



Michigan Association
of Community and
Adult Education

Creating a Framework of Excellence for Michigan Alternative Education

*Prepared by the MACAE Alternative Education Focus Group in Collaboration
With Michigan Alternative Education Teachers, Administrators & Organizations*

September 2008

Creating a Framework of Excellence for Michigan Alternative Education

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In today's global economy, high school graduation represents the first essential step to each student's preparation to compete. Alternative education programs offer a lifeline to many students at risk of dropping out, providing them a clear path to success in academic preparation and critical support for transition to college and careers. Providing these students with what they need to succeed now is the best investment we can make to ensure they become contributing, self-sustaining members of society as adults.

The **Framework of Excellence for Michigan Alternative Education** serves to provide a common understanding of alternative education, a working definition for policy development and program implementation, and a detailed analysis of current issues impacting the delivery, including the Michigan Merit Curriculum, the Michigan Merit Examination, the four-year graduation requirements, and the need for local community involvement. Clarifying the need for alternative education, the following recommendations are presented:

1. Provide alternative education students with increased flexibility in meeting the Michigan Merit Curriculum. Extend the four-year cohort to allow alternative students additional time to complete their diploma. Provide equal access to student resources for alternative students to ensure individual, academic and career success.
2. Allow additional standard assessment methods to demonstrate academic growth for reporting Adequate Yearly Progress. Report alternative education student assessments separately from district reports for Adequate Yearly Progress calculations and test students after they have had an opportunity to master coursework relating to tests.
3. Provide professional development for new and current teachers in alternative education programs, based on research and targeted for alternative education students.
4. Increase public understanding of the social and economic impacts of student failure, and the need for alternative delivery models.

For further information, or to participate in the efforts outlined above, please contact:

Michigan Association of Community and Adult Education

826 Municipal Way, Lansing, Michigan 48917

(517) 913-0268

www.macaec.org

Creating a Framework of Excellence

for Michigan Alternative Education

Framework Goal: *Create an understanding of alternative education programs and their role in preparing at-risk students for high school graduation and transition to post-secondary education and training.*

Objectives:

- *Provide a common definition of alternative education programs and practices in Michigan, to promote increased understanding for stakeholders and policy makers.*
- Address reporting challenges currently legislated under No Child Left Behind's Adequate Yearly Progress Requirements.
- Address assessment and curriculum challenges currently required in Michigan's High School Graduation Requirements and Michigan Merit Exam stipulations.
- Develop recommendations for enabling alternative education programs to meet those challenges.
- Ensure that alternative education students have equal access to all available opportunities for transition to college and careers.

INTRODUCTION

As Michigan struggles to overcome one of its most difficult economic downturns in history, there is an increased need for a highly trained and educated workforce. The days when a Michigan resident could drop out of high school at 16 and get a high-paying job that would support a family are over. Those jobs have moved overseas in today's global economy or have transformed into high-skill, high-tech jobs requiring a minimum of two to four years of college and/or specialized training.

So what does this mean for our students who are struggling to graduate from high school today? Students who have complicated lives at home that carry over to the classroom, as well as students that may have learning difficulties or attendance issues may not do well in a traditional classroom. They may have fallen behind in their earlier school years for numerous reasons and are at risk of dropping out or failing out of high school. Students who do not graduate from high school or continue on to college or training today will end up unemployed or underemployed. They are more likely to have children before adulthood, be uninsured, homeless, dependent on tax-payer supported services, and/or end up incarcerated and in and out of prison for a lifetime. In other words, we can either invest in these students today to ensure they can become productive members of society, or eventually pay more by marginalizing and subsidizing them for the rest of their lives.

Alternative education currently provides an option for students at risk of dropping out of our educational system. However, with increasing demands to meet expanded assessment and graduation requirements within restricted time-lines, the very flexibility and alternative programming that provides at-risk students essential support is at risk of being dismantled.

To address these concerns and open up the discussion, the following parties have been meeting for the past year to study the challenges, needs and possible solutions to the issues at hand: alternative education program directors, teachers, parents, district administrators and school boards, state administrators and the state school board, federal administrators and policy makers, the Michigan Association of Community and Adult Education's (MACAE) Alternative Education Focus Group, along with representatives from other education and human services organizations.

