same technology options as students in traditional schools based upon per pupil expenditure ratios.

Table 1

Typical Alternative Education Program Characteristics

Staffing	Instruction	Focus	Nontraditional
Small school, class size, staff	Standards-based	Supportive environment	Flexible scheduling, evening hours, multiple shifts
Low student-to-teacher ratio	Innovative and varied curricula	Informal or high structure	Student and staff entry choice
Adult mentors	Functional behavior assessments	Student-orientation	Reduced school days
Leadership from either a principal or director/teacher-director	Self-paced instruction	Proactive or problem focus (i.e. last chance)	Linkages between schools and workplaces
Lack of specialized services (e.g. library, career counseling)	Vocational training involving work in the community	Character, theme, or emphasis from interests of founding teachers	Intensive counseling and monitoring
Dynamic leadership	Social skills instruction	Teacher-student and student-student relationships	Collaboration across school systems and other human service agencies
Fewer rules and less bureaucracy	Individualized and personalized learning		Collegiality with faculty and students

Note. Adapted from "Expansion of an Alternative School Typology," by R. S. Henrich, 2005, *The Journal of At-Risk Issues, 11,* p. 25. Copyright 2010 by Educational Research Service. Reprinted with permission.

Additional research by Schargel and Smink (2001) discovered that successful alternative education schools possessed the following characteristics: (a) total commitment to have each student be a success, (b) maximum teacher/student ratio of 1:10, (c) small student base not

exceeding 250 students, (d) clearly stated mission and discipline code, (e) caring faculty with continual staff development pertaining to students at-risk, (f) school staff that has high expectations for student achievement, (g) learning program that is specific to the student's expectations and learning style, and (h) flexible school schedule with community involvement and support.

When either implementing or analyzing alternative school programs, both the administrators and teachers must understand these research-based characteristics and correlate them with the immediate needs of their student body. Uniformly, with easy accessibility and relevancy of this information the quality of alternative education and the success rate of at-risk students should be improved (Lange & Sletten, 1995). Raywid (2001) concluded that effective alternative education programs may be able to catapult a marginal group of at-risk students onto a more meaningful path.

Since alternative schools primarily serve these at-risk youth on the verge of dropping out of school, it is vital to distinguish those elements that can "increase satisfaction, self-esteem, and connection to school" (Lange & Sletten, 2002, p. 22). Solidifying alternative school success is dependent upon the specific type of alternative education program established and upon the mission, vision, and purpose statements of the alternative education program; however, unique strategies and specialized characteristics have been identified as most productive in analyzing the effectiveness of alternative education programs (Lange & Sletten, 2002). These characteristics are classified in the following manner: school climate, student needs, instruction/curriculum, faculty needs, community support, student services, and leadership.

School climate. Since there are several different types of alternative education programs, each school must establish a clear and concise mission statement, vision statement, and core values and beliefs statement. As stated by Powell (2003), "A consistent mission and vision must be articulated to all stakeholders with rules, expectations, and logical consequences made known to all students and staff" (p. 69). Moreover, school climate can be defined as that state of the school which directly affects the needs and outcomes of students, such as low student-to-teacher ratios or a relevant mission statement (Fitzsimons-Lovett, 2001). Establishing these clearly defined mission and vision statements provides direction to the staff and assistance in governance issues, which, in turn, are evaluative tools for measuring effectiveness (Aron, 2006; Kellmayer, 1995; Lange & Sletten, 2002; Paglin & Fager, 1997; Schargel & Smink, 2001). There should be no confusion about the nature and objectives of the alternative educational program.

In order for an alternative school to be successful, it must convey a realistic environment in which both students and teachers are active participants (Scherer, 1994). Voluntary student choice to attend either the alternative school or the traditional school is a critical component (Loflin, 2003; Raywid, 1994). Voluntary faculty and staff choice should be available for those interested in working at an alternative school (Aron, 2003; Aronson, 1995; Morley, 1991). According to the Coalition for Juvenile Justice (2001) and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, teachers who are competent, committed, and properly trained should be able to voluntarily decide to instruct at an alternative school (as cited in Aron, 2003). Similarly, alternative education instructors shouldn't just have the background experience but should also possess the desire and passion to interact with at-risk youth (Reimer & Cash, 2003).

Additional components that affect school climate are school size, classroom size, and a well-established student conduct system. The research on small school structures or organizations, especially small alternative schools, is overwhelmingly more effective than large school institutions (Barr & Parrett, 1995; Dynarski & Gleason, 1998; Raywid, 1998; Scherer, 1994). The best results of alternative school sizes range from 60 to 125 students (Aron, 2006; Kellmayer, 1995). Successful efforts pertaining to class size has been demonstrated with teacher-student ratios ranging from 1:10 to 1:15 (Kellmayer, 1995; Schargel & Smink, 2001; Thomas, Sabatino, & Sarri, 1982).

Regarding an expectation for clearly defined student conduct, Tobin and Sprague (2000) examined the classroom management systems of effective alternative schools and discovered highly structured classrooms with behavioral management strategies that emphasized positive reinforcement rather than negative reinforcement observed high academic gains amongst the students, and students were able to achieve less restrictive settings at a faster pace. It is the responsibility of the teachers and administrators at each alternative school environment to ensure clearly established rules for behavior are implemented and consistently enforced (Aron, 2006; Paglin & Fager, 1997). In addition, students feel that a positive climate exists in their school when "the rules are equitably enforced, fair, and valid represented by the scales of belief in rules and fairness of rules and teachers and administrators treat them with dignity represented by the scale of respect" (Quinn et al., 2006, p. 15). This atmosphere promotes staff and student choice and responsibility, which, in turn, will assist in developing effective assessment instruments for alternative education performance (Smink, 1997).

Student needs. Students' aspiration of autonomy is fulfilling when students are able to make choices, and their opinions' are considered in the decision making process of school

functionality (Aron, 2006; Kerka, 2003; Paglin & Fager, 1997). The alternative school emits a sense of community between staff and students (Aronson, 1995; Quinn et al., 2006). In fact, community is an internal and external facet of the school, in which there is a collaborative relationship with the alternative school and the local community so that students can become involved in service learning projects or participate in business-led partnerships (Fitzsimons-Lovett, 2001). Another successful attribute for alternative schools is when they exude an aura of genuine, caring, and compassionate relationships between students and faculty (Aronson, 1995; Barr & Parrett, 1997; Kerka, 2003). In other words, faculty members can openly communicate to students on a personal and individualized level, which improves trust and support between both interested parties (Kerka, 2003).

At-risk students suffer from numerous social, emotional, family-related, and economical factors making it even more imperative that alternative schools develop effective student supports such as a positive reward system, flexible scheduling, mutual respect, and counseling services. Accountability measures are established with alternative school students through a positive reinforcement program promoting attendance and academic achievement (Aron, 2006). The programs that exist at effective alternative schools are "both highly structured and extremely flexible" (Aron, 2006, p. 13). The educational philosophy that faculty and staff will demonstrate mutual respect for each and every student, and the daily expectation that this characteristic is reciprocated by the students fulfills a basic physiological need of all students (Kerka, 2003; Paglin & Fager, 1997). Tobin and Sprague (2000) declared that alternative school faculty who serve as mentors, advisors, and tutors are assisting students with both academic and social needs.

Instruction/Curriculum. The one-size-fits-all approach that is prevalent throughout the curriculum in the traditional school setting cannot exist in the alternative school environment because these students truly learn differently and need more individualized instruction and additional time to process their learning. The faculty at an alternative school should be well-trained, supportive, and committed to student success, and the students should be provided a curriculum that is relevant and rigorous while still addressing their learning styles and skill levels (Fitzsimons-Lovett, 2001). Providing engaging and relevant instruction is one of the most effective methodologies in reducing inappropriate student behavior and reducing boredom in the curriculum (Hughes & Adera, 2006). Successful alternative schools must possess a curriculum that is aligned with student real-world expectations, demonstrate relevant student learning, and applicable student life lessons for outside of school (Aron, 2006).

As implied by Loflin (2003), a genuine alternative school's curriculum should consist of the following important characteristics: individualized, self-paced, flexible, customized, and personalized; for if the alternative education program does not portray a learning environment that relates to student learning styles, then it is simply not an alternative. Contrary to what is observed in many traditional classrooms where the teacher is the focal point of the group and the vehicle for information dissemination is performed by the teacher, effective and efficient instruction must consist of varying one's teaching methods, cooperative learning is encouraged, and student-centered problem solving is occurring. For example, student learning should be project-based, hands-on, integrated, creative, and experiential that emphasizes improving critical thinking strategies and reading comprehension skills (Gable, Bullock, & Evans, 2006; Paglin & Fager, 1997). In addition to differentiated instructional strategies, successful alternative education programs "have a clear focus on academic learning that combines high

academic standards with engaging and creative instruction and a culture of high expectations for all students" (Aron, 2006, p. 12).

Moreover, academic instruction should provide a flexible, self-paced, customized, intellectually challenging curriculum that is receptive to students' needs and skills and provides opportunities for credit recovery (Aron, 2006; Fitzsimons-Lovett, 2001; Quinn & Rutherford, 1998). In conjunction with flexibility is individualized instruction, alternative education students should be able to develop personalized learning plans and set learning goals based upon these individualized plans (Aron, 2006; Gable et al., 2006). A practical illustration of individualized learning is depicted at AIM High School, which is an alternative high school in central New York that has existed for over 20 years and has sent over 75% of its graduates to postsecondary learning institutions (Grobe, 2002). At AIM High School, teachers identify the weaknesses of their students who have experienced repeated failure in courses through pretesting, discussion, and observation, and, then, they develop a customized plan for each student in order to correct any errors, complete a final assessment, and progress to the next specified course (Grobe, 2002). Another integral factor in self-paced and individualized learning is grouping students by their ability levels instead of by age or grade levels (as cited by Lange & Sletten, 2002)

In today's ever-evolving technological age, online learning has been a tremendous blessing for alternative schools to incorporate into their curriculum and annual budgets. For any high school graduate to function in today's world of work, young adults need to be 'technologically savvy' (Kellmayer, 1995). In fact, with the assistance of technology, online learning has grown exponentially creating opportunities for at-risk youth to raise student achievement as well as achieve more high school credits (Brenner, 2007). As stated by Reimer

and Cash (2003), distance learning should be implemented to provide relevant coursework and instruction for students needing courses outside the capacity or abilities of the respective alternative school. Therefore, alternative schools need to take advantage of this new development in education and incorporate technology and online learning into their curriculum standards and expectations.

Faculty Needs. In an alternative school setting, the selection of administration and faculty is of utmost importance as they should be certified and experienced personnel who demonstrate a genuine passion and understanding for alternative education. Additional governance issues dealing with curriculum and program structure should be decided by local lead directors/administrators and faculty members, or at least be given sincere input (Aronson, 1995; Raywid, 1994). Faculty members play an active role in curricular development and program design, which includes sharing resources, strategies, and ideas with their colleagues (Aron, 2006).

When analyzing faculty's needs, a critical component that often gets overlooked is on-going professional development. Successful alternative schools provide engaging professional development experiences that enhance teacher instruction, maintain an academic focus, and develop alternative instructional techniques that will adequately meet the needs of their students (Aron, 2006). The most meaningful types of professional development occur when teachers have input, work collaboratively with each other, and are provided opportunities to visit other alternative schools and observe actual pedagogical practices of other alternative school teachers (Aron, 2003).

Community Support. With the recent economic downturn of the past couple of years, funding for alternative education programming is amongst the first areas to be either cut or

reduced. Thus, it is even more imperative to obtain the incredible support from the local school superintendent. This individual or the respective designee from central office administration must be a strong advocate for the purpose and mission of alternative education and how it impacts student learning (Kellmayer, 1995). An articulation of the vision for alternative education must be established and proclaimed throughout the community with vigor and passion (Reimer & Cash, 2003).

Successful alternative schools build partnerships with a wide variety of community organizations, in order to provide students with job shadowing and internship opportunities, service learning projects, counseling services, health care facilities, mental health care services, and other recreational opportunities (Aron, 2006). Work-release programs that correspond with a student's special interests or abilities are most effective in maintaining student interest and motivation to acquire a high school diploma (Dugger & Dugger, 1998). Another confidence builder for students is participating in service learning projects, in which they are able to assist people in the local community (Duckenfield & Swanson, 1992).

A final issue regarding community support is a strong point of emphasis on parent involvement. It is an incredible challenge to get parents of at-risk youth to become involved in their child's education; however, some alternative schools have developed effective strategies that are outreach-based such as hosting free meals and family events like watching movies or playing games at a local community center (Hoye & Sturgis, 2005). Kellmayer (1995) stated acquiring parent involvement and participation is a tremendous step in the right direction for the child and for the alternative school.

Student Services. As previously stated in the student impact section of this literature review, students who attend alternative schools require a greater amount of personalized

attention and assistance. An essential social service that must exist in an alternative school and must be available to all students is counseling services (Dugger & Dugger, 1998; Dynarski & Gleason, 1998). Through both group and individual counseling, assistance should be provided with daily living skills, social coping skills, peer mediation techniques, and critical thinking strategies (Quinn & Rutherford, 1998; Tobin & Sprague, 2000). Similar to the community support section, many alternative schools have developed beneficial relationships with local community and service providers, such as medical care, social care (Dugger & Dugger, 1998; Dynarski & Gleason, 1998), mental health care, and juvenile justice programs (Kleiner et al., 2002). In addition, consistent academic guidance is incorporated into these student services (Aron, 2006).

Leadership. There are seven sustainable leadership qualities that can occur in any educational setting: 1) Sustainable leadership matters, 2) Sustainable leadership lasts, 3) Sustainable leadership spreads, 4) Sustainable leadership is socially just, 5) Sustainable leadership is resourceful, 6) Sustainable leadership promotes diversity, and 7) Sustainable leadership is activist (Hargreaves & Fink, 2004). Concurrently, successful schools are a manifestation of great leadership and teaching (Whitaker, 2002). As stated by Aron (2006), "A successful alternative education program has a strong, engaged, continuous, and competent leader" (p. 13).

Therefore, it is imperative for an alternative school lead director to develop a shared vision with stakeholders in order to guide decisions and create hope for the future (Barr & Parrett, 1997). A prerequisite for being an inspirational leader is being a great communicator. Strong communication skills, both oral and written, are vital for an administrator to convey new ideas and develop positive and productive relationships with people (Kellmayer, 1995).

Another study discovered that strong alternative school leaders provide encouragement to faculty and students, depict enthusiasm, and emit a positive attitude (Holmes, 1988). An effective alternative school leader must exude pride and confidence, must pronounce successes, and must organize celebrations to his faculty, students, superiors, and community members on a consistent basis (Reimer & Cash, 2003). Undoubtedly, an alternative school administrator is to be a devout advocate and a zealous 'champion' for at-risk youth, so that they can achieve the same dreams and accomplish the same goals as the traditional school student.

Consequently, the perceptions of effectiveness and the differing fundamental philosophies of alternative education programs have created a profile of essential characteristics and vital practices. Adherence to the aforementioned prescriptive characteristics of alternative education programs will increase student achievement, with respect to more adolescent youth attaining a high school diploma, and decrease student misconduct, with respect to less adolescent youth being expelled and/or suspended from school. This reduction of dropout rates, expulsion rates, suspension rates, and recidivism rates will, undoubtedly, develop more productive members of our society.

Review of Gooden Study

In 2009, Gooden completed a study regarding the perceptions of effective characteristics in alternative high schools throughout the state of Missouri. The population included alternative high schools in Missouri with a sample size of 51 individuals granting permission to participate in this study. There were 67 individuals employed in these alternative schools who completed the survey instrument, with 24 classifying themselves as administrators and 43 identifying themselves as teachers. Based on the data collected, over 55% of the respondents

were from schools with 50 or fewer students; while, 12% of the respondents were from schools with over 100 students. In addition, 82% cited the average classroom size was 12 students.

