

**Alternative Education's Spoiled Image:  
When it happened, how it happened, why  
it happened, and what to do about it.**

**Special Topics in Education  
EDUC 507  
University of Indianapolis**

John Loflin  
Alternative Education  
Indianapolis Public Schools  
August 5, 2000

If we taught children to speak, they'd never learn.

--William Hull

It is the duty of a citizen in a free country not to fit into society, but to make society.

--John Holt

The new concept of schooling is in its romantic phase, in which the replacement of "mechanical" by "natural" methods has become unhealthily exaggerated.. Previously pupils at least acquired a certain baggage of concrete facts. Now there will be no longer any baggage to put in order... The most paradoxical aspect of it all is that this new type of school is advocated as being democratic, while in fact it is destined not merely to perpetuate social differences, but crystallize them in Chinese complexities.

--Antonio Gramsci,

Prison Notebooks,  
Quaderno XXIX (1932)

Today's television child is attuned to up-to-the-minute "adult" news -- inflation, rioting, war, taxes, crime...and is bewildered when he enters the nineteenth-century environment that still characterizes the educational establishment where information is scarce but ordered and structured by fragmented, classified patterns, subjects, and schedules.

--Marshall McLuhan

Nobody can teach anyone anything; whatever the child learns, he learns on his own.

--W. R. Wees

## Table of Contents

### An Introduction

The Intent of the Paper

### A Summary of the History of Alternative Education 3

Classical-Realism	3
Romanticism	3
Teacher-centered vs Child-centered	4
Other European Reformers	4
School Reformers of the 1800s in America	4
The Progressive Education Movement in America before WW II	5
The Progress Movement after WW II	5
The "Romantics" of the 1960s	6
Indiana's Contributions to Change	6
The Civil Rights Movement and Alternative Education	7
The Proliferation of Alternatives: The 1970s	8
Desegregation and Alternative Schools: The Magnet Concept	9
The 1980s: The Decade of Extremes	9
The 1990s: The Continuing Evolution of Alternative Education	10
Alternative Education Since 1930: Conclusions and Questions	12

### The Political Psychology of Alternatives: The Rationalizations of the Status Quo 12

Type I Popular Innovations	12
Type II Last Chance Programs	13
Type III Remedial Focus	13
Why Does Alternative Education Have a Negative Image?: The Ideas of Deirdre Kelly	13
Continuation Schools and Alternative Schools	15
Alternative Schools' Negative Image: The Ideas of Mary Anne Raywid	16
Broken Kid vs Broken System	17
Special Issues in Alternative Education: The Ideas of Bill Johnston and Karen Wetherill	19
Educational Alternatives Not Alternative Education: The Ideas of Don Glines	20
What Went Wrong: The Spoiling of Alternative Education's Image	21
Meeting the Needs of At-Risk Students is Not Enough: The Research of Paula Groves	23
Are Type II/III Alternatives Actually Wolves in Sheep's Clothing?: The Accusations of Richard Sagor	24
Consequence of a Policy	25
"Spoiled Image" Problems	25
Learning From Those Who Have Failed: The Conclusions of Amy Bauman	26
Bauman's Concluding Thoughts	26
Does This Mean All Alternatives Are Bad?	27