Representatives of the MACAE Alternative Education Focus Group has also been serving on the Michigan Dropout Prevention Summit Leadership Planning Team. The Summit, part of nationwide America's Promise

initiative to "develop strong, effective partnership alliances that are committed to seeing children experience the fundamental resources they need to succeed—Five Promises (caring adults, safe places, a healthy start, an effective education, and opportunities to help others)—at home, in school, and out in the community." The October 22, 2008 Summit marks a first statewide effort to build community alliances throughout the state to develop grassroots networks to support a "whole child" approach to solving Michigan's dropout crisis. While Michigan's Alternative Education programs are responsible for retaining many high school students at risk of dropping out, the issues addressed in the Framework are critical to being able to increase that number. These issues have been reinforced throughout the Summit planning process as part of the challenge of meeting the needs of the whole child.

We stress our support for high academic performance standards and accountability. However, the reality is that most students who enter alternative education programs have deficits in many areas including academic skills, required credits, interpersonal skills, and personal career plans. It is not usually due to the student's lack of effort, but due to the barriers that seem insurmountable to these adolescents. Alternative education programs offer an opportunity for them to overcome these barriers so that they can achieve their academic potential in high school and beyond.

While the traditional school can meet the needs of the majority of children, there is a growing number of students who need additional support, whether it be counseling, mentoring, tutoring, social services, or childcare and parenting classes. They may also need individualized approaches to academic programs that enable the teacher and student to spend more time on a particular subject, or use specialized approaches and tools that incorporate relevant applications into classroom instruction.

The very reason that alternative education has evolved as an essential option for at-risk students is that local communities are not willing to give up on these students. Many school districts have an excellent relationship with their alternative education program and an effective referral process. Other districts may have a cooperative agreement for services with neighboring districts. Some alternative education programs are part of the Intermediate School District (ISD) and serve the districts in that ISD.

We are encouraged by the increased levels of participation by the Michigan Department of Education staff and State Board of Education in discussions on alternative education and recognition that all students may not be able to meet the new high school graduation requirements within four years. We are equally enthusiastic about the recent attention to Michigan's high-school dropout rate, and look forward to cooperating with state and local education stakeholders to address this critical issue.

We also encourage continued sharing of national and local models that reflect best practices, researched delivery options, and measurable outcomes. To document and advance the effectiveness of alternative education programs, there is a need for data collection and analyses as well as research of best practice.

We further encourage The Michigan Department of Education to forge stronger relationships between school districts and alternative education programs, as well as with adult education programs. The Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth's (DLEG) Office of Adult Education must play a crucial role in this collaboration, as Alternative Education K-12 students becomes Adult Education students at age 20. Shared strategies and improved communications will serve to benefit students and lead to positive learning outcomes. Universities need to be fully engaged in this effort as well to ensure practitioners have access to research-based teaching practices. Teacher education curricula should include specific courses and professional development opportunities for teachers to master knowledge and best practices designed for success with alternative education students.

We believe that if all parties invested in the future success of all our children work together, with the emphasis on what is in the best interest of the student, we can address the current challenges and work to create more flexible, innovative alternatives for helping students reach their potential as contributing members of society. To abandon these students will invite the unintended consequence of leaving thousands of Michigan students behind and unprepared to participate in the fight for Michigan's economic success.

HISTORY OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

Public education is the cornerstone for learning for a diverse population. As such, learning alternatives have always existed to address specific needs of the people, from colonial America to the 21st century. Historically, the movement may have started with John Dewey (Dewey, 1916), as he urged educators to recognize the importance of individualized education for children of different learning styles and skills. He encouraged us to move from "school as a factory," to a system that recognizes students as individuals. It is this philosophy that has shaped the practice of Alternative Education today.

How did alternative education begin?