Approximately 25% of the respondents were employed in alternative schools that have been in existence for less than six years. By contrast, 10% of the respondents were from schools that have been in existence for greater than 20 years. Regarding the typology of alternative education, 79% of the respondents stated the purpose of their alternative school was to allow more flexibility and choice options for students to graduate by offering flexible scheduling times, credit recovery opportunities, and other programs not offered at the traditional school. These results correspond with Raywid's Type I and Type III alternative education programs, which emphasize student choice and remediation-type schools.

Gooden (2009) asserted the existence of alternative schools was to provide a quality education for at-risk students who have behavioral problems, academic deficiencies, or personal issues and who are not encountering any success in the traditional school setting. Her literature review of alternative schools provided a list of 40 characteristics discovered in successful alternative schools that were classified into seven different categories. For each item, respondents rated how strongly they agreed to the existence and importance of the specified characteristic.

The information Gooden (2009) compiled was for the purpose of answering the following research questions:

1. Do the faculty members and administrators of alternative schools in Missouri perceive that established research-based effective characteristics of alternative schools exist as part of their program?

2. Do the faculty members and administrators of alternative high school programs in Missouri perceive these research-based effective characteristics of alternative schools as being important?
3. Do the faculty members and administrators agree on the existence of the research-based characteristics of alternative high schools in their alternative high schools?
4. Do the faculty and administrators agree on the importance of the research-based characteristics?

In answering the first question, Gooden (2009) found that administrators were in strong agreement that 33 of the 40 characteristics exist in their alternative school, with the highest-rated characteristic being the director (or principal) has a vision of the school. The lowest-rated characteristic for administrators was partnerships are developed with businesses for job shadowing, internships, and/or mentoring opportunities. Regarding faculty members, there was strong agreement that 32 of the 40 characteristics existed in their alternative school, with the two highest-rated characteristics being the alternative school has fewer than 125 students and the staff serves as mentors, advisors, and tutors helping students with academic and social needs. The lowest-rated characteristic for faculty members was teachers visit other alternative schools to gather new ideas.

For the second question, Gooden's (2009) research affirmed that administrators strongly agreed 39 of the 40 characteristics were important, with the highest-rated characteristic dealing with a clearly established vision for the school. The only item that administrators did not feel was very important was grouping students by ability levels instead of by age or grade levels. Concurring with the administrators, faculty members also agreed that 39 of the 40 characteristics were important, with the highest-rated characteristic dealing with them serving

as mentors and advisors for their students. Also, the teachers agreed with the administrators that the lowest-rated characteristic with respect to importance dealt with the configuration of student grouping.

Therefore, both lead directors and teachers believe these 39 characteristics to be of utmost importance in the operation of an alternative school. Both administrators and teachers recognized the six traits in the leadership category as the most significant category, including the most vital characteristic of the school's mission and vision needing to be observed and implemented in a successful alternative school. This result verified the need for dynamic leadership and instruction both inside and outside of the alternative education classroom.

With respect to the lowest scoring characteristic for both administrators and teachers in the area of importance, it was determined that student grouping by ability instead of grade level had little significance on the successful outcome of each alternative education student. Gooden (2009) was greatly concerned with this particular result because she stated that the configuration of students by grade level was a conventional structure, in contrast to grouping students by ability levels, which assists at-risk students to work at a more individualized pace, pre-determined by their content mastery and performance versus age and grade level status. Another characteristic dealing with faculty sharing resources, ideas, and strategies with each other received high ratings in agreement of its existence by administrators and faculty members. This strategy is incredibly relevant as we are progressively living in a collaborative society, in which teachers can work together on a daily basis. According to Gooden, student learning is not only enhanced with the proper development of professional learning communities but it can also break down those isolated walls that may exist with faculty members in alternative schools and in traditional schools.

For the third and fourth questions regarding the perceptions of existence and importance in the area of school climate, Gooden (2009) alluded that employees in larger alternative schools did not observe effects of class size over 16 or the school size over 125 as detrimental to student success. Gooden's reasoning was that many of these items, such as sense of community between staff and students, students' opinions are listened to and may be used in the decision making process, and staff serving as mentors, advisors, and tutors, are actions very difficult to provide in the larger school environments. Conversely, when analyzing the two items of school-community partnerships and service learning projects under the community support category, characteristics are not strongly perceived to be in existence or of importance. Yet, in comparing the size of the school, schools with over 100 students are more inclined to report the existence of community partnerships than schools with less than 25 students. Gooden confirmed that larger alternative schools are most likely to be located in larger communities where more businesses are available to develop partnerships; while smaller alternative schools may exist in smaller communities, thus inhibiting their opportunities to establish effective business partnerships.

Another interesting statistic was that administrators with 6-10 years of experience reported a higher level of existence of community partnerships than administrators with 2-5 years of experience. Gooden (2009) surmised that as administrators spend more time in the positions they are able to get more involved in the community and develop stronger and longer-lasting business partnerships. It can also be assumed that the longer the administrator stays at the alternative school, then the more opportunities families, patrons, and key stakeholders can develop positive and productive relationships with that respective administrator, which may

allow for more educational involvement and better financial support for the continued existence of the alternative school.

In summary, Gooden (2009) stated that although there were several circumstances where statistically significant differences existed between the perceptions of administrators and teachers, there were many more instances where statistically significant differences did not exist. This was evident with both the perceptions of existence and importance from the 40 characteristics of the questionnaire. Collectively, Gooden (2009) construed that administrators and teachers of alternative high schools who participated in this research are aware of these effective characteristics and are implementing them in a consistent manner regardless of size of school, years of schools' existence, and years of employment in an alternative setting and with few exceptions.

Summary

The related literature was reviewed beginning with a brief history of alternative education programs, especially emphasizing Young's (2002) assertion of alternative education establishing roots since the conception of America's public education system. Next, historical studies by Reimer and Cash (2003) and Lange and Sletten (2002) explained the various changes and emerging philosophies that alternative education experienced in the last quarter of the 20th century. Relative to the historical perspective of alternative education programs, landmark court cases and judicial decisions, such as *in loco parentis, Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*, *Goss v. Lopez*, *Wood v. Strickland*, and *Honig v. Doe*, manufactured an even faster evolution of alternative education programs compared to the traditional public school system.

In addition, literature was reviewed pertaining to the different types of alternative school programs, specifically Raywid's (1994) typology of alternative education, Hefner-Packer's (1990) five models of alternative education, Chalker's (1996) four common environments for alternative education, and Schargel and Smink's (2001) review of the nine different types of alternative education programs as compiled by the National Dropout Prevention Center. The next section of the literature review dealt with the impact alternative education had upon student conduct and student achievement. Several researchers surmised that recidivism rates are high for students who begin to receive out-of-school suspensions in a conventional public school, which will eventually lead to an increasing high school dropout rate if no alternative education program exists within the school system. The final section of the literature review identified indispensable characteristics of effective alternative schools, such as school climate, student needs, instruction/curriculum, faculty needs, community support, student services, and leadership.

The significance of this literature review was to complement the overall purpose of examining the perceptions between alternative school directors and alternative school teachers with regards to the extent of existence of effective practices and the importance of effective practices in their alternative education programs throughout the state of Indiana. The following chapter describes the methodology of this study pertaining to the characteristics of alternative schools and the perceptions of their existence and importance by lead directors and faculty members. It is followed by an analysis of the data, conclusions from the data analysis, and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

This study was designed to identify the difference in the perceptions between alternative school directors and alternative school teachers with regards to the extent of existence of effective practices and the importance of effective practices in their alternative education programs throughout the state of Indiana. This chapter describes the particular methodology that was used in this study. The research design, description of the population, the instrument, procedures for data collection, and statistical analysis of data are discussed.

Research Design

This study used a non-experimental and descriptive design process. It was a quantitative study with data collected through the use of surveys that was distributed to the lead directors and faculty members of alternative educational programs throughout the state of Indiana. The instrument consisted of 40 research-based effective characteristics of alternative schools. Participants rated each item based upon their perception of the existence of that item in their alternative school and upon their perception of importance of that item in their alternative school. The characteristics were divided into seven different categories: school climate, student needs, instruction/curriculum, student services, faculty needs, community support, and leadership. This survey was used to determine the frequency of occurrence of these effective characteristics and any significant difference between these effective

characteristics as they were perceived by lead directors and faculty members with respect to importance and existence.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to conclude if there is a difference in the perceptions between alternative school directors and alternative school teachers with regards to the extent of existence of effective characteristics and the importance of effective characteristics in their alternative education programs throughout the state of Indiana. These different types of effective characteristics were determined through the literature review on alternative education programs.

The effectiveness of alternative education programs in Indiana was measured using the perceptions of lead directors who are responsible for the daily management and visionary aspirations of their respective alternative schools, and the perceptions of teachers who are responsible for the daily instruction and maximization of student learning. Information from this research may be used by central office administrators to develop an effective alternative school that will meet the needs of these students attending these different types of alternative education programs. An additional application for this study may be for the proposal of effective professional development strategies for existing alternative education faculty. Lead directors and faculty may also use this study to formerly assess an alternative education program through the existence of the effective characteristics in their schools and establish any changes they may want to make to improve their effective traits and practices in their schools.

Research Questions

This study examined effective characteristics of alternative education programs as perceived by lead directors and teachers in alternative schools in the state of Indiana. It sought

to conclude if there is a difference in perceptions of the existence of these characteristics and if there is a difference in the perceived importance of these characteristics by the teachers and lead directors. The following were the research questions:

1) Is there difference between alternative school lead directors' and faculty members' perceptions on the linear composite of school climate, student needs, instruction/curriculum, student services, faculty needs, community support, and leadership, regarding the existence of these effective characteristics of alternative school programs?
2) Is there difference between alternative school lead directors' and faculty members' perceptions on the linear composite of school climate, student needs, instruction/curriculum, student services, faculty needs, community support, and leadership, regarding the importance of these effective characteristics of alternative school programs?

Null Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested:

1. There is no significant difference between alternative school lead directors' and faculty members' perceptions on the linear composite of school climate, student needs, instruction/curriculum, student services, faculty needs, community support, and leadership, regarding the existence of these effective characteristics of alternative school programs.

2. There is no significant difference between alternative school lead directors' and faculty members' perceptions on the linear composite of school climate, student needs, instruction/curriculum, student services, faculty needs, community support, and leadership, regarding the importance of these effective characteristics of alternative school programs.

Variables

For the purpose of this study, the independent variable was the position of the respondents, which were comprised of two different levels: alternative school lead directors and alternative school certified teachers. The dependent variables were the perceptions of existence and importance of effective alternative school characteristics from lead directors and certified teachers, with respect to school climate, student needs, instruction/curriculum, student services, faculty needs, community support, and leadership. The formation of these seven composite variables originated from the Perceptions of Alternative Schools Survey, in which 40 research-based questions were categorized into these seven ubiquitous elements that make the greatest impact upon the effectiveness of successful alternative schools.

Population

The population of this study included alternative education programs that serve at-risk students throughout the state of Indiana and that provided a yearly program profile made public on the Indiana Department of Education's website for the 2009-10 school year (Indiana Department of Education, 2009). This list contained 199 alternative education programs with applicable information including the name and email address of each lead director/administrator. Each alternative education program had at least one lead director/administrator and at least one faculty member. However, of these 199 alternative education programs, there were only 141 lead directors/administrators, as several of them are responsible for multiple alternative education programs. In addition, there were a total of 965 certified teachers employed in these 199 alternative education programs. Although after calculating these 141 lead directors, there were a total of 202 certified teachers that were eligible to participate in this study. According to the methodology of this study, the 141 lead

directors represented the entire population for lead directors in Indiana alternative education programs; while, the 202 certified teachers represented a sample of the population for certified teachers in Indiana alternative education programs.

Instrument

The Perceptions of Alternative Schools Survey originally developed by Wiseman (1996) and revised by McAffee (1999) and by Gooden (2009), was used with permission granted by all three researchers. The survey consisted of items regarding the perceived existence of 40 research-based effective characteristics of alternative education programs and items regarding the perceived importance of each of these characteristics. These items were divided into seven categories representing the areas of school climate, student needs, instruction/curriculum, student services, faculty needs, community support, and leadership. The effective characteristics were derived from the review of literature on alternative education programs. Table 2 illustrates the effective characteristics and the studies in which they were found to exist and to have great importance within alternative education programming. Also, there were demographic questions concerning years of teaching or administrative experience in an alternative school, enrollment of the alternative school, and length of existence of the alternative school (Appendix C). Additional demographic information included questions pertaining to student/teacher ratio and questions related to the purpose of the alternative school. These questions had several answers to choose from as well as additional space if the appropriate option for a response was not provided. Once the surveys were received by the researcher, the information was tabulated through the use of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

Table 2

Program Characteristics of Alternative Education Programs Based Upon Literature Review.

Characteristic	Research Study
1. A guiding mission statement to assist in making decisions	Powell (2003), Aron (2006), Kellmayer (1995), Lange & Sletten (2002), Paglin & Fager (1997), Schargel & Smink (2001)
2. Student choice to attend	Loflin (2003), Raywid (1994)
3. Faculty choice to work at school	Aron (2003), Aronson (1995), Morley (1991)
4. Fewer than 125 students	Aron (2006), Kellmayer (1995)
5. Class size less than 16 students	Kellmayer (1995), Schargel & Smink (2001), Thomas, Sabatino, & Sarri (1982)
6. Clearly established rules of student conduct	Aron (2006), Paglin & Fager (1997), Quinn, Poirier, Faller, Gable, & Tonelson (2006)
7. Students' opinions are heard	Aron (2006), Kerka (2003), Paglin & Fager (1997)
8. Sense of community between staff and students	Aronson (1995), Quinn et al. (2006)
9. Open and free communication between students and faculty	Aronson (1995), Barr & Parrett (1997), Kerka (2003)
10. Positive reinforcement program	Aron (2006)
11. Flexible scheduling	Aron (2006)
12. Mutual respect between staff and students	Paglin & Fager (1997), Kerka (2003)
13. Staff serving as mentors and advisors to students	Tobin & Sprague (2000)
14. Relevant curriculum and instruction	Fitzsimons-Lovett (2001), Hughes & Adera (2006), Aron (2006)

Table 2 (continued)

Characteristic	Research Study
15. Differentiated instructional strategies used in classroom	Gable, Bullock, & Evans (2006), Paglin & Fager (1997)
16. High academic student expectations	Aron (2006)
17. Students work at own pace	Loflin (2003), Fitzsimons-Lovett (2001), Quinn & Rutherford (1998)
18. Individualized student instruction for students	Loflin (2003), Aron (2006), Gable, Bullock, & Evans (2006), Grobe (2002)
19. Student grouping by ability	Lange & Sletten (2002)
20. Technology integration	Kellmayer (1995), Brenner (2007)
21. Teachers make curricular decisions	Aronson (1995), Raywid (1994)
22. Teachers develop curriculum	Aron (2006)
23. Sharing of ideas with faculty	Aron (2006)
24. Professional development options	Aron (2006)
25. Visiting other alternative schools	Aron (2003)
26. Superintendent support	Kellmayer (1995)
27. Students learn job-related skills	Aron (2006)
28. Business partnerships developed	Dugger & Dugger (1998)
29. Service learning projects	Duckenfield & Swanson (1992)
30. Parent involvement	Hoye & Sturgis (2005), Kellmayer (1995)
31. Individual and group counseling	Dugger & Dugger (1998), Dynarski & Gleason (1998)
32. Assistance with problem solving, social skills, & peer mediation	Quinn & Rutherford (1998), Tobin & Sprague (2000)

Table 2 (continued)

Characteristic	Research Study
33. Community relationships	Dugger & Dugger (1998), Dynarski & Gleason (1998), Kleiner, Porch, & Farris (2002)
34. Academic guidance is provided	Aron (2006)
35. Director/Principal has a vision for school	Barr & Parrett (1997), Hargreaves & Fink (2004)
36. Director believes in faculty's ability to reach goals	Barr & Parrett (1997), Kellmayer (1995)
37. Director encourages faculty to develop new ideas to improve school	Holmes (1988), Whitaker (2002)
38. Director is a good communicator	Kellmayer (1995)
39. Director has a positive attitude	Holmes (1988)
40. Director is an advocate for the school	Reimer & Cash 2003

Validity/Reliability

The original survey instrument was written by Wiseman (1996). A pilot study was conducted by Wiseman to determine the validity and reliability. The items were reviewed by five experts in the alternative education field. Recommendations were incorporated in the survey; thus increasing its content validity.