<b>How Can We Avoid the Negative Image?</b>	27
Putting the Horse Back In Front of the Cart	28
Looking Forward: The Indiana Connection, the ISTA. Connection...	28
Why Alternative Schools Work and "Why Don't They Understand"	28
From a Type II to a Type I Alternative: Lakeside, A School of Choice. Our Choice	30
How Choice Works	31
So Why Don't They Get the Message?: One Administrator Talks to others	32
Meeting the Needs of All Students While Stigmatizing None:	
The Suggestions of Richard Sagor	33
Avoiding the "Spoiled Image"	33
Philosophy Not Politics: The Suggestions of Don Glines	34
How to Remove Alternative Education's Negative (Self-) Image:	
The Ideas and Suggestions of Tom Gregory	35
People Issues	37
Identity Issues	38
Equity and Parity Issues	38
Programmatic Issues	39
A Summary of Gregory's Ideas and Suggestions: The Barriers Within	39
The Suggestions of Robert D. Barr and William Parrett	40
A System of Schools, Not a School System: Two Publication's	
Positive Image of Alternative Education	42
Involving More African-Americans in Alternative Education:	
Continuing the Legacy	43
Schooling vs Education	45
Alternative Education: Different Ways to Learn, Different Ways to Evaluate Learning	46
Alternative Education: Learning Styles, Alternative Assessment, and Democratizing Our Concept of Human Intelligence	48
<b>Conclusions: Alternative Education Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow</b>	50
"We Cannot Ignore Alternatives"	50
Alternative High Schools: Models for the Future?	50
Another Model for the Future: A K-12 Year-Round Education School	51
Better Public Relations: Two Approaches	52
Best Practices: "The (too) Quiet Revolution"	53
Educational Testing: To Standardize or Customize Assessment	53
Educational Alternatives: "...the importance of expanding options in the public school setting" and Polishing the Image of Alternative Education	54
A Parallel System of Educational Alternatives: A vision	54
Sustaining Change: How Do We Make Lasting Improvements?	55

**In Closing...** 57

**References**

It is our school and its  
way of teaching-that's  
alternative, not our students.  
--Paul  
Schwarz

Sed quis custodiet ipsos custodes?  
(Who will reform the reformers?)  
--Juvenal,  
Satires, 6, 1. 347

Most children are curious, they want to know; but their eager inquiry is dulled by our pontifical assertions, our superior impatience and our casual brushing aside of their curiosity. We do not encourage their inquiry, for we are rather apprehensive of what may be asked of us; we do not foster their discontent, for we ourselves have ceased to question.

--Krishnamurti

If we insist on looking at the rainbow  
of intelligence through a single filter.  
many minds will seem devoid of light.  
--Renee Fuller

Today's child has become the unwilling, unintended victim of overwhelming stress borne of rapid, bewildering social change and constantly rising expectations.

--David Elkind

Our obsession .with test scores has, produced distorted curriculum, teaching and educational policy. As long as it continues, we will get the dual phenomena of rising test scores and too many illiterate and innumerate citizens.

--Deborah Meier

## **An Introduction**

The 3rd Annual Indiana Alternative Education Conference was held in early March 2000 and was sponsored by the Indiana Department of Education/Alternative Education and Learning Options division. To get the conference started, an Alternative Education National Forum was held. The panel of distinguished, world-class educators presented concept papers, talked, and responded to questions. One of the topics brought forward by the speakers was about their concern with the "negative image" of alternative education/schools. In today's public school environment, such a label would be a public relations nightmare. Currently, for example, the Indianapolis Public Schools have a special public relations staff and they publish the monthly IPSis... magazine that is sent to the area via The Indianapolis Star. Like any business corporation, the negative comments about IPS will get a positive spin due to this modern-day necessity.

Although this issue has been a major problem for alternative education (Kelly, 1993) this important and defining "complaint" was not made a continuing and major topic after this forum. Perhaps many of the participants were not aware that there was such an image and/or were confused in general about the big picture. This is not any attempt to knock those attending. If the above is true, they are not alone. During the last twenty years, the term "alternative education" has been applied so indiscriminately and to such a wide variety of programs; that its original meaning has been clouded in confusion among teachers, students, and the general public (Kellmayer, 1998). Part of the misunderstanding comes from the fact that even after decades of success, genuine alternative education/schools remain on the fringe. Although alternative education has provided leadership for positive change, it has yet to receive full institutional legitimacy (Raywid, 1998). A bewildered John Lammel (1998), associate executive director of the National Association of Secondary School Principals asks, "Why don't we get the message? What don't we understand?" He was referring to the many administrators who remain confused and/or "misguided" (King, Silvey, Holliday, & Johnston, 1998) about the authentic image and history of alternative education and the proven viability of small public alternative schools of choice to educate those underserved by the traditional schooling style.

## **The Intent of this Paper**

This research summary intends to do what was not done at the Indiana meeting. It puts forth an in-depth analysis of this dubious image in order to understand when and how this perception developed. More importantly, it will investigate why, as we enter a new century and consequently after over thirty years of development, does alternative education have a "spoiled image" (Sagor, 1997) and continues to be the "stepchild" (Groves, 1998) of the traditional school system.