During the last 30 years, legislators on the national and state level have supported a wide range of alternative models, ranging from theme-based schools for arts, math, and science, to magnet schools. Since the 1960s, alternative schools have exploded to the current national count of approximately 10,000 public alternative schools serving three million students, (Raywid, 1994). Alternative programs developed within public education designed to serve a special population, unique interests or abilities, potential dropouts, teen parents, or court-placed youth.

The goal of such programs is to keep students engaged to complete their high school education and transition to college and career success. Because of the diversity of needs they address, the organizational structure of schools varies widely. These may include: school-within-a-school; schools without walls; residential schools; separate alternative learning centers; college-based alternative schools; summer schools, magnet schools, second-chance

schools, and charter schools, (Schargel and Smink, 2001).

In Michigan, 34,151 students were registered in programs for 2007. This number has nearly doubled in the past two years, and promises to continue to increase. Michigan's proactive history in providing learning options for all students has resulted in the development of many alternative program designs across the state. These programs offer a path for individual student success, while providing local districts and communities viable options and equal access to education for all students, (Free and Appropriate Public Education, FAPE).

Recognizing that all students do not learn in the same way, at the same pace, alternative education programs provide a positive and successful learning experience by using varied instructional methods, schedules and assessment options, while still addressing the requirements of the high school curriculum. Alternative programs across the state report increases and project further growth as high school requirements for curriculum and time become increasingly difficult for at-risk students.

How is alternative education defined?

There is no single accepted definition for what constitutes alternative education. (Lange and Sletten, 2002) The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) conducted a study of alternative programs defined as those "geared towards students at risk of education failure, that were administered by regular districts, and where students spent at least 50 percent of their instructional time." (NCES, 2000) Alternative education exists in multiple models, depending on the local community needs. It may be better described as 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." (Morley, 1991, p.8)

The Michigan Department of Education describes alternative education as a "program operated as a subdivision of the regular K-12 program. It is designed for students who can be better served by an alternative delivery system. Alternative education pupils are funded under the K-12 foundation rate. Students served include those who have special needs and are lacking sufficient credit to graduate with their class. Alternative education programs often include expanded services from the regular program such as counseling, childcare and transportation."

Why are alternative programs needed?

It is the mantra of public education that “all children can learn.” Legislation and legal opinions are based on this premise, state and local policies are built to accommodate this in action, and parents and children are encouraged from birth to adulthood that education and learning are a part of their birthright and responsibility of our society.

Alternative education students often need extra attention provided by qualified teachers and staff to overcome the challenges they face. Many of these students do not have a responsible adult to turn to and rely on school staff for guidance. Recently, Michigan has adopted a high standard of curriculum and graduation expectations for all students. Competition for jobs in the global economy has heightened the need for an educated workforce, and it is recognized that a high school diploma is a prerequisite for the skill sets needed. There is no disagreement on this desired educational outcome, but there are a few variables that affect the delivery and success for all students. These variables lie within the individual learner, individual learning style, emotional and social well being, basic academic skill level, economic and social support, and time required to meet stated requirements. Efforts to ensure that all students attain the new high school graduation requirements must take the individual student and potential barriers to success into account.

What characterizes alternative education programs?

Key findings from National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) research on alternative schools indicate that approximately 39 percent of public school districts administered at least one alternative school. Most were housed in a separate facility focusing on high school grades. As of October 2000, an estimated 612,900 students in the nation, or 1.3 percent of all public school students were enrolled in public alternative schools. They report approximately 12 percent of these students are classified as special education students. They also report their schools are full; 33 percent had reached capacity, and 54 percent had a student wait list, (NCES, 2002). In spite of recent attention on the issue of dropouts in our nation, data trends do not show a decrease in these percentages.

Although there are usually specific admission criteria (e.g., failure, referral, suspension, etc.), once enrolled, students usually elect to stay in the alternative program. Many of these programs have policies in place leading to smaller class size (85 percent), remedial instruction (84 percent), self-paced instruction (83 percent), crisis/behavioral intervention (79 percent), and enhanced counseling and services (87 percent). In regard to staffing, 86 percent of the programs surveyed hired teachers specifically trained to teach in alternative schools and programs (NCES, 2002), and these programs are not operating in isolation. In each community, programs reported collaboration with 6.9 of the 12 agencies listed, commonly including community organizations, drug/alcohol clinics, family organizations and childcare agencies, (NCES, 2002). In Michigan, alternative programs may also be linked with community colleges, and early or middle college designs. Programs may be run by a variety of institutions, including districts, consortia, intermediate school districts, colleges or charter schools.