Reliability was determined through a pilot study performed at a public alternative school in North Carolina. Using Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha to determine internal consistency, the seven subcategories were evaluated along with the entire survey. The

instrument itself had a reliability coefficient of .87. The seven subcategories received reliability coefficients between .85 and .88.

Wiseman's (1996) survey used a Likert scale for responses pertaining to the perceived importance and existence of the individual characteristics listed. The raters responded to each item with a number from 1-5. The response of 1 was designated as not important or does not exist. The response of 5 was designated as highly important or consistently exists. The responses of 2-4 were not labeled. McAffee revised the directions by labeling the responses of 2-4 with varying degrees of existence and importance. The questions were not significantly altered. The reliability of McAffee's survey was calculated using the SPSS 11.0 software program. Internal reliability using coefficient alphas ranged from .89 to .94 (McAffee, 1999).

Measurement

For the 40 items on the Perceptions of Alternative Schools Survey, the respondents were asked to state how they rate the existence of each research-based characteristic, as well as the importance of each characteristic in the school. To indicate to what extent they agree or disagree, there were a choice of responses on a 6-point Likert scale. These choices were the following: (1) Strongly agree, (2) Agree, (3) Slightly agree, (4) Slightly disagree, (5) Disagree, and (6) Strongly disagree.

Data Collection Procedures

After receiving exempt status from the Institutional Review Board, the Perceptions of Alternative Schools Survey was transmitted to an online survey through the use of Qualtrics and was emailed to the 141 lead directors responsible for the 199 alternative education programs throughout the state of Indiana. A list of the subjects was developed using the information provided by the Indiana Department of Education's (IDOE) Alternative Education

website. After contacting the IDOE, email addresses were obtained for every lead director responsible for the 199 alternative education programs.

Next, the email sent to the lead director included a cover letter (Appendix A), an informed consent form (Appendix B), and a link to click on the Perceptions of Alternative Schools Survey (Appendix C) to complete. The cover letter explained the purpose of the study, provided instructions, ensured anonymity, and requested the assistance in forwarding the email to three other certified teachers in the respective alternative education program. Additional information sent to the subjects was an explanation that the respondent's identity was blind to the researcher. Included in the email, each potential subject received the informed consent form advising that clicking on the link to the survey was an indication of consent. No person receiving the invitation to participate in the research was under any obligation to complete the survey and participate in the research. Included in the informed consent form, participants were made aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Once the lead director received the email sent by the researcher, the lead director was requested to forward the email, which included the cover letter, the informed consent form, and the survey link, to three certified teachers, if applicable, in the respective alternative education program, by randomly selecting three teachers whose last names were closest to the letter M. If there were less than three certified teachers in the alternative education program, then the lead director forwarded the email to those respective teachers. If there were no certified teachers in the alternative education program, then the lead director didn't forward the email to anyone. Finally, the lead director was requested to participate by clicking on the survey link within two to three days of receipt.

Once the certified teacher received the forwarded email from the lead director, each teacher received the cover letter (Appendix A), the informed consent form (Appendix B), and a link to click on the Perceptions of Alternative Schools Survey (Appendix C) to complete. The cover letter and the informed consent form explained the study, provided instructions, ensured anonymity to the participants, and kept the results of the survey confidential. Each certified teacher was requested to click the survey link within two to three days of receipt.

In addition, 10 days after sending the initial email to all of the lead directors both collectively and individually, a follow-up email (Appendix D) was sent to all of the lead directors as a reminder to participate in this survey by clicking on the link, to forward this email to three randomly-selected certified teachers, and to thank those who had already participated in the survey. Data was collected and recorded through the Qualtrics server. This data was transmitted to SPSS for data analysis. All data was stored on the Qualtrics server and on the researcher's external hard drive, in addition to hard copies stored in a locked file cabinet until the study was completed.

Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. Biographic data pertaining to the respondents and demographic data pertaining to the alternative schools and the student population were presented in frequencies and percentages. Once the questionnaires were received from the participating alternative schools, the information was tabulated through the use of SPSS version 17.0. The data was averaged and ranked for perceptions of existence and importance of the effective alternative school characteristics for both lead directors and certified teachers. Inferential statistics were used to analyze the data pertaining to each research question. Two multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) tests were conducted with the

alternative school positions of lead directors and certified teachers as the two different levels of the independent variable and the mean scores of their perceptions of effective alternative school characteristics, with respect to school climate, student needs, instruction/curriculum, student services, faculty needs, community support, and leadership as the dependent variables. The first one-way MANOVA test analyzed the issue of existence of alternative school characteristics by comparing perceptions of lead directors and faculty members on a linear composite across a combination of the seven different categories from the survey. While, the second one-way MANOVA test analyzed the issue of importance of alternative school characteristics by comparing perceptions of lead directors and faculty members on a linear composite across a combination of the seven different categories from the survey. After a multivariate effect was performed, then follow-up univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were conducted to compare lead directors with teachers on the existence of each composite variable and on the importance of each composite variable. If a significant univariate effect was discovered among the seven composite variables, then additional univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were conducted to compare lead directors with teachers on the existence of each subset of questions within the significant composite variable(s) and on the importance of each subset of questions within the significant composite variable(s).

Summary

The perceived existence and perceived importance of 40 research-based effective characteristics of alternative education programs were evaluated using a non-experimental, descriptive design of quantitative data. The data was collected from lead directors/administrators and certified teachers of public alternative education programs in the state of Indiana using the Perceptions of Alternative Schools Survey, which was originally

developed by Wiseman (1996) and later revised by McAffee (1999). The data was analyzed using frequencies and averages, one-way MANOVA tests, and univariate ANOVA tests. The results provided essential information regarding the frequency of existence, the amount of importance, and any significant differences of effective characteristics in alternative education programs. This information may be used to assist in the design of effective alternative school student learning and student growth, in the development of effective alternative school leadership, and in the direction of effective programming for alternative schools now and into the future.

Chapter 4 presents an analysis of the data collected from this study. It begins with an explanation of the categorical features of the effective alternative school characteristics as designated in the questionnaire and a description of the population that participated in the questionnaire, including information regarding the respondents and the alternative education programs they represent. Next, an analysis of inferential data illustrates the data by answering the research questions through the use of null hypotheses. The chapter concludes with a summary of the previously mentioned sections.

CHAPTER 4

Analysis of the Data

This chapter reports the results and findings of the study accumulated from questionnaires through the use of statistical testing. The chapter begins with an explanation of the categorical features of the effective alternative school characteristics as designated in the questionnaire, a description of the study's participants and locations, and an analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaire sent to alternative school lead directors and certified teachers throughout the state of Indiana. The data are presented by research questions and null hypotheses. The chapter ends with a brief summary.

The purpose of this study was to conclude if there is a difference in the perceptions between alternative school directors and alternative school teachers with regards to the extent of existence of effective characteristics and the importance of effective characteristics in their alternative education programs throughout the state of Indiana. Responses were sought to the following questions:

1) Is there difference between alternative school lead directors' and faculty members' perceptions on the linear composite of school climate, student needs, instruction/curriculum, student services, faculty needs, community support, and leadership, regarding the existence of these effective characteristics of alternative school programs?

2) Is there difference between alternative school lead directors' and faculty members' perceptions on the linear composite of school climate, student needs, instruction/curriculum, student services, faculty needs, community support, and leadership, regarding the importance of these effective characteristics of alternative school programs?

The research instrument was a survey emailed to all lead directors, who were responsible for an alternative education program that contained a program profile on the Indiana Department of Education's Alternative Education website, in which they electronically forwarded the same survey to three certified teachers, if applicable, who were employed in their respective alternative schools. The survey consisted of 40 features of alternative education programming. Each characteristic/feature belonged to one of seven categories. These categories were School Climate, Student Needs, Instruction/Curriculum, Faculty Needs, Community Support, Student Services, and Leadership (Table 3).

Lead directors/administrators and certified teachers were asked to respond to each item twice. The first time they were to rank each item on a 6-point Likert scale on the existence of the feature in their respective alternative schools. Responses to each item for the first row labeled, "This item exists in my school," were ranked as follows: (1) Strongly Agree, (2) Agree, (3) Slightly Agree, (4) Slightly Disagree, (5) Disagree, and (6) Strongly Disagree. The second time, lead directors/administrators and certified teachers were asked to respond on the importance each item would have upon alternative schools. Responses to each item for the second row labeled, "The importance I place on this item," were ranked in the equivalent aforementioned manner.

Table 3

Characteristics/Features of Alternative Schools by Category.

Category	Item	Characteristic/Feature
School Climate	1	The school has a mission statement used to guide the school in decision making and evaluation.
School Climate	2	The students can choose to attend either the alternative school or the traditional school.
School Climate	3	Teachers and staff choose to work at the alternative school.
School Climate	4	The alternative school has fewer than 125 students.
School Climate	5	Class size is less than 16 students per teacher.
School Climate	6	There are clearly established rules for behavior that are continually enforced.
Student Needs	7	Students' opinions are listened to and may be used in the decision making process.
Student Needs	8	There is a sense of community between staff and students.
Student Needs	9	Students and teachers can speak freely with each other.
Student Needs	10	Teachers provide positive reinforcement to students.
Student Needs	11	Flexible scheduling is available for students.
Student Needs	12	Students and teachers have mutual respect.
Student Needs	13	The staff serves as mentors, advisors, and tutors helping students with academic and social needs.
Instruction/Curriculum	14	There is relevance established between what is learned and how it applies to the world outside of school.
Instruction/Curriculum	15	A variety of teaching methods are used in the classroom to meet the needs of students with different learning styles.
Instruction/Curriculum	16	Teachers have high academic expectations for students.

Table 3 (continued)

Category	Item	Characteristic/Feature
Instruction/Curriculum	17	Students are allowed to work at their own pace.
Instruction/Curriculum	18	Instruction and curriculum are individualized for students.
Instruction/Curriculum	19	Students are grouped by ability not grade level.
Instruction/Curriculum	20	Technology is available and used as part of instruction.
Faculty Needs	21	Teachers have the freedom to make curriculum decisions.
Faculty Needs	22	Teachers work together to develop curriculum.
Faculty Needs	23	The faculty shares resources, ideas, and strategies with each other.
Faculty Needs	24	Professional development targeting the needs of alternative schools and the students is provided.
Faculty Needs	25	Teachers visit other alternative schools to gather new ideas.
Community Support	26	The superintendent shares his/her support of the alternative school with the community.
Community Support	27	Students have the opportunity to work in the community and learn job related skills.
Community Support	28	Partnerships are developed with businesses for job shadowing, internships, and/or mentoring opportunities.
Community Support	29	Service learning is part of the curriculum.
Community Support	30	Parents are encouraged or required to be involved in the school.
Student Services	31	Individual and group counseling is provided as needed.
Student Services	32	Assistance is given with problem solving, social skills, and/or peer mediation.

Table 3 (continued)

Category	Item	Characteristic/Feature
Student Services	33	There is a relationship with outside service providers in the community (social services, juvenile justice services, etc.).
Student Services	34	Students receive academic guidance on a regular basis.
Leadership	35	The director (or principal) has a vision for the school.
Leadership	36	The director believes in the ability of the staff to reach their goals.
Leadership	37	The director encourages the staff to develop new ideas or improve the school.
Leadership	38	The director is a good communicator.
Leadership	39	The director has a positive attitude.
Leadership	40	The director is an advocate for the school within the district and the community.

Lead directors and teachers were also asked to complete demographic information of their respective alternative schools concerning student enrollment, student-teacher ratio, school's longevity of existence, and the main purpose of the alternative school. In addition, lead directors and teachers were asked biographic information related to their alternative school position, administrative or teaching experience at an alternative school, and total teaching and/or administrative experience. This information was collected to assist in establishing a more accurate and updated profile of Indiana's alternative education programs, their lead directors, and their teachers.

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for all statistical analysis. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for biographic and demographic data.

Means and standard deviations were calculated for perceptions of existence and importance of the effective alternative school characteristics for both lead directors and certified teachers. Inferential statistics were used to analyze the data pertaining to each research question. Two multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) tests were conducted with the alternative school positions of lead directors and certified teachers as the two different levels of the independent variable and the mean scores of their perceptions of effective alternative school characteristics, with respect to school climate, student needs, instruction/curriculum, student services, faculty needs, community support, and leadership as the dependent variables. The first one-way MANOVA test analyzed the issue of existence of alternative school characteristics by comparing perceptions of lead directors and faculty members on a linear composite across a combination of the seven different categories from the survey. While, the second one-way MANOVA test analyzed the issue of importance of alternative school characteristics by comparing perceptions of lead directors and faculty members on a linear composite across a combination of the seven different categories from the survey. After a multivariate effect was performed, then follow-up univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were conducted to compare lead directors with teachers on the existence of each composite variable and on the importance of each composite variable. If a significant univariate effect was discovered among the seven composite variables, then additional univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were conducted to compare lead directors with teachers on the existence of each subset of questions within the significant composite variable(s) and on the importance of each subset of questions within the significant composite variable(s).

Population Description

The population for this study was derived from a list of alternative education programs obtained from the Indiana Department of Education's Alternative Education website that submitted an annual program profile for the 2009-10 school year. This list contained 199 alternative education programs with applicable information including the name and email address of each lead director. Each alternative education program had at least one lead director and at least one faculty member. However, of these 199 alternative education programs, there were only 141 lead directors, as several of them are responsible for multiple alternative education programs throughout their school corporation. In addition, there were a total of 965 certified teachers employed in these 199 alternative education programs. Although after calculating these 141 lead directors, there were a total of 202 certified teachers that were eligible to participate in this study. Emails were sent to the lead directors of these alternative education programs requesting participation in this survey. A link to the survey was provided in the email. Lead directors were instructed to complete the survey and forward the survey on to three randomly-selected, certified teachers who were employed in the respective alternative education program. After 10 days, a follow-up email was sent as a reminder.

In describing the demographic results of these alternative education programs, there were 114 respondents who began taking the survey, with 101 surveys being completed between lead directors and teachers. Approximately half (47%) of the respondents were from schools with 50 or fewer students. Another 27% of the respondents were from schools with an enrollment greater than 100 students; while, 25% of the respondents were from schools between 50 and 100 students (Table 4).

Table 4

Student Enrollment of Indiana Alternative Schools

Student Enrollment	Frequency	Percent
Under 25 students	18	17.8%
25-50 students	29	28.7%
51-100 students	25	24.7%
101-125 students	7	6.9%
Over 125 students	20	19.8%
Did not respond	2	1.9%

Note: $n = 101$

The survey participants indicated the current student-teacher ratio in 54% of the schools was 12:1 or greater; while, 44% of the schools possessed a 12:1 or lower ratio. The distribution of responses is detailed in Table 5.

Table 5

Current Student-Teacher Ratio in Indiana Alternative Schools

Ratio	Frequency	Percent
12 or fewer students per teacher	44	43.6%
More than 12 students per teacher	54	53.5%
Did not respond	3	2.9%

Note: $n = 101$

Greater than one in three respondents (37%) were employed in alternative schools that have been in existence greater than 10 years. Another 33% of the respondents were from alternative schools that have been in existence for less than six years. A total of 24% of the respondents were from schools that have been in existence between 6 and 10 years. Only 7% did not answer the question (Table 6).