Finally, this work is particularly pertinent since many of the roots of the original concept are right here in Indiana (Smith, Barr, & Burke, 1976; Young, 1990). We who reside here and work in education have a special responsibility to see to it that alternative education continues to challenge and be an option of families to the sorting uniformity and common standards of the present educational system (Raywid, 1994).

## **A Summary of the History of Alternative Education**

In June of 2000, a 30th national (now international) alternative education conference took place in Minneapolis. Over 300 people from 26 states attended. A silver/25th annual conference was held in Bloomington, Indiana, "...the place where it all started..." (HALO, 1995). From these statements, one could imply that alternative education possibly began in America in the late 1960's anti-establishment movement. Indeed, educators such as Kozol (1967), Holt (1964, 1967), Herndon (1968), Hentoff (1967), and Khol (1967) began questioning the education establishment, exposing its racism, class bias, and other detrimental effects. Yet, this educational reassessment did not actually begin here. Questioning of this sort began in Europe over two hundred years ago through the efforts of other dissident, innovative educators (Young, 1990).

### **Classical-Realism**

Romanticism was a philosophical, political, and cultural movement that swept Europe and later America between 1775 and 1830. The Romantics were opposed to the popular philosophy of the time known as Classical-Realism. Extending forward from the past influences of Aristotle, Realism stressed the idea of a fixed intangible universe capable of being perceived objectively; reality exists independently of the mind. This knowledge was objective -- not a product of subjective attitudes, feelings or point of view. It sought universal ideas that were not relative, but true for all people, all cultures, in/at all times (Ozmon & Craver, 1999).

Realism was closely related to the Rationalists who promoted the use of pure reason to acquire and justify knowledge. They believed that theory, not practical experience or experimentation, was the way to truth. Reason rather than faith or appealing to empirical (based on observation/practical) premises would lead one logically/analytically to a substantial knowledge about the nature of the world. The Age of Reason was epitomized by the preference of rationality over sense experience -- all truths of reason were analytical (Blackburn, 1994).

The influence of the Religious Realists on education is found in their belief in original sin and that human nature is basically corrupt, lazy, and prone to wrong doing. Although modern Secular Realists may reject this view, it is very much a part of education today. As was the case in the 1700's, hard work and discipline were considered "good" for students and their heads should be filled with memorized objective "factual truth" so that they would not come to a bad end (Ozmon & Craver, 1999).

### **Romanticism**

Romanticism's influence on education is exemplified by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) who elevated nature and sentiment above civilization and intellect. This was partly a reaction against the stiff rationality of the era and its official, static, neo-classical art, in favor of the spontaneous, the unfettered, the subjective, the imaginative and emotional, and the inspirational and heroic (Urmsom & Ree, 1989).

In philosophy the Romantics took from Kant both the emphasis on free will and the doctrine that reality is ultimately spiritual (not rational-God is beyond our reason), with nature itself a mirror of the human soul. Opposing Realism, Romanticism held that the knowledge of the nature of reality could not be acquired by rational and analytical means, but only by emotional experience and intuition. Thus, they valued feeling more than reason impulse over self-discipline. They were interested in

"psychology" and the expressive, the childlike, and, the revolutionary. They were also against formality and containment and favored assertion of the primacy of the individual perceiver in the world they perceived. Therefore, they did not seek the universal, but the exceptional and unconventional. The Romantics claimed that the Realists "deified" reason to the detriment of the total human being by ignoring human passion, the five senses, emotion, feelings, and irrationality (Bullock & Trombley, 1997).

Educationally, since they viewed human nature as basically good, energetic, and naturally inquisitive-while favoring the freedom of the individual, rejecting restricting social conventions and unjust political rules, restraints and order, the Romantics were "child-centered." Children should be taught with patience and understanding. Schools need not curb or discipline the natural tendencies of the child, but encourage the student to grow and blossom. Teachers were to appeal to the child's interests and discourage strict discipline and tiresome lessons. Love and sympathy were the guides, not rules and punishment. Teaching by example and direct experience or by people and thing, were better for learning than books and lectures. The world should just simply be presented or made available to students and no force or threats were required. Finally, Romantics opposed the fact-based/"factual truth" approach to knowledge because once the factual truth is found, further questioning is discouraged and this leads to close-mindedness. This is an incorrect assumption, they also claim, since "facts" change (Ozmon & Craver, 1999).