Who are alternative education students?

Students come to alternative education programs for a variety of reasons. The flexibility of the programs allows many students to attend and succeed, on either a short-term or long-term basis. Alternative education students are often the "invisible students," going unnoticed in traditional settings, or exhibiting extreme dispositions. They may have attendance or truancy issues, sometimes related to illness or accident recovery. Many of these students may be characterized as "at-risk," unlikely to graduate on time with the academic and social skills necessary to exercise adult role options, (Smink & Schargel, 2004). Alternative education students often need to recover credits to graduate on time, either from the alternative program or their home high school. They may be seeking a way to complete high school, while gaining a foothold in college and career. The students served by alternative education often share one or more of the following characteristics:

- They are resilient and motivated to succeed in spite of the challenges they face.
- They value education.
- They have a debilitating medical condition.
- They are truant.
- They work to support themselves and/or their families.
- They will be first in their families to graduate from high school.
- They are parents raising small children.
- They are functioning below their grade level.
- They have suffered emotional and/or physical abuse and neglect.
- They are foster-care children.
- They have no parental or family support.
- They are homeless.
- They and/or their families suffer from alcohol or other substance abuse.
- They are, or feel pressured to be, associated with gangs.
- They, or their parents or siblings, have been incarcerated.
- They and/or their families move frequently, interrupting their education.

(Michigan Alternative Education Summit, 2007)

THE ECONOMIC IMPACT

What are the costs of losing these students?

When students' needs are unmet, they may elect to leave high school at age 16, and many unfortunately do. Not recognizing the cost to their future, up to 30 percent of U.S. students drop out of school each year.* This one educational decision continues to manifest in a lifetime of repercussions, limiting lifetime earnings by at least \$338,000, eliminating viable career options in a knowledge economy, and adding significantly to the costs for their community. Forty-five percent of all minimum-wage earners are dropouts; Forty percent cannot find work and have three times greater chance of living in poverty. Their dropout decision ultimately costs the nation approximately \$944 billion in lost revenue, while increasing welfare and crime-related spending by \$24 billion, (NMBRT). Eighty-two percent of America's prisoners are dropouts (USDJ, Juvenile Justice Bulletin, April, 1998) at a cost of approximately \$23,500 per year per prisoner. It is estimated that a dropout faces decreased earnings, increased welfare, judicial, and health care costs, and provides significantly lower tax contributions. In summary, the costs of keeping a student in school until graduation provide a clear return on investment.

**The controversy on how to count dropout statistics is based on a number of calculations and strategies, making accurate counts difficult. Numbers vary greatly between state reporting systems, and further vary between racial and ethnic groups, income groups, and urban populations.*

What are the benefits of Alternative Education?

The benefits of alternative programs are many, and their impact toward dropout prevention has been well documented. Alternative schools have been shown to reduce truancy, help meet high school requirements, improve attitudes toward school, and reduce behavior problems. The challenge these programs face is in academic improvement of students, since the majority of students arrive with academic deficiencies. (Smink and Schargel, 2004) These programs may also often provide resources for teen parents, providing both academic skills and parenting curriculum while solving child-care issues. Educating the parent promises to break the cycle of poverty and oftentimes results in their children being enrolled in early childhood development programs and receiving health screenings, ensuring a strong start for the next generation.

Additional benefits of alternative education include smaller class size, more direct contact with positive adults, access to Career Technical Education, and assistance in preparing and taking the Michigan Merit Exam. As local districts face the difficulties of reporting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) they may see the benefit of having a referral site for low-performing, low-achieving students.

A comprehensive system must create ways and opportunities for these students to catch up in academic skills and credits. Without alternative education programs, many students have no place to turn when a crisis and/or barriers make it difficult to succeed in a traditional setting.