Table 6

Years of Existence of Indiana Alternative Schools

Number of Years	Frequency	Percent
1-5 years	33	32.7%
6-10 years	24	23.8%
11-20 years	28	27.7%
Over 20 years	9	8.9%
Did not respond	7	6.9%

Note: $n = 101$

Next, participants were asked to provide the main purpose of the alternative school. Approximately half of the respondents (46%) stated their alternative school exists to allow flexibility for students to graduate, especially for credit recovery purposes. A total of 21% of the respondents believed their alternative school's main purpose was to accept the removal of students with behavioral problems from the traditional high school setting. Another 17% of respondents stated the main purpose of their alternative school was to provide more individualized attention from teachers and/or smaller class sizes. An additional 14% declared

their alternative school had a different purpose than the available listed options. Table 7 details the responses to this question.

Table 7

Main Purpose of the Alternative School

Purpose	Frequency	Percent
Remove students with behavior problems from the high school	21	20.8%
Provide students more attention from teachers and/or smaller class size	17	16.8%
Allow more flexibility for students to graduate (scheduling, credit recovery opportunities, etc.)	46	45.5%
Other	14	13.9%
Did not respond	4	4.0%

Note: $n = 101$

In describing the biographic information from the respondents, there were 101 surveys completed between lead directors and teachers, with 60 respondents out of a total of 141 designated lead directors (43%) being classified as lead directors/administrators. In contrast, 39 respondents out of a total of 202 designated teachers (19%) were classified as certified teachers. Two participants did not respond to this particular question.

Concerning the length of tenure of alternative school lead directors/administrators who participated in the study, approximately half (48%) of the respondents had between 2 to 5 years of administrative experience in an alternative school environment. Another 27% of the respondents had between 6 to 10 years of administrative experience in alternative schools. This

was the first year of alternative school administration for six respondents. Six respondents indicated they had more than 10 years of alternative school administration experience (Table 8).

Table 8

Years of Administrative Experience at an Alternative School

Years of Experience	Frequency	Percent
1 year	6	10.0%
2-5 years	29	48.3%
6-10 years	16	26.7%
11-20 years	4	6.7%
Over 20 years	2	3.3%
Did not respond	3	5.0%

Note: $n = 60$

In similarity, responding certified teachers had spent approximately the same amount of time in their positions as lead directors. Almost half (49%) of the respondents had taught between 2 to 5 years at an alternative school setting. Another 21% had more than 10 years of alternative school teaching experience; while, an additional 18% had between 6 to 10 years of alternative school teaching experience. An incredible three respondents had instructed at an alternative school for over 20 years. This was the first year of teaching at an alternative school for two respondents. Table 9 illustrates the respondents' choices to this question.

Table 9

Years of Teaching Experience at an Alternative School

Years of Experience	Frequency	Percent
1 year	2	5.1%
2-5 years	19	48.7%
6-10 years	7	17.9%
11-20 years	8	20.5%
Over 20 years	3	7.7%

Note: $n = 39$

Based on the demographic data collected, almost half of the respondents represented alternative schools with fewer than 50 students, a majority represented alternative schools with more than 12 students per teacher, a majority of the alternative schools were less than 10 years old, and approximately half of the alternative schools existed for the purpose of helping students graduate from high school. Concerning the biographic information of the respondents, almost half of the respondents had taught or directed an alternative school between 2 to 5 years. Less than 15% of the participants were in either their first year of teaching or directing at an alternative school environment. Approximately 10% of the respondents had over 20 years of teaching or administrative experience at the alternative school setting. Statistically, the teachers had more experience in their positions than the lead directors who responded.

Analysis of Inferential Data

A survey containing Likert scale responses was sent by email to participants requesting their perception of the existence and importance of 40 effective characteristics of alternative

schools found in the literature review. The Likert scale ranged from 1 to 6 with 1 representing Strongly Agree and 6 representing Strongly Disagree. For each item, respondents rated how strongly they agreed to the existence and importance of each characteristic. The responses were statistically analyzed based on the two research questions. Research Question 1: Is there difference between alternative school lead directors' and faculty members' perceptions on the linear composite of school climate, student needs, instruction/curriculum, student services, faculty needs, community support, and leadership, regarding the existence of these effective characteristics of alternative school programs?

Before an analysis of the MANOVA results is explained for the first question, a calculation of the mean and standard deviation for each item on the survey for both lead directors and certified teachers must occur and be ranked according to the level of agreement. A mean of 2.5 or less represented strong agreement of the item.

Averages for lead directors' responses were tabulated for each characteristic to identify how strongly they agreed or disagreed that the 40 characteristics existed. The means for the perceptions of existence of the characteristics for lead directors ranged from 1.34 to 3.42. Thirty-three of the 40 characteristics showed a high level of agreement ($M \leq 2.50$) that the characteristic exists within their alternative schools. A complete list of each characteristic, along with their mean and standard deviation, is illustrated in Table 10.

Table 10

Characteristics Lead Directors Rate Highest in Existence in Their Alternative Schools

Characteristic	Mean	*SD*	Category
Technology is available and used as part of instruction.	1.34	0.571	Instruction/ Curriculum
The director has a positive attitude.	1.42	0.720	Leadership
The director believes in the ability of the staff to reach their goals.	1.45	0.717	Leadership
Teachers provide positive reinforcement to students.	1.47	0.676	Student Needs
Class size is less than 16 students per teacher.	1.50	1.081	School Climate
The director is an advocate for the school within the district and the community.	1.52	0.890	Leadership
There are clearly established rules for behavior that are continually enforced.	1.52	1.033	School Climate
The director encourages the staff to develop new ideas to improve the school.	1.53	0.767	Leadership
The director (or principal) has a vision for the school.	1.55	0.746	Leadership
The staff serves as mentors, advisors, and tutors helping students with academic and social needs.	1.56	0.696	Student Needs
The school has a mission statement used to guide the school in decision making and evaluation.	1.57	0.745	School Climate
Students are allowed to work at their own pace.	1.72	1.075	Instruction/ Curriculum
The faculty shares resources, ideas, and strategies with each other.	1.75	0.703	Faculty Needs
The director is a good communicator.	1.75	0.836	Leadership

Table 10 (continued)

Characteristic	Mean	*SD*	Category
The alternative school has fewer than 125 students.	1.77	1.544	School Climate
Students and teachers can speak freely with each other.	1.77	0.789	Student Needs
Assistance is given with problem solving, social skills, and/or peer mediation.	1.77	0.945	Student Services
Students and teachers have mutual respect.	1.78	1.026	Student Needs
Students receive academic guidance on a regular basis.	1.78	0.825	Student Services
Teachers have high academic expectations for students.	1.85	0.777	Instruction/ Curriculum
There is a sense of community between staff and students.	1.92	1.046	Student Needs
The superintendent shares his/her support of the alternative school with the community.	1.95	1.227	Community Support
Teachers have the freedom to make curriculum decisions.	2.00	0.883	Faculty Needs
Teachers and staff choose to work at the alternative school.	2.00	1.484	School Climate
Individual and group counseling is provided as needed.	2.02	1.295	Student Services
Flexible scheduling is available for students.	2.08	1.279	Student Needs
Students' opinions are listened to and may be used in the decision making process.	2.10	0.986	Student Needs
There is a relationship with outside service providers in the community (social services, juvenile justice services, etc.).	2.10	1.245	Student Services

Table 10 (continued)

Characteristic	Mean	*SD*	Category
Instruction and curriculum are individualized for students.	2.12	1.236	Instruction/ Curriculum
Teachers work together to develop curriculum.	2.17	0.941	Faculty Needs
There is relevance established between what is learned and how it applies to the world outside of school.	2.17	0.847	Instruction/ Curriculum
A variety of teaching methods are used in the classroom to meet the needs of students with different learning styles.	2.32	1.142	Instruction/ Curriculum
Students have the opportunity to work in the community and learn job related skills.	2.50	1.467	Community Support
Parents are encouraged or required to be involved in the school.	2.70	1.319	Community Support
Professional development targeting the needs of alternative schools and the students is provided.	2.73	1.313	Faculty Needs
Service learning is part of the curriculum.	2.81	1.652	Community Support
The students can choose to attend either the alternative school or the traditional school.	3.08	1.670	School Climate
Students are grouped by ability not grade level.	3.11	1.559	Instruction/ Curriculum
Partnerships are developed with businesses for job shadowing, internships, and/or mentoring opportunities.	3.13	1.384	Community Support
Teachers visit other alternative schools to gather new ideas.	3.42	1.533	Faculty Needs

Note: $n = 101$

The top characteristic (M = 1.34, SD = 0.571) that lead directors believed to exist in their alternative school was "technology is available and used as part of instruction," which originated from the Instruction/Curriculum category. Also included in these top 10 characteristics were five of the six features in the Leadership category, two features from the Student Needs category, and two features from the School Climate category. The categories of Community Support, Faculty Needs, and Student Services were not represented in these top 10 characteristics. In addition, these top 10 characteristics had an average mean of 1.49, which verified a very high level of agreement among lead directors as to which characteristics they believed to predominantly exist in their alternative schools.

Even though most lead directors agreed the 40 characteristics existed to some extent in their alternative education programs, there were seven items they did not strongly agree existed (M > 2.50). The characteristic (M = 3.42, SD = 1.533) that achieved the lowest rating in terms of existence was "teachers visit other alternative schools to gather new ideas," which originated from the Faculty Needs category. Also included in these bottom seven characteristics were three of the five features from the Community Support category, one feature from the School Climate category, one feature from the Instruction/Curriculum category, and another feature from the Faculty Needs category. The categories of Student Needs, Student Services, and Leadership were not represented in these bottom seven characteristics. In addition, these bottom seven characteristics had an average mean of 3.00, which verified the alternative lead directors did not respond to these specific features with a high level of agreement of existence in their schools.

An analysis of the responses of participating certified teachers was also performed using the same set of characteristics. Mean scores for teachers' responses were tabulated for each

characteristic to identify how strongly they agreed or disagreed that the 40 characteristics existed. A mean score equal to or less than 2.50 indicated strong agreement. The mean scores for the perceptions of existence of the characteristics for teachers ranged from 1.41 to 4.00. The faculty agreed that 33 of the 40 characteristics existed in their alternative schools. Table 11 displays a list of characteristics, means, and standard deviations based upon faculty responses.

Table 11

Characteristics Teachers Rate Highest in Existence in Their Alternative Schools

Characteristic	Mean	*SD*	Category
Teachers provide positive reinforcement to students.	1.41	0.549	Student Needs
The staff serves as mentors, advisors, and tutors helping students with academic and social needs.	1.44	0.680	Student Needs
The director has a positive attitude.	1.51	0.644	Leadership
The director is an advocate for the school within the district and the community.	1.54	0.682	Leadership
The director believes in the ability of the staff to reach their goals.	1.56	0.552	Leadership
Technology is available and used as part of instruction.	1.64	0.811	Instruction/ Curriculum
Students and teachers can speak freely with each other.	1.69	0.655	Student Needs
The director encourages the staff to develop new ideas to improve the school.	1.69	0.694	Leadership
Students are allowed to work at their own pace.	1.71	0.943	Instruction/ Curriculum
The director (or principal) has a vision for the school.	1.72	0.887	Leadership

Table 11 (continued)

Characteristic	Mean	*SD*	Category
The school has a mission statement used to guide the school in decision making and evaluation.	1.82	1.121	School Climate
There is a sense of community between staff and students.	1.82	0.997	Student Needs
Students receive academic guidance on a regular basis.	1.87	0.833	Student Services
There are clearly established rules for behavior that are continually enforced.	1.87	0.894	School Climate
Students and teachers have mutual respect.	1.87	0.801	Student Needs
Teachers have high academic expectations for students.	1.87	0.978	Instruction/ Curriculum
The director is a good communicator.	1.90	1.046	Leadership
Assistance is given with problem solving, social skills, and/or peer mediation.	2.02	1.181	Student Services
Students' opinions are listened to and may be used in the decision making process.	2.05	1.025	Student Needs
The faculty shares resources, ideas, and strategies with each other.	2.05	0.916	Faculty Needs
Flexible scheduling is available for students.	2.10	1.334	Student Needs
Teachers have the freedom to make curriculum decisions.	2.10	1.210	Faculty Needs
Teachers and staff choose to work at the alternative school.	2.13	1.609	School Climate
A variety of teaching methods are used in the classroom to meet the needs of students with different learning styles.	2.18	1.233	Instruction/ Curriculum
The alternative school has fewer than 125 students.	2.26	1.846	School Climate

Table 11 (continued)

Characteristic	Mean	*SD*	Category
Individual and group counseling is provided as needed.	2.26	1.322	Student Services
Class size is less than 16 students per teacher.	2.31	1.592	School Climate
There is a relationship with outside service providers in the community (social services, juvenile justice services, etc.).	2.31	1.217	Student Services
There is relevance established between what is learned and how it applies to the world outside of school.	2.33	1.108	Instruction/ Curriculum
Service learning is part of the curriculum.	2.34	1.453	Community Support
Teachers work together to develop curriculum.	2.36	1.287	Faculty Needs
The superintendent shares his/her support of the alternative school with the community.	2.44	1.447	Community Support
Students have the opportunity to work in the community and learn job related skills.	2.45	1.481	Community Support
Instruction and curriculum are individualized for students.	2.51	1.355	Instruction/ Curriculum
The students can choose to attend either the alternative school or the traditional school.	2.77	1.347	School Climate
Parents are encouraged or required to be involved in the school.	2.77	1.266	Community Support
Professional development targeting the needs of alternative schools and the students is provided.	3.18	1.699	Faculty Needs
Partnerships are developed with businesses for job shadowing, internships, and/or mentoring opportunities.	3.21	1.673	Community Support

Table 11 (continued)

Characteristic	Mean	*SD*	Category
Students are grouped by ability not grade level.	3.59	1.681	Instruction/ Curriculum
Teachers visit other alternative schools to gather new ideas.	4.00	1.573	Faculty Needs

Note: $n = 101$

The top characteristic ($M = 1.41$, $SD = 0.549$) that certified teachers believed to exist in their alternative schools was "teachers provide positive reinforcement to students," which emanated from the Student Needs category. Also included in these top 10 characteristics were five of the six features in the Leadership category, two additional features from the Student Needs category, and two features from the Instruction/Curriculum category. The categories of School Climate, Faculty Needs, Community Support, and Student Services were not represented in these top 10 characteristics. In comparing the responses of lead directors and teachers, eight out of the top 10 characteristics were identically selected by both groups as the most prevalent in their school settings. In addition, these top 10 characteristics had an average mean of 1.59, which verified a very high level of agreement among teachers as to which characteristics they believed to predominantly exist in their alternative schools.

In contrast, the lowest characteristic ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 1.573$) that teachers believed to exist in their buildings was "teachers visit other alternative schools to gather new ideas," which originated from the Faculty Needs category and was the identical response from lead directors. Similar to lead directors, there were also seven characteristics that the teachers did not strongly agree existed in their alternative education programs ($M > 2.50$). Other characteristics in the

bottom seven of existence were two features from the Instruction/Curriculum category, two features from the Community Support category, one feature from the School Climate category, and an additional feature from the Faculty Needs category. The categories of Student Needs, Student Services, and Leadership were not represented in these bottom seven characteristics. In comparing the responses of lead directors and teachers, six out of the bottom seven characteristics were identically selected by both groups as the least prevalent in their educational environment. In addition, these bottom seven characteristics had an average mean of 3.15, which verified the teachers did not respond to these specific features with a high level of agreement of existence in their alternative schools.

In summary, both lead directors and teachers reported strong agreement that 83% of the research-based effective characteristics exist in their alternative educational programs. There were seven features in which both lead directors and teachers did not report strong agreement. None of the items were rated in strong disagreement by either lead directors or faculty members.