### **Teacher-centered vs Child-centered**

In summary, the background to understanding current issues involving alternative education can be stated as: teacher-centered vs child-centered approaches to learning and schooling.

### **Other European Reformers**

Two other European innovators during the 1700s must be mentioned. Pestalozzi (1746-1827) also focused on love and understanding rather than learning by rote and using the harsh punishment used by many of the schoolmasters of the day. He also adapted his teaching to the ascertained capacity of each child. Froebel (1782-1852) created the Kindergarten concept in 1840. He believed that children developed through self-activity; thus, the teacher's role was not to indoctrinate or instill, but to encourage self-discovery (Hegener & Hegener, 1992).

Montessori (1870-1952), in spite of opposition from traditional European schools dominated by strict teachers, encouraged freedom of movement, which was considered destructive to discipline. She also introduced the notion that children could be interested in their environment. Due to the ideas concerning fixed intelligence-that heredity alone determined a child's development -- many of her ideas were not readily accepted in America. Yet her "discovery of the child" and its influence on the teacher as observer and guide, keeping enthusiasm for learning going rather than instructing and demanding conformity, won out. Today, there are over 4,000 Montessori schools. The Indianapolis Public Schools developed one of the first programs in America-in the 1970s (Hegener & Hegener, 1992).

### **School Reformers of the 1800s in America**

School Reformers of the 1800s in the United States can also be seen as having a major effect on alternative education. Alcott (1799-1888) founded the Temple School in Boston. Like the Romantics she pioneered a child-centered approach that pursued self-knowledge and reflection. She was more concerned with the physical, emotional, and intellectual well-being of the students rather than teaching



facts. Parker (1837-1902) was a forerunner to "progressive" education. She used informal methods and promoted a relaxed social atmosphere in schools at a time when teachers were strict authoritarian rulers over the classroom, used rigid techniques, enforced an inflexible discipline and regimentation of students. She was against corporal punishment since children were not bad by nature and so must be repressed. She disagreed that children did not like learning, thus it was necessary to discipline the mind through fear. This made her refuse to use rewards, grades, ranking, and rewards/punishment as means of control (Loflin, 1997).

### **The Progressive Education Movement in America before WW II**

Much of what happened in Europe came to influence the so-called Progressive Education Movement in the United States in the 1900s. Dewey (1859-1952) reiterated what previous innovators believed. His particular contributions surrounded such ideas as: education should not simply be concerned with intelligence, but also with manual skills, and physical/moral development. He felt that education was more than test scores, achievement standards, discipline, and order in class, but an integral part of life. He exposed a conflict in education concerning the acquisition of knowledge vs the development of intelligence. In the past, when the availability of information was limited, knowing this fact was important. However, with the growth of new/more information, the development of the capacity to think was more useful or pragmatic. The other major idea he promoted was his emphasis on experience/"hands-on" learning. Thus, this put students in real-life situations and mixed real-life experiences, outside of the school, with academics. Finally, other general Progressive ideas centered around theme-based/interdisciplinary curricula, and democratic ideals such as community service and giving students choices in the classroom (Loflin, 1997).

### **The Progressive Movement-after WW II**

Perhaps the most influential event, not person, that was the basic impetus for what is now known as alternative education was the Eight Year Study. The results of this work came to influence educators to consider "alternatives" to the traditional public schooling style. Conducted during the 1930s and 1940s, students who were attending selected high schools were released from traditional college entrance requirements. The high schools were encouraged to make new curricula and approaches to teaching and learning. Using ideas of Dewey and Progressive Education, traditional course requirements were replaced with competencies or projects. Special attention was given to their standardized test scores and college entrance exams. They were also observed during the four years after graduation. The results showed that the experimental group scored higher on entrance exams than the control group. They also tended to be more successful later. In the 1970s, this study influenced the climate and curriculum at various schools. In particular, the St Paul Open School replaced traditional graduation requirements with outcome based performance competencies (Barr & Parrett, 1995).