IDENTIFYING THE CHALLENGES AND NEEDS

The Michigan Merit Curriculum and the No Child Left Behind Act have created some unintended challenges for alternative education students. In an effort to ensure that all students receive a "Free and Appropriate Public Education" (FAPE), some personalization of curriculum will be necessary to help alternative students achieve their highest potential.

The following section identifies four major issues and impacts, with suggested recommendations. This is not a comprehensive list of issues, but represents those issues that have a substantial and immediate impact on Michigan's Alternative Education students.

ISSUE I: Michigan High School Curriculum Guidelines—Needs, Challenges, and Recommendations

Federal regulations in the No Child Left Behind Act and the recent state requirements of the Michigan Merit Curriculum have combined to create particular challenges for alternative education programs and students. In raising the bar for high school graduation, legislation has unwittingly left many students unable to attain this new minimal standard. Although there is support for making sure Michigan students are challenged and prepared to succeed in post-secondary education and training programs and the global marketplace, alternative education programs themselves have become “at risk” in local districts. Without these options for a diploma, many students will be unable to graduate within the timeframe required. Despite having significant barriers, alternative students can succeed in alternative settings and earn their diplomas. Without an alternative to traditional education, these students will fall further behind in their education. Although the legislation and policy are built upon recognition of competency learning, current delivery practices may not allow for students to learn at their required pace. Their learning time may be longer than the traditional four years.

Frequently alternative education students have fallen behind in credits, academic skills, and social skills. While we seek the three R’s of Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships, alternative students especially require the last two R’s. Research indicates the need for social and emotional connections and relevance for effective alternative programs. They also frequently need additional support in developing a "social" foundation to support their academic skills, including conflict resolution skills, goal setting and career planning. Programs and services in counseling and support programs, as well as access to Career Technical Education and work-based learning are strong needs for alternative education.

Issues:

Recommendations: Specific Strategies

Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements	Allow more time to complete credit requirements; Amend guidelines to allow flexibility in ways to attain credit;	Continue to serve pupils on into Adult Education
Need for relevance, application of skills	Access to Career Technical Education programs, work-based learning, service learning;	
Personal Curriculum limitations	Allow for alternative education student learning requirements, based on Educational Development Plan (EDP) alignment;	Continue advocacy for curriculum flexibility
Four-Year Cohort graduation requirements	Support State requests for a fifth year for graduation, up to age 20 for high-school completion;	Gather data to determine time required for students to complete
Lack of equity/quality dedicated to alternative education programs	Ensure Equity in resources, supplies, and access to online options;	Advocate for pupil funding designated for alternative ed students

<p>Effective plans, transitions, bridges to college/careers</p>	<p>Expand Dual Enrollments, early college, capstone learning, and opportunities to enroll and succeed in post-secondary learning for fifth-year seniors;</p>	<p>Specific connections w/ counselors in colleges.</p> <p>Special orientations</p> <p>Increased dual enrollment options</p>
<p>Need for physical fitness, recreation spaces</p>	<p>Expand access to district and community facilities</p>	<p>Engage community partners, fitness facilities, health clubs, churches</p> <p>Personal Trainers</p> <p>Expand cooperation between district PE staff/facilities</p>
<p>Late recognition of students functioning below grade level, at risk of not graduating.</p>	<p>Extend recognition of at-risk students for early remediation, skill development, competency, and credit completion;</p>	<p>Partnering w/ local and state Dropout Preventions initiatives.</p>
<p>Lack of student support programs, services</p>	<p>Increase counseling, student support, Special Education services to alternative education; increase mental health services, transportation support (transient group);</p>	<p>Expand collaborations w/ K12 and parents</p>
<p>Demonstrated student needs in social, emotional functioning</p> <p>Career explorations</p>	<p>Expand counseling and support services</p>	<p>Support Grad Coaches for alternative ed students upon enrollment</p>
<p>Demonstrated needs in social/emotional learning</p>	<p>Extend counseling and support services.</p>	<p>Develop programs and services addressing the “Whole Child.”</p> <p>Expand counseling and support services</p>

This section was scribed by Gary Diehl- see him for notes!!!