In order to determine the difference in agreement on the existence of these characteristics one hypothesis was proposed and tested:

1. There is no significant difference between alternative school lead directors' and faculty members' perceptions on the linear composite of school climate, student needs, instruction/curriculum, student services, faculty needs, community support, and leadership, regarding the existence of these effective characteristics of alternative school programs.

A one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to determine lead directors' and certified teachers' differences of their perceptions of the existence of effective alternative school characteristics, with respect to school climate, student needs,

instruction/curriculum, student services, faculty needs, community support, and leadership. Before an explanation of the results is revealed, the researcher will explain several of the assumptions and transformations that transpired.

Prior to performing the statistical test, the missing data were examined for each variable, in which the missing data appeared random and non-systematic. Thus, the first transformation replaced missing scores by calculating a new score using the series mean estimation method. In examining the univariate outliers of the 40 different characteristics for administrators and teachers, there were only seven characteristics that didn't contain any outliers. In order to eliminate these outliers and provide for better normality, a second transformation was performed, in which original cases with a score greater than or equal to a 6 was recoded to a score of 5, original cases with a score greater than or equal to a 5 was recoded to a score of 4, and original cases with a score greater than or equal to a 4 was recoded to a score of 3. Next, the researcher grouped the 40 alternative school characteristics into the seven composite dependent variables, per the classification from the Perceptions of Alternative Schools Survey.

In addition, a statistical procedure, called the Mahalanobis' Distance, was performed and revealed no visible multivariate outliers among the seven alternative school characteristics. After these two transformations were performed, Table 12 displays the new means and standard deviations for lead directors' and teachers' perceptions of the seven alternative school characteristics.

Table 12

Means and Standard Deviations of Lead Directors' and Teachers' Perceptions of Existence of Alternative School Characteristics

	Lead Directors		Teachers	
Effective Characteristics	Mean	*SD*	Mean	*SD*
School Climate	1.69	0.449	1.88	0.377
Student Needs	1.74	0.556	1.73	0.481
Instruction/Curriculum	2.05	0.620	2.20	0.684
Faculty Needs	2.36	0.606	2.60	0.818
Community Support	2.58	0.938	2.56	0.948
Student Services	1.84	0.660	1.99	0.676
Leadership	1.50	0.546	1.63	0.500

Note: $n = 101$

Subsequently, the researcher examined three general assumptions involved in multivariate statistical testing: normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. Regarding univariate normality, the researcher analyzed the skewness, kurtosis, and calculated z-scores for both skewness and kurtosis for each of the seven alternative school characteristics, with respect to lead directors' and teachers' responses, through the examination of histograms and descriptive statistics (Table 13).

Table 13

Descriptive Statistics for Perceptions of Existence of Effective Alternative School Characteristics by Lead Directors and Teachers

	School Climate	Student Needs	Inst./Curriculum	Faculty Needs	Comm. Support	Student Services	Leader-ship
Lead Directors							
Skewness	0.868	0.741	0.603	-0.335	0.405	0.565	1.151
z-score	2.809	2.398	1.951	-1.084	1.311	1.828	3.725
Kurtosis	0.622	-0.047	0.282	-0.436	-0.066	-0.364	1.027
z-score	1.023	-0.077	0.464	-0.717	-0.109	-0.599	1.689
Teachers							
Skewness	-0.001	0.354	-0.116	0.092	0.374	0.122	0.491
z-score	-0.003	0.937	-0.307	0.243	0.989	0.323	1.299
Kurtosis	0.303	-0.133	-1.090	-0.824	-0.472	-0.857	-0.016
z-score	0.409	-0.179	-1.471	-1.112	-0.637	-1.157	-0.022

Note: $n = 101$

A normal distribution occurred among six out of the seven alternative school characteristics since the range of their skewness and kurtosis values were between ±1 and/or their z-scores were within ±1.96 standard deviations of the mean. Likewise, an analysis of the histograms exuded a normal distribution for six out of the seven identical alternative school characteristics. Consequently, the one characteristic that had a slightly positive skewness was the leadership perceptions of lead directors. Furthermore, univariate linearity was examined through the use of normal Q-Q plots, in which each graph depicted the observed values

corresponding with the predicted values resembling a straight line for each of the seven alternative school characteristics. In examining multivariate normality and linearity, the scatter plot matrices displayed elliptical shapes for each alternative school characteristic. Therefore, both normality and linearity was assumed.

The final assumption of univariate homoscedasticity examined the homogeneity of variances between lead directors and certified teachers through the Levene's Test. For this statistical test, an alpha level of .05 was used for the significance level. Table 14 illustrates the results of the Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variance.

Table 14

A Summary of Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variance

Effective Characteristics	Levene Statistic	*df*1	*df*2	Significance
School Climate	0.752	1	97	0.388
Student Needs	0.235	1	97	0.629
Instruction/Curriculum	2.116	1	97	0.149
Faculty Needs	6.471	1	97	0.013
Community Support	0.093	1	97	0.761
Student Services	0.007	1	97	0.936
Leadership	0.569	1	97	0.452

Note: $n = 101$

The Levene's Test revealed that the scores received for six out of the seven alternative school characteristics were not significant, which meant there was a homogeneity of variance for these six characteristics based upon the perceptions of the lead directors and teachers. The

characteristic, Faculty Needs, was significant, which meant there was a heterogeneity of variance between the scores of the lead directors and teachers. Therefore, with the overwhelming majority of dependent variables being nonsignificant, univariate homogeneity of variance was still assumed. The last assumption of multivariate homogeneity of variance was evaluated within the MANOVA test.

Furthermore, the Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices verified that equal variances can be assumed, $F(28,23112) = 1.309$, $p = .127$. A nonsignificant Box's *M*, indicated a lack of evidence that the homogeneity of variance assumption was violated. Therefore, Wilks' Lambda was used as the test statistic. MANOVA results revealed no significant differences among lead directors and teachers on the dependent variables, effective alternative school characteristics, Wilks' $\Lambda = .873$, $F(7,91) = 1.90$, $p > .05$, multivariate =.127 (Table 15).

Table 15

MANOVA Test for Perceptions of Existence of Effective Alternative School Characteristics by Lead Directors and Teachers

Effect	Value	*F*	Hypothesis *df*	Error *df*	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Wilks' Lambda	.873	1.898	7.0	91	.079	.127

In analyzing the results from Table 15, the first hypothesis was not rejected. Therefore, there is no significant difference between alternative school lead directors' and faculty members' perceptions on the linear composite of school climate, student needs,

curriculum/instruction, student services, faculty needs, community support, and leadership, regarding the existence of these effective characteristics of alternative school programs.

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted on each dependent variable as a follow-up test to MANOVA. The difference in the perceptions of lead directors and teachers was significant for School Climate, $F(1,97) = 5.23$, $p < .05$, partial =.051. Additionally, mean scores of School Climate differed for lead directors and teachers, in which lead directors (M = 1.69) possessed a stronger agreement level, among the six alternative school characteristics that comprised the School Climate category, in comparison to the teachers' (M = 1.88) agreement level of these same characteristics. Differences were not significant in the following six categories: Student Needs[$F(1,97) = .018$, $p > .05$, partial =.000], Instruction/Curriculum [$F(1,97) = 1.26$, $p > .05$, partial =.013], Faculty Needs [$F(1,97) = 2.84$, $p > .05$, partial = .028], Community Support [$F(1,97) = .007$, $p > .05$, partial = .000], Student Services [$F(1,97) = 1.16$, $p > .05$, partial = .012], and Leadership [$F(1,97) = 1.48$, $p > .05$, partial = .015]. Table 16 presents a univariate ANOVA summary table for perceptions of existence of effective alternative school characteristics by lead directors and teachers. The aforementioned Table 12 displays the means and standard deviations for lead directors' and teachers' perceptions of the seven alternative school characteristics. No post hoc tests were performed because there were fewer than three independent variables.

Table 16

Univariate ANOVA Summary Table for Perceptions of Existence of Effective Alternative School Characteristics by Lead Directors and Teachers

Effective Characteristics	*df*	*F*	Significance	Partial Eta Squared
School Climate	1	5.233	.024	.051
Student Needs	1	0.018	.893	.000
Instruction/Curriculum	1	1.255	.265	.013
Faculty Needs	1	2.835	.095	.028
Community Support	1	0.007	.936	.000
Student Services	1	1.158	.285	.012
Leadership	1	1.477	.227	.015

Note: $n = 101$

A final analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted on each of the six questions within the composite variable, School Climate. Lead director and teacher differences were significant for Question #5, "class size is less than 16 students per teacher," $F(1,97) = 13.95$, $p < .001$, partial = .126 and for Question #6, "there are clearly established rules for behavior that are continually enforced," $F(1,97) = 9.73$, $p < .05$, partial = .091. Table 17 presents a univariate ANOVA summary table for lead directors' and teachers' perceptions of existence of the six questions within School Climate.

Table 17

Univariate ANOVA Summary Table for Lead Directors' and Teachers' Perceptions of Existence of the Six Questions Within School Climate

School Climate Questions	*df*	*F*	Significance	Partial Eta Squared
Question #1	1	0.980	.325	.010
Question #2	1	0.621	.432	.006
Question #3	1	0.044	.835	.000
Question #4	1	2.696	.104	.027
Question #5	1	13.954	.000	.126
Question #6	1	9.725	.002	.091

Note: $n = 101$

In continuation with the examination of this inferential data, the second research question dealing with the importance of each alternative school characteristic was statistically analyzed. Research Question 2: Is there difference between alternative school lead directors' and faculty members' perceptions on the linear composite of school climate, student needs, instruction/curriculum, student services, faculty needs, community support, and leadership, regarding the importance of these effective characteristics of alternative school programs?

Before an analysis of the MANOVA results is explained for the second question, a calculation of the mean and standard deviation for each item on the survey for both lead directors and certified teachers must occur and be ranked according to the level of agreement. A mean of 2.5 or less represented strong agreement of the item.

Averages for lead directors' responses were tabulated for each characteristic to identify how strongly they agreed or disagreed that the 40 characteristics were important. The means for the perception of importance of the characteristics for lead directors ranged from 1.24 to 2.51. The lead directors reported strong agreement ($M \leq 2.50$) on 39 of the 40 characteristics. A complete list of each characteristic, along with their mean and standard deviation, is illustrated in Table 18.

Table 18

Characteristics Lead Directors Rate Highest in Importance in Their Alternative Schools

Characteristic	Mean	*SD*	Category
Teachers provide positive reinforcement to students.	1.24	0.463	Student Needs
The director has a positive attitude.	1.24	0.425	Leadership
The director is an advocate for the school within the district and the community.	1.25	0.423	Leadership
Class size is less than 16 students per teacher.	1.28	0.666	School Climate
Students and teachers have mutual respect.	1.28	0.454	Student Needs
The director encourages the staff to develop new ideas to improve the school.	1.30	0.461	Leadership
The director believes in the ability of the staff to reach their goals.	1.31	0.459	Leadership
There are clearly established rules for behavior that are continually enforced.	1.32	0.624	School Climate
Technology is available and used as part of instruction.	1.32	0.504	Instruction/ Curriculum
The staff serves as mentors, advisors, and tutors helping students with academic and social needs.	1.35	0.547	Student Needs

Table 18 (continued)

Characteristic	Mean	*SD*	Category
The director (or principal) has a vision for the school.	1.37	0.517	Leadership
Teachers have high academic expectations for students.	1.38	0.547	Instruction/ Curriculum
The director is a good communicator.	1.41	0.491	Leadership
Assistance is given with problem solving, social skills, and/or peer mediation.	1.42	0.559	Student Services
Students receive academic guidance on a regular basis.	1.42	0.588	Student Services
Students are allowed to work at their own pace.	1.45	0.746	Instruction/ Curriculum
There is relevance established between what is learned and how it applies to the world outside of school.	1.50	0.624	Instruction/ Curriculum
Individual and group counseling is provided as needed.	1.53	0.722	Student Services
There is a sense of community between staff and students.	1.53	0.747	Student Needs
The faculty shares resources, ideas, and strategies with each other.	1.55	0.615	Faculty Needs
Teachers and staff choose to work at the alternative school.	1.55	1.048	School Climate
Students and teachers can speak freely with each other.	1.55	0.699	Student Needs
Instruction and curriculum are individualized for students.	1.56	0.696	Instruction/ Curriculum

Table 18 (continued)

Characteristic	Mean	*SD*	Category
A variety of teaching methods are used in the classroom to meet the needs of students with different learning styles.	1.57	0.784	Instruction/ Curriculum
The superintendent shares his/her support of the alternative school with the community.	1.58	0.906	Community Support
There is a relationship with outside service providers in the community (social services, juvenile justice services, etc.).	1.62	0.734	Student Services
Teachers work together to develop curriculum.	1.76	0.696	Faculty Needs
Teachers have the freedom to make curriculum decisions.	1.76	0.744	Faculty Needs
Flexible scheduling is available for students.	1.77	0.981	Student Needs
Students have the opportunity to work in the community and learn job related skills.	1.78	1.058	Community Support
The alternative school has fewer than 125 students.	1.78	1.276	School Climate
The school has a mission statement used to guide the school in decision making and evaluation.	1.82	0.792	School Climate
Service learning is part of the curriculum.	1.88	1.208	Community Support
Students' opinions are listened to and may be used in the decision making process.	1.93	0.861	Student Needs
Professional development targeting the needs of alternative schools and the students is provided.	1.95	1.032	Faculty Needs
Parents are encouraged or required to be involved in the school.	1.98	1.186	Community Support
Partnerships are developed with businesses for job shadowing, internships, or mentoring opportunities.	2.09	1.124	Community Support

Table 18 (continued)

Characteristic	Mean	*SD*	Category
Teachers visit other alternative schools to gather new ideas.	2.31	1.183	Faculty Needs
The students can choose to attend either the alternative school or the traditional school.	2.41	1.366	School Climate
Students are grouped by ability not grade level.	2.51	1.197	Instruction/ Curriculum

Note: *n*=101

The top characteristic (*M* = 1.24, *SD* = 0.463) that lead directors believed was the most important in their alternative schools was "teachers provide positive reinforcement to students," which originated from the Student Needs category. Also included in the top 10 characteristics were four of the six features in the Leadership category, two additional features from the Student Needs category, two features from the School Climate category, and one feature from the Instruction/Curriculum category. In addition, these top 10 characteristics had an average mean of 1.29, which verified a very high level of agreement among lead directors as to which characteristics they believed were of utmost importance in their alternative schools.

In contrast, there was only one characteristic that the lead directors did not strongly agree was important (*M* > 2.50). The characteristic (*M* = 2.51, *SD* = 1.197) that achieved the lowest ranking in terms of importance was "students are grouped by ability not grade level," which originated from the Instruction/Curriculum category.

An analysis of the responses of participating teachers was also performed using the same set of characteristics. Mean scores for teachers' responses were tabulated for each characteristic to identify how strongly they agreed or disagreed that the 40 characteristics were

of importance. A mean score equal to or less than 2.50 indicated strong agreement. The mean scores for the perceptions of importance of the characteristics for teachers ranged from 1.26 to 3.03. The faculty agreed that 38 of the 40 characteristics were important in their alternative schools. Table 19 displays a complete list of characteristics, means, and standard deviations based upon faculty responses.