During the 1950s, Progressive Education ideas faltered. Influenced by events such as the Cold War and especially the Russian launch of the Sputnik satellite in 1957, national interests, illustrated by the passage of the National Defense Act of 1958, replaced any vestiges of individual-centered ideas with a subject-centered curriculum. Competing with the Russians meant increased competition in schools, ability grouping, and tracking students according to tests given by school counselors (Loflin, 1997).

## The "Romantics" of the 1960s

Coming full circle, we can now see the influence of the European Romantics on the educators of the 1960s mentioned in the beginning paragraph of the Summary of the History of Alternative Education. Like Rousseau and the Romantic's reaction to the existing conditions in Europe attributed to the Classical-Realists, social critics and educators of the 1950s and 1960s began pointing out the negative side of the emphasis on national interests and increased competition. Detractors such as Goodman (1960, 1964) raised such issues as students being schooled rather than educated, socializing the young to accept national norms and fit into the nation's manpower needs, and a lack of moral education that would foster personal growth. Goodman also made the public aware that the public schools served to confirm social and class distinctions and alienated the poor and unsuccessful (Young, 1990).

Along with Goodman's Growing Up Absurd, Riessman's Culturally Deprived Child (1962) exposed the national trend to limit the definition of school success to cognitive terms based on middle-class values that were promoted at the expense of fairness. He felt public schools needed to focus on the socially and economically disadvantaged. One of the more important critics was Kozol. His Death at an Early Age (1967) won the National Book Award-something unusual for a book on education. As a teacher in the Roxbury/Boston public schools, he wrote about what he considered being repressive teaching methods in a racist educational system. As a result, he founded the Roxbury Free School. 36 Children, a book by Khol (1967) showed how a teacher could learn from their students and then build a curriculum that used student's strengths. Holt's two books, How Children Fail (1964) and How Children Learn (1967) are the sterling example of the influence of the Romantics on 1960s educators. Holt promoted the ideas that learning is natural and that educators need to provide as much of the world to children and then get out of the way-only helping if students have questions. His outlook can be stated in his quote: "Birds fly, fish swim; man thinks and learns" (1967). His writings came to influence the home schooling movement (1976, 1981, 1989) and the creation of Homo curaos (Loflin, 1995) a concretion of our-innate curiosity. Farber (1969) writing about how poorly public school kids were treated added to the desire by educators to make improvements in the public schools.

## Indiana's Contributions to Change

In the early 1970s, a group of professors and students at a Hoosier university, influenced by many of the above critics and innovators of the 1960s, reviewed various schools around the nation. After finding several schools that were humane, caring, and effective, they hosted a conference. The characteristics of the schools had several things in common:

- students attended by choice
- the schools were small (between 50-200 students)
- the curriculum was designed to fit the needs and interests of the students
- performance competencies determined school success
- there was a democratic air through shared decisions among the staff, parents, and students (Barr & Parrett, 1995)

Influenced by the Eight Year Study and the 1971 Experimental Schools Program--a federally funded concept that encouraged innovative schools in Minneapolis, Tacoma, and Berkeley--Indiana University became the first school of higher education to identify and study these new public school options by:

- conducting the first descriptive research
- creating/publishing Changing Schools, the "Journal of Alternative Education," in 1973

- developing a teacher/administrator education program -- Alternative Schools Teacher Education Program (ASTEP)--that was nationally acclaimed
- founded a national professional association -- the National Consortium of Options in Public Education (NCOPE)
- creating an annual national alternative education conference (Barr & Parrett, 1995)

There was no such concept as "alternative education" until the momentum of the Indiana University School of Education blossomed. Fantini's Public School of Choice (1973) brought this schooling style to national attention. Such sections as "Legitimizing Educational Alternatives," "Organizing and Implementing of Alternative Schools," and especially, "Matching Teaching-Learning Styles," were truly revolutionary. The idea that different children learned in different ways so that teachers had/could teach differently was the beginning of the breaking of the "one size fits all" mold of the conventional system. Dunn and Dunn's Teaching Students Through Their Individual Learning Styles (1978) helped lead to the creation of one of the major alternative concepts, "There is no one best way to learn" (Barr & Parrett, 1995). This concept was the precursor to Gardner's multiple intelligences ideas in, Frames of Mind (1983), Skromme's The 7-Ability Plan (1989), Herrman's The Creative Brain (1995), and Sternberg's, Thinking Styles (1974). Preceding these ideas was Fizzell who believed that along with learning style, the school-student match was just as important. His "Schooling Style Inventory" (1975) helped push alternative schools towards a variety of types and sizes.