ISSUE II: Student Assessment and Evaluation

Current assessment requirements using only the Michigan Merit Exam also present difficulties for alternative education students and programs. Prescribed testing calendars built on traditional student curriculum mastery fail to match or measure student learning out of sync with the norm. Students who participate in alternative education programs often do so because they have fallen so far behind academically that they can no longer perform at grade level. While we recognize and support the need for high-academic standards, those standards need to allow for appropriate assessment of alternative education students.

These students frequently test significantly below grade level, thereby lacking either the academic or test-taking skills to succeed on the Michigan Merit Exam. If a new student is forced to take a difficult assessment on unknown content, they will most certainly fail. In the current system, this individual failing results not only in the student's personal sense of failure, but is a negative reflection to the school and district's Adequate Yearly Progress. These negative consequences may challenge districts to decide between continuing to serve at risk students vs. publishing a marketable district profile. Using alternate, approved, standardized assessments to measure student growth would demonstrate learning and accountability for meaningful progress.

Issues:

Recommendations:

Only the Michigan Merit Exam (MME) is used for student assessment	Allow growth model to show student progress, pre and post testing;
Meeting district AYP can effect program continuation	Disaggregate alternative education MME scores for AYP reporting;
Rigid test dates limit student assessment	Allow MME to be taken in final year; allow flexible test dates to accommodate student entry, learning time;
Meaningful data for alternative education student learning	Allow alternative test, assessment data, alternative assessment processes, including portfolio, competency tests for modules, etc.;
Lack of data on alternative education students as a cohort	Improve definitions, data, for identification, remediation, and understanding;

Meg was the reporter on this section – see her notes?

ISSUE III: Professional Development, Support & Research-Based Best Practices

Ideally, we should be aggressively recruiting our most dynamic, effective, experienced teachers to work with our most challenged students. However, our educational system tends to follow an opposite pattern. These teachers work daily with students who present the most difficult personal and academic challenges, yet alternative education teachers do not have access to professional development expertise or a rich base of research-based best practices.

The growth of alternative education programs across the country is drawing more attention from academia and policy makers, but research-based protocols need to be disseminated to the field. Additionally, there is a need for universities

and colleges to offer courses and training for teachers to be better prepared to work in alternative education. Alternative education staff is not always included in professional development opportunities offered at the district level.

Issues:	Recommendations:	Strategies:
Lack of teachers prepared for alternative education instructional challenges	Encourage alternative education preparation in colleges, universities;	Define preparation requirements Endorsement Certificate Research what is available in universities, online, etc.
Limited professional development opportunities for alternative education staff	Design professional development for alternative education staff and include in local and regional high school curriculum in-service trainings; develop an online learning community to share resources and best practices;	Continue to plan professional development to expand the learning community Remind existing K12 to include alternative ed staff in relevant training.
Lack of research available of effective instructional practices	Establish state clearinghouse for research links, best practices, technical assistance and action research;	Link with partners in state dropout prevention initiative, and collaborate in online resource sharing
Highly qualified teacher requirements for multiple disciplines	Allow HOUSSE portfolio for alternative education teachers to meet HQ requirements of NCLB;	Determine status of this requirement allowance

ISSUE IV: Creating Public Understanding

Students reflect the wider community, and often return to their community after school. Isolation of their problems within the school system does not enable all local stakeholders a seat at the table, both in recognition and understanding of current and future problems, and in seeking community-supported solutions to help students attain an education relevant to future careers and reflective of the local community.

When communities are fully engaged in setting expectations for all students to start pre-school ready to learn, and graduate from high school ready to pursue post-secondary education and training opportunities, they are more likely to also ensure students have the support structures in place to be successful learners. It is more important today than possibly at any other point in Michigan's history that communities be made aware of the increasing education and training expectations in today's world of work, demanding that every child graduate from high school and continue on for post-secondary education and/or training. The ability to drop out of school at 16 and find a job on the line at a local manufacturing plant is no longer an option. To effectively reach our student population, and particularly those students most at risk of dropping out, Michigan needs to develop a community-based public outreach and understanding campaign to better inform the public of changing expectations in the workplace and the local short and long-term cost associated with local students dropping out of high school.