Table 19

Characteristics Teachers Rate Highest in Importance in Their Alternative Schools

Characteristic	Mean	*SD*	Category
The director has a positive attitude.	1.26	0.442	Leadership
The staff serves as mentors, advisors, and tutors helping students with academic and social needs.	1.28	0.510	Student Needs
Teachers provide positive reinforcement to students.	1.31	0.465	Student Needs
The director (or principal) has a vision for the school.	1.31	0.468	Leadership
The director is an advocate for the school within the district and the community.	1.33	0.478	Leadership
There are clearly established rules for behavior that are continually enforced.	1.34	0.474	School Climate
The director is a good communicator.	1.36	0.537	Leadership
Students and teachers have mutual respect.	1.38	0.493	Student Needs
The director believes in the ability of the staff to reach their goals.	1.41	0.498	Leadership
The director encourages the staff to develop new ideas to improve the school.	1.49	0.556	Leadership
Students receive academic guidance on a regular basis.	1.50	0.500	Student Services

Table 19 (continued)

Characteristic	Mean	*SD*	Category
Technology is available and used as part of instruction.	1.51	0.644	Instruction/ Curriculum
Assistance is given with problem solving, social skills, and/or peer mediation.	1.51	0.683	Student Services
Teachers and staff choose to work at the alternative school.	1.52	0.910	School Climate
There is a sense of community between staff and students.	1.55	0.849	Student Needs
There is relevance established between what is learned and how it applies to the world outside of school.	1.56	0.680	Instruction/ Curriculum
Individual and group counseling is provided as needed.	1.62	0.633	Student Services
Students and teachers can speak freely with each other.	1.63	0.704	Student Needs
Students are allowed to work at their own pace.	1.63	0.741	Instruction/ Curriculum
Teachers have the freedom to make curriculum decisions.	1.64	0.628	Faculty Needs
A variety of teaching methods are used in the classroom to meet the needs of students with different learning styles.	1.67	0.662	Instruction/ Curriculum
Teachers have high academic expectations for students.	1.67	0.772	Instruction/ Curriculum
Class size is less than 16 students per teacher.	1.69	1.190	School Climate
The faculty shares resources, ideas, and strategies with each other.	1.69	0.694	Faculty Needs

Table 19 (continued)

Characteristic	Mean	*SD*	Category
There is a relationship with outside service providers in the community (social services, juvenile justice services, etc.).	1.69	0.832	Student Services
The superintendent shares his/her support of the alternative school with the community.	1.72	1.075	Community Support
Flexible scheduling is available for students.	1.74	0.938	Student Needs
The school has a mission statement used to guide the school in decision making and evaluation.	1.79	0.950	School Climate
Teachers work together to develop curriculum.	1.85	0.745	Faculty Needs
Parents are encouraged or required to be involved in the school.	1.85	1.065	Community Support
The alternative school has fewer than 125 students.	1.86	1.321	School Climate
Service learning is part of the curriculum.	1.89	0.911	Community Support
Students' opinions are listened to and may be used in the decision making process.	1.94	1.075	Student Needs
Students have the opportunity to work in the community and learn job related skills.	1.94	1.169	Community Support
Professional development targeting the needs of alternative schools and the students is provided.	1.95	0.887	Faculty Needs
Instruction and curriculum are individualized for students.	2.00	1.147	Instruction/ Curriculum
The students can choose to attend either the alternative school or the traditional school.	2.03	0.932	School Climate
Partnerships are developed with businesses for job shadowing, internships, and/or mentoring opportunities.	2.21	1.128	Community Support

Table 19 (continued)

Characteristic	Mean	*SD*	Category
Teachers visit other alternative schools to gather new ideas.	2.67	1.562	Faculty Needs
Students are grouped by ability not grade level.	3.03	1.495	Instruction/ Curriculum

Note: *n*=101

The top characteristic (*M* = 1.26, *SD* = 0.442) that certified teachers believed was the most important in their alternative schools was "the director has a positive attitude," which emanated from the Leadership category. Also included in these top 10 characteristics were the rest of the five features in the Leadership category, three features from the Student Needs category, and one feature from the School Climate category. The categories of Instruction/Curriculum, Faculty Needs, Community Support, and Student Services were not represented in these top 10 characteristics. In comparing the responses of lead directors and teachers, eight of the top 10 characteristics were identically selected by both groups as the most important in their alternative school settings. In addition, these top 10 characteristics had an average mean of 1.35, which verified a very high level of agreement among teachers as to which characteristics they believed were of significant importance in their alternative schools.

In contrast, there were only two characteristics that the teachers did not strongly agree were of importance (*M* > 2.50). The second lowest characteristic (*M* = 2.67, *SD* = 1.562) that teachers believed was of least importance was "teachers visit other alternative schools to gather new ideas," which was an item from the Faculty Needs category. The lowest characteristic (*M* = 3.03, *SD* = 1.495) that teachers believed was of least importance in their buildings was

"students are grouped by ability not grade level," which originated from the Instruction/Curriculum category and was the identical response from lead directors.

In summary, both lead directors and teachers reported strong agreement that 95% of the research-based effective characteristics were very important in their alternative educational programs. There were a total of only three features in which both lead directors and teachers did not report strong agreement. None of the characteristics were rated in strong disagreement by either lead directors or faculty members.

In order to determine the difference in agreement on the importance of these characteristics one hypothesis was proposed and tested:

2. There is no significant difference between alternative school lead directors' and faculty members' perceptions on the linear composite of school climate, student needs, instruction/curriculum, student services, faculty needs, community support, and leadership, regarding the importance of these effective characteristics of alternative school programs.

A one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to determine lead directors' and certified teachers' differences of their perceptions of the importance of effective alternative school characteristics, with respect to school climate, student needs, instruction/curriculum, student services, faculty needs, community support, and leadership. Before an explanation of the results is revealed, the researcher will explain several of the assumptions and transformations that transpired.

Identical to the MANOVA test for existence, the same two transformations were performed prior to conducting the statistical test for importance. The first transformation replaced the missing data using the series mean estimation method. In examining the univariate outliers of the 40 different characteristics for administrators and teachers, there were only 10

characteristics that didn't contain any outliers. In order to eliminate these outliers and provide for better normality, a second transformation was performed, in which original cases with a score greater than or equal to a 5 was recoded to a score of 4 and original cases with a score greater than or equal to a 4 was recoded to a score of 3. Next, the researcher grouped the 40 alternative school characteristics into the seven composite dependent variables, per the classification from the Perceptions of Alternative Schools Survey.

In addition, the Mahalanobis' Distance test was performed and revealed only one scarcely significant multivariate outlier, which occurred in the Student Services category with respect to administrators, among the seven alternative school characteristics. This one multivariate outlier (*CV* = 27.67) barely exceeded the calculated Mahalanobis chi square, , critical value of 24.32. Table 20 displays the new means and standard deviations for lead directors' and teachers' perceptions after the transformation of the seven alternative school characteristics.

Table 20

Means and Standard Deviations of Lead Directors' and Teachers' Perceptions of Importance of Alternative School Characteristics

	Lead Directors		Teachers	
Effective Characteristics	Mean	*SD*	Mean	*SD*
School Climate	1.56	0.351	1.60	0.358
Student Needs	1.49	0.407	1.52	0.436
Instruction/Curriculum	1.58	0.418	1.80	0.521
Faculty Needs	1.83	0.528	1.93	0.632
Community Support	1.72	0.533	1.77	0.508
Student Services	1.49	0.483	1.56	0.518
Leadership	1.31	0.360	1.36	0.406

Note: $n = 101$

Subsequently, the researcher examined three general assumptions involved with multivariate statistical testing: normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. Regarding univariate normality, the researcher analyzed the skewness, kurtosis, and calculated z-scores for both skewness and kurtosis for each of the seven alternative school characteristics, with respect to administrators' and teachers' responses, through the examination of histograms and descriptive statistics (Table 21).

Table 21

Descriptive Statistics for Perceptions of Importance of Effective Alternative School Characteristics by Lead Directors and Teachers

	School Climate	Student Needs	Inst./Curriculum	Faculty Needs	Comm. Support	Student Services	Leader-ship
Lead Directors							
Skewness	0.532	0.623	0.482	0.197	0.187	0.762	0.752
z-score	1.722	2.016	1.560	0.638	0.605	2.466	2.434
Kurtosis	-0.340	-0.564	-0.544	-0.620	-1.246	0.220	-0.951
z-score	-0.559	-0.928	-0.895	-1.020	-2.049	0.362	-1.564
Teachers							
Skewness	-0.033	0.310	0.044	0.121	0.038	0.325	0.527
z-score	-0.087	0.820	0.116	0.320	0.101	0.860	1.394
Kurtosis	-1.136	-1.149	-1.348	-0.988	-0.996	-1.188	-1.396
z-score	-1.533	-1.551	-1.819	-1.333	-1.344	-1.603	-1.884

Note: $n = 101$

Since the range of skewness and kurtosis values were between ±1 and/or their respective z-scores were within ±1.96 standard deviations of the mean, a normal distribution occurred among all seven alternative school characteristics. Also, an analysis of the histograms exuded a normal distribution for all seven alternative school characteristics. Furthermore, univariate linearity was examined through the use of normal Q-Q plots, in which each graph depicted the observed values corresponding with the predicted values resembling a straight line for each of the seven alternative school characteristics. In examining multivariate normality and linearity,

the scatter plot matrices relatively displayed elliptical shapes for each alternative school characteristic. Therefore, both normality and linearity was assumed.

The final assumption of univariate homoscedasticity examined the homogeneity of variances between lead directors and certified teachers through the Levene's Test. For this statistical test, an alpha level of .05 was used for the significance level. Table 22 illustrates the results of the Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variance.

Table 22

A Summary of Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variance

Effective Characteristics	Levene Statistic	*df*1	*df*2	Significance
School Climate	0.464	1	97	0.497
Student Needs	0.623	1	97	0.432
Instruction/Curriculum	5.243	1	97	0.024
Faculty Needs	1.825	1	97	0.180
Community Support	0.426	1	97	0.516
Student Services	1.600	1	97	0.209
Leadership	3.006	1	97	0.086

Note: $n = 101$

The Levene's Test revealed that the scores received for six out of the seven alternative school characteristics were not significant, which meant there was a homogeneity of variance for these six characteristics based upon the perceptions of importance of lead directors and teachers. The characteristic, Instruction/Curriculum, was significant, which meant there was a heterogeneity of variance between the scores of lead directors and teachers. Therefore, with the

overwhelming majority of dependent variables being nonsignificant, univariate homogeneity of variance was still assumed. The last assumption of multivariate homogeneity of variance was evaluated within the MANOVA test.

Moreover, the Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices verified that equal variances can be assumed, $F(28,23112) = 0.804$, $p = .757$. A nonsignificant Box's *M*, indicated a lack of evidence that the homogeneity of variance assumption was violated. Therefore, Wilks' Lambda was used as the test statistic. MANOVA results revealed no significant differences amongst lead directors and teachers on the dependent variables, effective alternative school characteristics, Wilks' $\Lambda = .925$, $F(7,91) = 1.05$, $p > .05$, multivariate = .075 (Table 23).

Table 23

MANOVA Test for Perceptions of Importance of Effective Alternative School Characteristics by Lead Directors and Teachers

Effect	Value	*F*	Hypothesis *df*	Error *df*	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Wilks' Lambda	.925	1.050	7.0	91	.402	.075

In analyzing the results from Table 23, the second hypothesis was not rejected. Therefore, there is no significant difference between alternative school lead directors' and faculty members' perceptions on the linear composite of school climate, student needs, curriculum/instruction, student services, faculty needs, community support, and leadership, regarding the importance of these effective characteristics of alternative school programs.

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted on each dependent variable as a follow-up test to MANOVA. The difference in the perceptions of lead directors and teachers was significant for Instruction/Curriculum, $F(1,97) = 5.26$, $p < .05$, partial = .051. Additionally, mean scores of Instruction/Curriculum greatly differed for lead directors and teachers, in which lead directors ($M = 1.58$) possessed a stronger agreement level, among the seven alternative school characteristics that comprised the Instruction/Curriculum category, in comparison to the teachers' ($M = 1.80$) agreement level of these same characteristics. Differences were not significant in the following six categories: School Climate [$F(1,97) = .181$, $p > .05$, partial = .002], Student Needs [$F(1,97) = .091$, $p > .05$, partial = .001], Faculty Needs [$F(1,97) = .767$, $p > .05$, partial = .008], Community Support [$F(1,97) = .235$, $p > .05$, partial = .002], Student Services [$F(1,97) = .449$, $p > .05$, partial = .005], and Leadership [$F(1,97) = .342$, $p > .05$, partial = .004]. Table 24 presents a univariate ANOVA summary table for perceptions of importance of effective alternative school characteristics by lead directors and teachers. The aforementioned Table 20 displays the means and standard deviations for lead directors' and teachers' perceptions of the seven alternative school characteristics. No post hoc tests were performed because there were less than three independent variables.

Table 24

Univariate ANOVA Summary Table for Perceptions of Importance of Effective Alternative School Characteristics by Lead Directors and Teachers

Effective Characteristics	*df*	*F*	Significance	Partial Eta Squared
School Climate	1	0.181	.672	.002
Student Needs	1	0.091	.764	.001
Instruction/Curriculum	1	5.257	.024	.051
Faculty Needs	1	0.767	.383	.008
Community Support	1	0.235	.629	.002
Student Services	1	0.449	.504	.005
Leadership	1	0.342	.560	.004

Note: $n = 101$

A final analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted on each of the seven questions within the composite variable, Instruction/Curriculum. Lead director and teacher differences were significant for Question #16, "teachers have high academic expectations for students," $F(1,97) = 4.17$, $p < .05$, partial = .041 and for Question #18, "instruction and curriculum are individualized for students," $F(1,97) = 4.35$, $p < .05$, partial = .043. Table 25 presents a univariate ANOVA summary table for lead directors' and teachers' perceptions of importance of the seven questions within Instruction/Curriculum.

Table 25

Univariate ANOVA Summary Table for Lead Directors' and Teachers' Perceptions of Importance of the Seven Questions Within Instruction/Curriculum

Instruction/ Curriculum Questions	*df*	*F*	Significance	Partial Eta Squared
Question #14	1	0.232	.631	.002
Question #15	1	1.195	.277	.012
Question #16	1	4.170	.044	.041
Question #17	1	1.907	.171	.019
Question #18	1	4.345	.040	.043
Question #19	1	3.461	.066	.034
Question #20	1	2.871	.093	.029

Note: $n = 101$

Summary

This chapter reported the results and findings of the statistical analysis for each of the following research questions:

1) Is there difference between alternative school lead directors' and faculty members' perceptions on the linear composite of school climate, student needs, instruction/curriculum, student services, faculty needs, community support, and leadership, regarding the existence of these effective characteristics of alternative school programs?
2) Is there difference between alternative school lead directors' and faculty members' perceptions on the linear composite of school climate, student needs,

instruction/curriculum, student services, faculty needs, community support, and leadership, regarding the importance of these effective characteristics of alternative school programs?

The first section of Chapter 4 explained the categorical features of the effective alternative school characteristics, as classified from the Perceptions of Alternative School Survey. Next, the second section presented the demographic data describing the specific respondents in the study. Finally, the third section included an analysis of the inferential data obtained from the questionnaire, which was completed by lead directors and teachers from alternative education programs throughout the state of Indiana. Statistical tests used in this analysis included a descriptive item analysis, two multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) tests, and follow-up univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests. Chapter 5 presents a summary and discussion of the results from this study, conclusions about some of the significant and non-significant outcomes from this study, and recommendations for future use of this information, as well as the impetus for future studies.

Chapter 5

Summary of Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This chapter is a summary and discussion of the research findings, conclusions discovered from those findings, and recommendations based upon the data collected. The purpose of this study was to conclude if there is a difference in the perceptions between alternative school directors and alternative school teachers with regards to the extent of existence of effective characteristics and the importance of effective characteristics in their alternative education programs throughout the state of Indiana. The independent variable was the position of the respondents, which were comprised of two different levels: alternative school lead directors and alternative school certified teachers. The dependent variables were the perceptions of existence and importance of effective alternative school characteristics from lead directors and certified teachers, with respect to School Climate, Student Needs, Instruction/Curriculum, Student Services, Faculty Needs, Community Support, and Leadership. The formation of these seven composite variables originated from the Perceptions of Alternative Schools Survey, in which 40 research-based questions were categorized into these seven ubiquitous elements that make the greatest impact upon the effectiveness of successful alternative schools.