### **The Civil Rights Movement and Alternative Education**

Weaving itself throughout the educational changes and questioning of the public schools and their schooling style was the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Kozol's Death at an Early Age, as was noted, exposed racism in the public schools. Regardless of the move toward integration and equal education opportunity, in many cities and towns in America, even after Brown vs Board of Education/1954, racial, economic, class and cultural bias continued. Although what Kozol made public was so new to many Americans, it was common knowledge to Black citizens. Influenced by political/revolutionary ideas from Latin American educator's writings such as Illich's Deschooling Society (1971)--where he decried the institutional dependence public education fostered--and Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970), a book relating the negative reactions he received from his government as he taught reading and literacy to peasant adults through connecting it with political awareness (Loflin, 1997), many people in America realized that a public school system could hurt, rather than help, some children. Some citizens began declaring that they should have a right to set up alternative schools/education methods (World Book, 2000).

Culminating in the creation of the Council of Independent Black Institutions (CIBI) in 1972 (Shujaa, 1994), African-Americans in southern states set up some of the first alternative schools. During the 1960s, "freedom schools" were established in communities where public schools refused to admit Black children or respect their culture and history. In many northern cities, African-Americans set up private alternative schools because of the dissatisfaction with the treatment of their children in the public schools (World Book, 2000). One of the best examples of this type of school was the Street Academy concept initiated by the Greater New York Urban League in 1966. Sometimes referred to as "storefronts," the major purpose of these innovative ventures was to reintroduce the disenfranchised students, most of whom were non-white and from low-income families, back to the education process. These schools proved that underserved students could be better educated in different and more sensitive environments than offered by the public schools (Loflin, 1997).

Like the negative educational/political relationships pointed out by Illich and Freire and by the American social/educational critics of this era-coupled with a reminder of the beliefs/actions of the Romantics over 200 hundred years ago-Shujaa, in Too Much Schooling, Too Little Education (1994), reiterates the teacher-centered vs the student-centered debate. He defines schooling as a process intended to maintain the status quo. Schools are like the American Indian schools of the past, where students are to be assimilated. Education, on the other hand, is the process of transmitting, from one generation to the next, knowledge of values, aesthetics, spiritual beliefs and all other things that give a culture its uniqueness. In a pluralistic and post-modern society like America, school can not just teach the values, concepts, skills, and reality of the dominant group. Examples of Black Independent Schools (BIS) are Chicago's Shule Ya Watoto(1972) and The Roots Activity Learning Center (1977) in Washington D.C. Both schools still prosper.

### **The Proliferation of Alternatives: The 1970s**

With all the ideas, discontent, and energy, there was a "flowering" of alternatives in several styles, both public and private, in the 1970s. Kozol's Free Schools (1972) was the "handbook for change" for those teachers, parents, and students who wanted to create nonpublic schools. Dissident newsletters such as No More Teachers' Dirty Looks, Skool Resistance, How to Organize a High School Underground and books with titles such as, School Is Dead (Reimer, 1971), The Way We Go to School by Larry Brown (1971), Formative Undercurrents of Compulsory Knowledge (Bishop & Spring), How to Start Your Own School (Rasberry & Greenway), and No Particular Place to Go: The Making of a Free High School (Bhaerman & Denker, 1971) illustrate the anti-establishment sentiment of this movement. In Chicago, the Southern School served primarily poor white children and in Indianapolis, COP-E (Community Organization Program Eastside) Academy was created (Kozol, 1972). Also in Indianapolis, Tech High School students published an underground newspaper they called, After Breakfast. Even this city's public school teachers had their own obscure publication, Ipsa Facto (Loflin, 1997). The New Orleans Free School (1971) is a great example of this genre. The K-8 school remains open (Mintz, 1995).