In order to achieve systemic renewal of education for alternative needs, school-community collaboration is critical. Strategies including family engagement, mentoring, service learning, and before/after school opportunities require active parent and community understanding and involvement. (Smink & Schargel, 2004) Increased mandates, requirements and standards have failed to provide the broad systemic reforms sought. Partnerships between the school and community are essential to address students' social, personal, and academic needs. Such collaboration includes increased awareness of at-risk youth issues, community dialog, information systems, and active collaboration with local government, public and private sectors. (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 1995)

Issues:	Recommendations:	Strategies:
Lack of public recognition, understanding and support for meeting the diverse needs of alternative education students	Establish community forums to define alternative student needs and issues, build local recognition for outstanding performance and contributions by students and staff;	Continue positive public relations campaign, local dropout summits
Lack of community dialog on the importance of graduation and life-long learning for all (among parents, churches, service clubs, employers, non-profit organizations and government leaders and agencies, etc.)	Create a public awareness campaign targeted to different community sectors on their unique roles in reinforcing the importance of completing high school and continuing education and training;	Link with state and national initiatives for data, strategies, and support
Negative perceptions of alternative education students and schools	Provide incentives to communities that engage alternative education students in community service, internships, job shadowing programs, and mentorship programs;	<p>Include students in district community relations initiatives</p> <p>Expand communications and understanding w/ local Board of Ed., Chamber of Commerce, policy makers.</p> <p>Establish mentoring programs to engage caring community adults with alternative ed students</p>
Lack of coordination between Adult and alternative education programs	<p>Create a smooth educational transition for students who need to continue learning and preparing for careers via Adult Education programs and services;</p> <p>Expand dialog and referrals in the local practice, reflecting clear communication and partnerships between state and federal departments with supportive, consistent guidelines;</p>	Continue dialog with MDE and DLEG for shared understandings, data, assessments, instructional strategies, and best practices
Lack of family engagement	Establish and disseminate best practice models for parent and family involvement;	Establish a parent outreach program

Lack of early intervention models	Provide information and training for early intervention/prevention models for at-risk students;	Research best practice models for local district implementation
-----------------------------------	---	---

REFERENCES

Business Roundtable. (2003) The hidden crisis in the high school dropout problems of young adults in the U.S. Recent trends in overall school dropout rates and gender differences in dropout behavior. Boston, MA, Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University.

Center for the Study of Social Policy. (1995) Building new futures for at-risk youth, as reported by Schargel, F., and Smink, J., Strategies to help solve our school dropout problem, 2001.

Kleiner, B., Porch, B., and Farris, E. (2002) Public alternative schools and programs for students at risk of education failure: 2000-01. Statistical Analysis Report, Washington, DC., National Center for Education Statistics (ED).

Koetke, C. (1999) One size doesn't fit all. Technos 8(2), 34-45. Bloomington, IN: The Agency for Instructional Technology.

Morley, R.E. (1991) Alternative Education. Clemson, SC: Clemson University, National Dropout Prevention Center.

New Mexico Business Roundtable for Educational Excellence. (NMBEE) (n.d.) www.nmbree.org Thorstensen, B.J., If you build it they will come: Investing in public education, University of New Mexico. Retrieved Online from: http://abec.unm.edu/resources/gallery/present/invest_in_ed.pdf.

Raywid, M. (1994) Alternative Schools: The state of the art. Educational Leadership, 52(1). 26-31.

Reimer, M, and Cash, J. (2003) Alternative schools: Best practices for development and evaluation. Clemson, SC: National Dropout Prevention Center.

Schargel, F.P., & Smink, J. (2001) Strategies to help solve our school dropout problem. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

Smink, J, & Schargel, F. (2004), Helping students graduate, Larchmont, NY, Eye on Education, National Dropout Prevention Center.

U.S. Department of Justice. (April,1998) Juvenile Justice Bulletin.