This study used a non-experimental and descriptive design. It was a quantitative study with data collected through the use of online questionnaires, via Qualtrics, emailed to lead

directors and faculty members of alternative education programs that were listed on the 2009-10 Indiana Department of Education's Alternative Education website. The survey instrument consisted of two sections.

The first section of the survey consisted of 40 Likert-type items. The questions were research-based, effective characteristics of alternative education programs identified from the literature review. Participants rated each item based upon their perception of each characteristic existing in their alternative school and upon their perception of how important each characteristic was in their alternative school. The questionnaire's design was weighted from 1 to 6, with a 1 indicating strong agreement and a 6 indicating strong disagreement. The 40 characteristics were separated into seven categories: School Climate, Student Needs, Instruction/Curriculum, Faculty Needs, Community Support, Student Services, and Leadership.

The second section of the survey consisted of biographic and demographic questions. These questions were used to determine important information about the schools and the respondents. Demographic information collected from participants about their alternative schools included student enrollment, student-teacher ratio, school's longevity of existence, and the main purpose of existence. Biographic information regarding the participants included their respective alternative school position, administrative or teaching experience at an alternative school, and total teaching and/or administrative experience.

The research instrument was emailed to 141 lead directors, who were responsible for one or more alternative education programs that filed an annual program profile with the Indiana Department of Education, in which they electronically forwarded the survey to a maximum of three randomly-selected, certified teachers who were employed in their respective alternative schools. The email consisted of a cover letter and an informed consent form,

instructing lead directors how to complete the online survey and requesting them to forward the email with the attached survey link and information to the appropriate number of faculty members in their schools. After 10 days, a follow-up email was sent as a reminder.

In describing the biographic and demographic results of the respondents and these alternative education programs, there were 114 respondents who began taking the survey, with 101 surveys being completed between lead directors and teachers. However, responses were only received from 60 alternative school lead directors and 39 alternative school teachers. Approximately half (47%) of the respondents were from schools with 50 or fewer students. Another 27% of the respondents were from schools with an enrollment greater than 100 students; while, 25% of the respondents were from schools between 50 and 100 students. This particular piece of demographic data coincides with the recommended alternative school size ranging between 60 and 125 students for maximizing student performance and student learning (Aron, 2006; Kellmayer, 1995). In contrast, an alarming result was noticed when 53% indicated the student-teacher ratio was 12:1 or greater. According to alternative school researchers, who study appropriate classroom sizes, they strongly encourage teacher-student ratios to be no greater than 1:15 (Kellmayer, 1995; Schargel & Smink, 2001; Thomas et al., 1982).

In addition, greater than one out of every two respondents (57%) were employed in schools that have been in existence for less than 10 years. Approximately half of the respondents (46%) stated their alternative school exists to allow more flexibility for students to graduate, especially for credit recovery purposes. Schargel and Smink (2001) declared the characteristic of alternative school flexibility is a key component in establishing an effective alternative education program through the development of a learning program that is specific to

the student's expectations and learning style and through the evolution of a flexible school schedule with external support. Concerning length of lead directors' tenure, approximately half of the respondents (48%) had two to five years of administrative experience in an alternative school environment. In similarity, responding certified teachers had spent approximately the same amount of time in their positions as lead directors. Almost half (49%) of the respondents had taught between two to five years at an alternative school setting.

Therefore, based on the data collected, almost half of the respondents represented alternative schools with fewer than 50 students, a majority represented alternative schools with more than 12 students per teacher, a majority of the alternative schools were less than 10 years old, and approximately half of the alternative schools existed for the purpose of helping students graduate from high school. In conjunction with this summative data, Raywid (1994) stated the importance of smaller alternative schools and smaller classroom sizes creates a more personalized environment for students and permits stronger human connections and relationships. Also, Gooden (2009) surmised that smallness appears to be a greater benefit for the continued and progressive learning of at-risk students. Almost half of the respondents had taught or directed an alternative school for two to 5five years. Less than 15% of the participants were in either their first year of teaching or directing at an alternative school environment. Approximately 10% of the respondents had over 20 years of teaching or administrative experience at the alternative school setting. Statistically, teachers had more experience in their positions than the lead directors who responded.

The data collected was for the purpose of answering the following research questions:

1) Is there difference between alternative school lead directors' and faculty members' perceptions on the linear composite of school climate, student needs,

instruction/curriculum, student services, faculty needs, community support, and leadership, regarding the existence of these effective characteristics of alternative school programs?

2) Is there difference between alternative school lead directors' and faculty members' perceptions on the linear composite of school climate, student needs, instruction/curriculum, student services, faculty needs, community support, and leadership, regarding the importance of these effective characteristics of alternative school programs?

To answer the first research question, means and standard deviations were calculated on each research-based characteristic for lead directors and certified teachers. A mean of 2.5 or less represented a strong condition of agreement. Lead directors were in strong level of agreement that 33 of the 40 characteristics existed within their alternative schools. The leading characteristic with the highest level of agreement (M = 1.34) was "technology is available and used as part of instruction," which originated from the Instruction/Curriculum category. In fact, one of Kellmayer's (1995) top 10 characteristics of effective alternative education programs is that students have access to the same technology options as students in traditional schools. With the emergence and exponential growth of distance learning, it is not surprising to observe the high existence rating for technology among administrators. Hence, the implementation of online learning programs provides relevant and rigorous coursework, instruction, and methodology for at-risk students who would normally not be able to receive this information due to the limited capacities or restrictions of the respective alternative school (Reimer & Cash, 2003).

Similarly, faculty members also possessed a strong level of agreement that 33 of the 40 characteristics existed in their alternative school, with only one of these 33 characteristics differing from the lead directors' perceptions. The top characteristic (M = 1.41) for teachers was "teachers provide positive reinforcement to students," which emanated from the Student Needs category. The necessity for providing positive reinforcement for students is substantiated by studies conducted by Aron (2006) and Paglin & Fager (1997). They concluded that students who attended effective alternative education programs experienced teachers who treated them more fairly and encouraged them with both intrinsic and extrinsic incentive plans that reinforced appropriate behavior, attitude, and actions.

In contrast, there were only seven characteristics lead directors did not rate with strong agreement of existence (M > 2.50). There were three characteristics from the Community Support category, two characteristics from the Faculty Needs category, and one characteristic from the School Climate and Instruction/Curriculum categories. The lowest rated characteristic (M = 3.42) was "teachers visit other alternative schools to gather new ideas."

Correspondingly, there were also seven characteristics teachers did not report by strongly agreeing to their existence, with only one of these seven characteristics differing from the lead directors' perceptions. There were two characteristics from each of the categories of Faculty Needs, Instruction/Curriculum, and Community Support. There was one characteristic from the category of School Climate. Identical to the lead directors' rating, teachers reported the same characteristic, "teachers visit other alternative schools to gather new ideas," with the lowest mean (M = 4.00).

Since both administrators and teachers believe the desire to make professional development visits to other alternative schools is a relatively non-existent opportunity and

benefit, this perception is in sharp contrast to the views of Aron (2003). Aron (2003) believed that successful alternative schools provided meaningful and engaging professional development opportunities, especially when collaboration and cooperation experiences between teachers allowed for on-site visitations, explorations, and inquisitions of different educational environments.

Therefore, both lead directors and teachers reported strong agreement that 83% of the research-based effective characteristics exist in their alternative education programs. There were seven features in which both lead directors and teachers did not report strong agreement, in which six out of these seven characteristics were identically selected by both groups as the least prevalent in their educational environment. None of the items were rated in strong disagreement by either lead directors or faculty members.

In order to determine the difference in agreement on the existence of these characteristics one hypothesis was proposed and tested. This is stated in the null form.

1. There is no significant difference between alternative school lead directors' and faculty members' perceptions on the linear composite of school climate, student needs, curriculum/instruction, student services, faculty needs, community support, and leadership, regarding the existence of these effective characteristics of alternative school programs.

Based upon a one-way MANOVA test, the first null hypothesis was not rejected, since there was no significant difference between lead directors' and teachers' perceptions of existence across the seven composite dependent variables, effective alternative school characteristics. Using a univariate ANOVA test, the category of School Climate showed statistical significance between lead director and teacher differences. Verifying this result, the transformed mean scores of School Climate differed for lead directors and teachers. A final

ANOVA test was performed on each of the six questions within the composite variable, School Climate. Statistical significance between lead directors' and teachers' responses occurred with Question #5, "class size is less than 16 students per teacher," and with Question #6, "there are clearly established rules for behavior that are continually enforced."

To answer the second research question, means and standard deviations were calculated on each research-based characteristic for lead directors and certified teachers. A mean of 2.5 or less represented a strong condition of agreement. Lead directors were in strong level of agreement that 39 of the 40 characteristics were important within their alternative schools. The leading characteristic with the highest level of agreement (M = 1.24) was "teachers provide positive reinforcement to students," which originated from the Student Needs category. As previously mentioned, teachers gave high ratings to the existence of positive reinforcement programs in their alternative schools. Uniformly, administrators placed high importance in the need for effective positive reinforcement programs for students. Therefore, the value of edification for at-risk students by adult educators promotes greater attendance, reinforces greater academic achievement, and strengthens greater accountability (Kerka, 2003). Conversely, only one item, "students are grouped by ability not grade level," (M = 2.51) had a mean above 2.50, indicating lead directors were not in strong agreement of its importance.

Similarly, faculty members also possessed a strong level of agreement that 38 of the 40 characteristics were important in their alternative school. The top characteristic (M = 1.26) for teachers was "the director has a positive attitude," which emanated from the Leadership category. The significance of this important rating of leadership represents an earnest desire for alternative school teachers to follow a transformational leader who can exude an aura of confidence and passion for at-risk students on a consistent basis, especially in a milieu that can

sporadically appear hopeless and disheartening. In fact, a study by Holmes (1988) discovered that strong alternative school leaders who provide encouragement to faculty and students, depict enthusiasm, and emit a positive attitude will observe more productive and sustainable teachers and will observe more committed and inspired students who want to achieve their high school diploma. Additionally, this value of strong leadership is supported by Wiseman's (1996) work, in which she concluded that leadership was the most essential determinate of overall effectiveness. Evidence indicated the two most important factors leading to the success of alternative schools were administrators who believed in the ability of their staff and who established a climate conducive to learning (Wiseman, 1996).

In contrast, there were only two characteristics teachers did not report by strongly agreeing to their importance. The second lowest characteristic (M = 2.67) that teachers believed was of least importance was "teachers visit other alternative schools to gather new ideas," which emanated from the Faculty Needs category. Identical to the lead directors' ranking, teachers reported the same characteristic, "students are grouped by ability not grade level," with the lowest mean (M = 3.03). The results from this student grouping feature differs from the viewpoint of Lange & Sletten (2002), who believed grouping students by ability levels instead of grade levels would promote more effective self-paced and individualized learning opportunities for at-risk students. Embedded in the Instruction/Curriculum category, the importance of a flexible and self-paced curriculum allows students to develop a customized learning plan to make corrections, complete sequential assessments, and progress to the next specified course instead of grade level (Aron, 2006; Grobe, 2002).

Therefore, both lead directors and teachers reported strong agreement that 95% of the research-based effective characteristics were important in their alternative education programs.

There were a total of only three features in which both lead directors and teachers did not report strong agreement, in which two of the three characteristics were identically selected by both groups as the least important in their educational environment. None of the items were rated in strong disagreement by either lead directors or faculty members.

In order to determine the difference in agreement on the importance of these characteristics one hypothesis was proposed and tested. This is stated in the null form.

2. There is no significant difference between alternative school lead directors' and faculty members' perceptions on the linear composite of school climate, student needs, curriculum/instruction, student services, faculty needs, community support, and leadership, regarding the importance of these effective characteristics of alternative school programs.

Based upon a one-way MANOVA test, the second null hypothesis was not rejected, since there was no significant difference between lead directors' and teachers' perceptions of importance across the seven composite dependent variables, effective alternative school characteristics. Using a univariate ANOVA test, the category of Instruction/Curriculum showed statistical significance between lead director and teacher differences. Verifying this result, the transformed mean scores of Instruction/Curriculum greatly differed for lead directors and teachers. A final ANOVA test was performed on each of the seven questions within the composite variable, Instruction/Curriculum. Statistical significance between lead directors' and teachers' responses occurred with Question #16, "teachers have high academic expectations for students," and with Question #18, "instruction and curriculum are individualized for students."

Conclusions

By providing more flexible scheduling and credit recovery opportunities, by rehabilitating students with behavioral problems, and by providing more individualized and

personalized instruction for at-risk students as they strive to graduate from high school, alternative education programs exist and are important in providing an education for students who are not successful in the traditional school environment. A review of the literature on alternative education programs provided a list of 40 characteristics discovered and proven to be successful. This study examined the perceptions of lead directors and teachers in alternative education programs throughout the state of Indiana.

Based upon this study's findings and results, the following conclusions are drawn:

1) The development and functionality of Indiana's alternative education programs is still operating in its infancy stages, as reflected in the biographic and demographic data collected. For example, a majority of the participating alternative schools have existed for less than 10 years, have fewer than 50 students, and have above average student-teacher ratios. According to the respondents, a great majority of them have either taught or administered at an alternative school for less than five years. Similarly, less than 10% of them have either taught or directed at an alternative school greater than 20 years. This data implied that alternative schools are entry-level positions for inexperienced or novice educators, whose educational environment is not conducive to personalized or individualized instruction due to large classroom sizes.
2) With respect to characteristics that currently exist in alternative schools, lead directors in Indiana provide their faculties with high levels of leadership, which has resulted in a staff that strives to meet student needs through positive reinforcement strategies and personalized mentoring plans. Teachers consistently gave high ratings in five of the six characteristics directly under the leadership of

administrators. Also, teachers ranked Leadership and Student Needs as the top two most effective alternative school characteristics. Lead directors recognized teachers have been developing positive rapport with their students and serving as effective mentors. Concurrently, lead directors ranked Leadership and School Climate as the top two most effective alternative school characteristics.

3) Additionally, lead directors in Indiana possess a strong level of confidence in the abilities of their teachers. This is documented by the high existence ratings that lead directors gave to their faculties in achieving their instructional goals for student learning.
4) Alternative education programs in Indiana are not meeting the needs of students that may require a nontraditional educational approach. Lead directors and teachers indicated that certain characteristics important in student learning, including non-graded, multiage classrooms, staff development opportunities, business partnerships, and parent involvement, do not exist to the level they should in alternative schools. Additionally, lead directors ranked Community Support as the least effective characteristic that exists in their alternative schools; while teachers ranked Faculty Needs as the least effective characteristic.
5) Currently, there exists a discrepancy between lead directors' and teachers' perceptions of the climate in the alternative school setting, especially with student behavior and classroom sizes. Lead directors believe behavioral expectations are held to a high standard that are clearly explained and maintained. However, teachers believe there is great inconsistency in enforcing appropriate student conduct. Moreover, lead directors perceive classroom sizes to be completely

appropriate and manageable for teachers to instruct students. Conversely, teachers perceive classroom sizes to be excessive and problematic in pursuing effective personalized and individualized instruction. These two conclusions for teachers is substantiated by the previously mentioned demographic statistic in which over half of the respondents indicated the student-teacher ratio was 12:1 or greater in their respective alternative schools.