In the public sector, there were so many alternative schools that to enhance everyone's understanding of the concept, the Indiana Department of Education publish this excerpt by Robert D. Barr in Alternatives in Indiana (1977) titled, "What Is An Alternative School?"

If the area of alternative schools is typified by any single characteristic, confusion would come close to being a good description. When alternative school educators met a Wingspread in 1972, the task of defining alternative became a central issue. Five years later, it is obvious that time has not mellowed either the discussion or the confusion. In some ways the area is even more complex. The number of terms used to denote alternative schools is legion: open-schools, multicultural schools, career centers, bilingual schools, schools of choice, store-fronts, contemporary schools, satellite schools, conventional schools, mini-schools, street academies, Montessori and vocational schools, magnets, school-within-schools, behavior-mod schools, optional schools, community schools, environmental schools, continuous progress-schools, schools without walls, back to basics, musical/fine arts schools ...and on and on.

The booklet's introductory section had this conclusion:

In spite of the confusion and turmoil, there seems to be strong agreement on some criteria for defining alternative schools (regardless of what you choose to call them).

- Voluntary Participation-No student or teacher is arbitrarily assigned.

- Distinctiveness-each alternative is different from the conventional school.
- Nonexclusiveness-The school is open to all students on voluntary basis.
- Comprehensive Set of Objectives
- Learning Environment That Relates to Student Learning Styles

If any school or program does not have the above characteristics, it simply is not an alternative (p.1).

### **Desegregation and Alternative Schools: The Magnet Concept**

The 1971 federal court decision, *Swann vs Charlotte-Mecklenburg*, was the beginning of desegregation. Many districts, even after 1954, found ways to circumvent racial integration. Curiously, court ordered desegregation in the Minneapolis Public Schools (1972.) exempted four alternative schools since they were already integrated. School desegregation had become the catalyst for the magnet school concept. In 1973, the first court sanction of magnets allowed them to be used in desegregating the Denver schools. The concept was now a legitimate alternative to the status quo. However, as Bauman concludes, this was not totally good for alternative education (1998):

Unfortunately, during the early 1970s, alternative schools were co-opted into a broader political agenda as they were incorporated into much larger desegregation plans. Magnet replaced the term 'Alternative' as many educators, administrators and school boards scrambled to find another approach to bussing. In doing so, schools which had visions of independence were drawn back into the network of pre-existing public education systems. The hope was that each magnet school would have a unique curriculum or approach which would attract a broad cross section of a community. Magnet schools also were eligible for federal funding which circumnavigated state specific curriculum restrictions. With these new magnet schools in place, families would be able to choose an alternative instead of their local school or in lieu of forced bussing. Not surprisingly, the magnets were seen as a last effort to combat the intense levels of 'white flight' plaguing big cities. Even far into the Reagan Era, magnet schools were touted as the salvation for floundering public school systems. Sadly, however, the Alternative schools which had challenged the infrastructure and political agendas of traditional public schools seemed to be disappearing (p. 258).

### **The 1980s: A Decade of Extremes**

By the 1980s, alternatives were firmly established in the public schools. Although many of the alternatives established in the 1960s/70s were no longer functioning, they were replaced by many more. By 1981, there were 10,000 public alternative schools with 3,000,000 students. However, the new options were less innovative and experimental, reflecting the conservative educational climate-and a different student population (Young, 1990).

The renewed interest in vouchers exemplified the changing political/educational climate of the 1980s. Indeed, both liberal and conservative camps wanted school systems to experiment with non-traditional ideas, but now these ideas were interpreted differently. Friedman in Capitalism and Freedom (1962) introduced the idea of vouchers-a certificate that could be used by families/students to attend either public or private schools. Other than a 1971-75 Office of Economic Opportunity project in Alum Rock, CA, there was no official use of vouchers (Young, 1990).