6) With respect to characteristics that are perceived to be highly important in alternative schools, leaders demonstrated a positive mental and vocal attitude towards teachers and students, which is actually being reciprocated by the teachers portraying positive reinforcement, encouragement, and praiseworthy commendations towards their students. Both lead directors and teachers gave high ratings in three of the seven characteristics directly related to meeting students' needs. It is apparent that alternative school teachers in Indiana are dedicated to serving their students. This is verified by the consistent high ratings of characteristics pertaining to teacher and student relationships as perceived by alternative school lead directors. Overall, both lead directors and teachers rated Leadership and Student Needs as the two most important alternative school characteristics. As previously mentioned, both groups also perceived these same characteristics existed to a large extent in their alternative schools. Both lead directors and teachers believe in providing opportunities for their students to be successful. Therefore, alternative education programs that exhibit this type of positive behavior and acts of encouragement by their employees create a climate and culture that enhances student learning and motivates students to attend school.

7) Lead directors and teachers shared similar views concerning the least important characteristics of alternative schools. Both groups perceived non-graded, multiage classrooms and staff development visits to other schools as relatively unimportant. Equivocally, both groups ranked Faculty Needs as the least important characteristic. This specific conclusion supports the statistical results, in which there are more important characteristics, such as establishing leadership, meeting students' needs, enhancing school climate, and improving instruction that will produce more successful alternative education programs.
8) Currently, there exists a discrepancy between lead directors' and teachers' perceptions of the type of instruction that is occurring in the alternative school setting, especially with high student-teacher expectations and individualized instruction. Teachers believe academic expectations are held and maintained to a high standard for students. However, lead directors believe teachers are lowering their expectations and are inconsistent with their standards towards students. A conjecture could be concluded that these students were originally unsuccessful in a traditional school environment and that the teachers are cognizant that this may be their students' last opportunity to obtain a high school diploma. Moreover, teachers perceive less effective personalized and individualized classroom instruction. Conversely, lead directors perceive instruction to be greatly personalized and individualized for students on a consistent basis. This conclusion for lead directors is substantiated because they rated the availability and use of technology as the most prevalent characteristic in existence and both teachers and lead directors rated technology as one of the most important characteristics.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, several recommendations are posited for further study and for use of the data within this study. These recommendations are explained below.

1) While this study replicated sections of the Gooden (2009) study, this researcher did not correlate the biographic and demographic information to individual participants' responses. Hence, a study should be conducted to determine if relationships exist between the biographic and demographic data and the responses of the participants to the alternative school characteristics. In turn, this would establish whether the years of existence, student-teacher ratio, and main purpose of the alternative school, along with the age and job experience of the lead directors and teachers would affect their perceptions of existence and importance of the 40 features. This may be very beneficial in the area of school climate, in which there was discrepancy between lead directors' and teachers' perceptions of class size being too large.
2) Data for this study were based upon participants' perception of the existence and importance of 40 characteristics, classified into seven amalgamated characteristics. A qualitative study allowing an observer to spend time in several alternative schools looking for the amount of existence and priorities of importance of these characteristics may produce a different perspective.
3) Research indicated that there are no established methods of determining alternative school effectiveness in the state of Indiana. A study should be conducted to establish the criteria schools use to determine effectiveness. Once a standard measurement tool has been established for gauging the effectiveness of an

alternative education program, a study should be conducted to determine the effectiveness of Indiana alternative schools.

4) Surveying or interviewing alternative education students about their perceptions of existence and of importance of effective alternative education characteristics would result in data from a source that may have differing perspectives and opinions than employees, especially in the area of student-teacher academic and behavioral expectations.
5) This study should be replicated in a couple of years to determine if the proposed and potential changes in school choice, privatization of public education, and school funding of open enrollment will affect the alternative education programming of at-risk students in Indiana.
6) Research should be conducted examining the curricular offerings, the methodology of instruction, and the mode of instruction at alternative education programs in Indiana. Throughout the literature review, there was a strong emphasis placed on the importance of a comprehensive curriculum and effective modes of instruction that accommodates the needs of many at-risk students. Additionally, the responses from lead directors and teachers in this study indicated a discrepancy in the perceptions of importance, which should initiate a further desire to explore the quality of instruction occurring at alternative schools.
7) The existence and importance of individualized personal and academic counseling was proffered in the literature review and in the results of this study. A study should be conducted to determine the extent of counseling services provided to students and the effectiveness of these services rendered to students.

8) Lead directors and teachers rated the characteristic, Faculty Needs, the lowest in the perception of importance and the second lowest in the perception of existence, which mainly contained questions about professional development opportunities. Using data from this research could establish the foundation for extensive professional development about the characteristics that are important for improving teacher instruction, improving alternative education programming, and improving the success rate and/or graduation rates of at-risk students.
9) There exists a state alternative education department established by the Indiana Department of Education, in which a simple database lists the number of alternative education programs and their respective annual program profiles. However, when performing the data collection procedures of the questionnaire, the researcher discovered very subjective labeling of certain alternative education programs and substantial perplexity among the classification of certain alternative education programs. As a result, it is difficult to obtain a comprehensive and an accurate list of the alternative education programs operated by public school corporations throughout Indiana. In order to avoid the confusion that some schools believed themselves to be magnet schools or schools of choice instead of alternative schools, criteria should be established by the IDOE's alternative education department clarifying this differentiated educational programming in their annual program profile, so that there are not any erroneous assumptions or any negative stigma attached to any of these programs.

Summary

Overwhelmingly, alternative education programs in Indiana are the only opportunity for many non-traditional, at-risk students to acquire a high school diploma. It is essential for these schools to be prepared to assist students in accomplishing this goal. From the review of the literature on alternative education programs, a list of 40 characteristics of effective schools was developed. It is imperative that school corporations electing to create and sustain an alternative school research these characteristics, implement them, and evaluate them for the future success of the school and of their students.

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APPENDIX A: LETTER TO LEAD DIRECTORS

Indiana State University

Date

Dear Lead Director,

My name is Timothy Edsell, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership, Administration and Foundations department at Indiana State University. The objective of this research project is to conclude if there is a difference in the perceptions between alternative school directors and alternative school teachers with regards to the importance of effective practices and the extent of existence of effective alternative school practices in their alternative education programs throughout the state of Indiana. Through your participation, I eventually hope to understand how to ensure a holistic view is achieved on prevalent perceptions of effective characteristics that either exist or are important in alternative education programs throughout the state of Indiana.

As a participant in this study, you will be asked to complete the online survey which consists of 40 items that asks a variety of questions about your perceptions of effective characteristics that either exist or are important in alternative education programs throughout the state of Indiana and 10 additional items that includes some demographic questions. The entire survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. **Once you have completed the survey, the researcher is asking that you forward this email, which contains this cover letter, the informed consent form, and the survey link to three certified teachers in the respective alternative education program by randomly selecting three teachers whose last names are closest to the letter M.** If there are less than three certified teachers in the alternative education program, then the lead director will be requested to forward this email to those respective teachers. If there are no certified teachers in the alternative education program, then the lead director won't have to forward this email to anyone.

Clicking on the link to the survey will be an indication of consent. You are under no obligation to complete this survey and participate in the research. If you choose to participate, you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Your responses to the survey will be kept confidential. I do not need to know who you are and no one will know whether you participated in this study. Your responses will not be identified with you personally, nor will anyone be able to determine which school corporation you work for. Nothing you say on the

questionnaire will in any way influence your present or future employment with your school corporation.

This study has been explained to me. By clicking on the link below to the questionnaire, I understand and voluntarily agree to the conditions of my participation.

Click here to go to survey: https://indstate.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_6P5GyMjHEdvfcWM

I hope you will take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. Without the help of people like you, research on employees could not be conducted. Your participation is voluntary and there is no penalty if you do not participate.

If you have any questions or concerns about completing the questionnaire or about participating in this study, you may contact me at (765) 432-0948 or tedsell@indstate.edu. You may also contact Dr. Robert Boyd at (812) 237-3804 or Robert.Boyd@indstate.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Indiana State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) by mail at Indiana State University, Office of Sponsored Programs, Terre Haute, IN 47809, by phone at (812) 237-8217, or by e-mail at irb@indstate.edu. This study (IRB # 11-021) received exempt status by the IRB on October 3, 2010.

Sincerely,

Timothy Edsell
Timothy Edsell, Ed. S.
Doctoral Student
Department of Educational Leadership, Administration, and Foundations
Indiana State University

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT

Indiana State University

Date

A Study of the Perceptions of Administrators and Faculty Regarding Relevancy and Frequency of Effective Characteristics of Alternative Schools in Indiana.

You are being invited to participate in a research study about the difference in the perceptions between alternative school directors and alternative school teachers with regards to the importance of effective practices and the extent of existence of effective alternative school practices in their alternative education programs throughout the state of Indiana. This study is being conducted by Timothy Edsell and Robert L. Boyd, from the Department of Educational Leadership, Administration and Foundations at Indiana State University. I am a doctoral student at Indiana State University conducting this study for my dissertation.

There are no known risks if you decide to participate in this research study. There are no costs to you for participating in the study. The information will provide insight for lead directors and faculty members to formerly assess an alternative education program through the existence of the effective characteristics in their respective schools and establish any changes they may want to make to improve their alternative school. The questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. The information collected may not benefit you directly, but the information learned in this study should provide more general benefits.

This survey is anonymous. No identifying information including names, e-mail addresses or IP addresses will be collected. Even though this is an anonymous survey, absolute anonymity cannot be guaranteed over the Internet. No one will be able to identify you or your answers, and no one will know whether or not you participated in the study. Individuals from the Institutional Review Board may inspect these records. Should the data be published, no individual information will be disclosed.

Please follow this link to participate in the study https://indstate.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_6P5GyMjHEdvfcWM Your participation in this study is voluntary. By completing this survey you are voluntarily agreeing to participate. You are free to decline to answer any particular question you do not wish to answer for any reason.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Timothy Edsell, 10095 West 600 North, Galveston, Indiana 46932, 765-432-0948, tedsell@indstate.edu or Robert L. Boyd, ELAF Department, Indiana State University, Terre Haute Indiana, 47809, 812-237-3804 or Robert.Boyd@indstate.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject or if you feel you've been placed at risk, you may contact the Indiana State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) by mail at Indiana State University, Office of Sponsored Programs, Terre Haute, IN 47809, by phone at (812) 237-8217, or by e-mail at irb@indstate.edu.

Date of IRB Approval: October 3, 2010
IRB Number: 11-021
Project Expiration Date: Exempt Status

APPENDIX C: PERCEPTIONS OF ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL SURVEY

Each item has two parts. The first part asks how strongly you agree/disagree each item exists in your school. The second part asks how strongly you agree/disagree in the importance of each item. Each item requires a response. There is a total of 40 items to rate.

School Climate

1. The school has a mission statement used to guide the school in decision making and evaluation.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

2. The students can choose to attend either the alternative school or the traditional school.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

3. Teachers and staff choose to work at the alternative school.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

4. The alternative school has fewer than 125 students.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

5. Class size is less than 16 students per teacher.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

6. There are clearly established rules for behavior that are continually enforced.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

Student Needs

7. Students' opinions are listened to and may be used in the decision making process.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

8. There is a sense of community between staff and students.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

9. Students and teachers can speak freely with each other.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

10. Teachers provide positive reinforcement to students.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

11. Flexible scheduling is available for students.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

12. Students and teachers have mutual respect.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

13. The staff serves as mentors, advisors, and tutors helping students with academic and social needs.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

Instruction/Curriculum

14. There is relevance established between what is learned and how it applies to the world outside of school.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

15. A variety of teaching methods are used in the classroom to meet the needs of students with different learning styles.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

16. Teachers have high academic expectations for students.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

17. Students are allowed to work at their own pace.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

18. Instruction and curriculum are individualized for students.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

19. Students are grouped by ability not grade level.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

20. Technology is available and used as part of instruction.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

Faculty Needs

21. Teachers have the freedom to make curriculum decisions.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

22. Teachers work together to develop curriculum.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

23. The faculty shares resources, ideas, and strategies with each other.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

24. Professional development targeting the needs of alternative schools and the students is provided.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

25. Teachers visit other alternative schools to gather new ideas.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

Community Support

26. The superintendent shares his/her support of the alternative school with the community.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

27. Students have the opportunity to work in the community and learn job related skills.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

28. Partnerships are developed with businesses for job shadowing, internships, and/or mentoring opportunities.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

29. Service learning is part of the curriculum.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

30. Parents are encouraged or required to be involved in the school.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

Student Services

31. Individual and group counseling is provided as needed.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

32. Assistance is given with problem solving, social skills, and/or peer mediation.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

33. There is a relationship with outside service providers in the community (social services, juvenile justice services, etc.).

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

34. Students receive academic guidance on a regular basis.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

Leadership

35. The director (or principal) has a vision for the school.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

36. The director believes in the ability of the staff to reach their goals.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

37. The director encourages the staff to develop new ideas to improve the school.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

38. The director is a good communicator.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

39. The director has a positive attitude.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

40. The director is an advocate for the school within the district and the community.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This item exists in my school	○	○	○	○	○	○
The importance I place on this item	○	○	○	○	○	○

Demographic Data

41. Current student enrollment at the school:
- ○ Under 25
- ○ 25-50
- ○ 51-100
- ○ 101-125
- ○ Over 125

42. Current student-teacher ratio at my school:
- ○ 12 or fewer students to one teacher
- ○ more than 12 students to one teacher

43. Number of years the alternative school has been in existence:

44. Main purpose of the alternative school:
- ☐ Remove students with behavior problems from the high school
- ☐ Provide students more attention from teachers and/or smaller class size
- ☐ Allow more flexibility for students to graduate (scheduling, credit recovery opportunities, etc.)
- ☐ Other (please specify)

45. My position at the alternative school.
- ○ Administrator
- ○ Teacher
- ○ Other (please specify)

46. Administrative experience at an alternative school (count the current year as one year):

47. Total years of administrative experience (count the current year as one year):

48. Total teaching and administrative years of experience (count the current year as one year):

49. Years of teaching experience at an alternative school (count the current year as one year):

50. Total years of teaching experience (count the current year as one year):

APPENDIX D: FOLLOW-UP EMAIL TO LEAD DIRECTORS

Indiana State University

Dear fellow colleagues:

My name is Timothy Edsell, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership program at Indiana State University. Ten days ago I sent you an email inviting you to participate in a study examining the perceptions between alternative school directors and alternative school teachers with regards to the importance of effective practices and the extent of existence of effective alternative school practices in their alternative education programs throughout the state of Indiana.

If you have completed the online survey and have forwarded the email to three certified teachers in the alternative education program, thank you very much for your promptness.

If you haven't yet completed the online survey or forwarded this email on to three certified teachers in the alternative education program, this email reminder provides you with this opportunity. **Once you've completed the survey, please remember to forward this email to three other certified teachers in the alternative program whose last names are closest to the letter M.** Thank you for your valuable time in making this study a success.

Clicking on the link to the survey will be an indication of consent. You are under no obligation to complete this survey and participate in the research. If you choose to participate, you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Your responses to the survey will be kept confidential. I do not need to know who you are and no one will know whether you participated in this study. Your responses will not be identified with you personally, nor will anyone be able to determine which school corporation you work for. Nothing you say on the questionnaire will in any way influence your present or future employment with your school corporation.

This study has been explained to me. By clicking on the link below to the questionnaire, I understand and voluntarily agree to the conditions of my participation.

Click here to go to survey: https://indstate.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_6P5GyMjHEdvfcWM

I hope you will take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. Without the help of people like you, research on employees could not be conducted. Your participation is voluntary and there is no penalty if you do not participate.

If you have any questions or concerns about completing the questionnaire or about participating in this study, you may contact me at (765) 432-0948 or tedsell@indstate.edu. You may also contact Dr. Robert Boyd at (812) 237-3804 or Robert.Boyd@indstate.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Indiana State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) by mail at Indiana State University, Office of Sponsored Programs, Terre Haute, IN 47809, by phone at (812) 237-8217, or by e-mail at irb@indstate.edu. This study (IRB # 11-021) received exempt status by the IRB on October 3, 2010.

Sincerely,

Timothy Edsell

Timothy Edsell, Ed. S.
Doctoral Student
Department of Educational Leadership, Administration and Foundations
Indiana State University