In 1983 the Reagan administration resurrected vouchers by proposing that a \$600 credit be given to parents of poor children to be used to purchase a private education if they so desired. Congress rejected the proposal. In 1988, Secretary of Education William Bennett, suggested Catholic schools

be reimbursed by the states for each hard-core student they enrolled. Despite the efforts of the Reagan administration, vouchers did not gain the political support necessary to become a viable option for parents and students (Young, p. 18).

As well, as part of the ripple effect of the Reagan presidency, more conservative school boards were elected which favored less innovative superintendents (Glines, 1992).

As technology replaced jobs and international economic competition increased, the consequences of dropping out of school became profound for the at-risk. With 69% of the schools in a 1981 national survey indicating that their students were functioning below local standards, the more conservative remedial programs were favored over progressive/open schools (Young, 1990) .

To lower the increasing drop out rate and reengage the Browning numbers of low achievers, disruptive students and "turned-off" or the disinterested, districts took two measures:

- high stakes testing would renew the attention and interest in standards and accountability which would cause the traditional schools to improve (Groves, 1998).
- meanwhile, creating remedial/retention programs would keep those at-risk in school.

The rationale for public alternative schools had changed. By 1988, some 4,000,000 or nearly 7% of the nation's students were in alternatives (Young, 1990).

At the other extreme, countering the moves to reactive remedial options where students were referred or placed, was a growing number of articles and books promoting the viability of proactive innovative alternatives of choice. Indiana educators' article, "Meeting student needs: Evidence of the superiority of alternative school" (Smith et al., 1981) illustrated how the sense of community created by the positive school climate of alternatives was more able to meet the psychological/social needs of students than the comprehensive high school. Maeroff's Don't Blame the Kids (1982) and Gold and Mann's Expelled to a Friendlier Place: A Study of Effective Alternative Schools (1986), were more examples of how changing the student-school match and providing a more caring and flexible climate contributed to the success of students underserved by the traditional school style.

Continuing Indiana's leadership and commitment to public schools were such work and educators as Vern Smith (1974), and Daniel Burke (1976), Robert Barr (1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, and 1981), Gregory Smith, Tom Gregory and Robert Pugh (1981), Tom Gregory (1987, 1993, and 2000), and Robert Barr and William Parrett (1995 and 1997). Barr's 1981 article, "Alternatives for the 80s: A second development," paved the way for research-based resistance to the focus by districts to use remedial transition programs as the only way to keep at-risk students engaged and enfranchised. Finally, Raywid's research (1981, 1982) at her Project on Alternatives in Education at Hofstra University, took advantage of the fertile grounds of the 1980s to research the value of reactive vs proactive alternatives.

### **The 1990s: The Continuing Evolution of Alternative Education**

During this decade, the dialogue about what alternative education was, what alternative schools should look like, and who should attend them was extended. Contrary to the appeal of educators critical of the conventional, public schools, the number of remedial programs increased.

The traditional schooling style is not only not meeting needs of our students, but is turning off a great majority of them.

One educator, Roland S. Barth, pinpoints the main reason quite accurately:

But the major factor in students' lives that leads to depression, dropping out, drugs, jail, and suicide appears to be the school experience: ability groups, grade retention, college pressures, working alone, denial of strengths and focus on weaknesses, learning that is information-rich and experience poor, and an irrelevant curriculum that students must endure and frequently ignore (De La Rosa, 1998 , p. 268).

Regardless, throughout the 90s, there was little change within public schools. Instead, the decade found a renewed growth and subsequent interest in alternatives that focused on the chronically disruptive, suspended, or for students that the schools said lacked effort or who needed a "change in attitude." This was a reaction to the increase in violence, drugs, gangs, and other issues associated with family, decreased urban school enrollment, and student drop out rates. These "get-back-on-track" programs attempted to take the disruptive or suspended and through various programs/techniques, enable the student to be reassimilated (Loflin, 1997).

As was the case in the 1980s, balancing the proliferation of remedial programs for the at-risk, were a number of publications and events that kept open the idea that educational alternatives were for all students not just reform school extensions of the status quo. AERO-GRAMME, "The newsletter of the Alternative Education Resource Organization" was published by Mintz (1989). Books and articles by education innovators such as Nathan (1989), Raywide (1990, 1994), Young (1990), Korn (1991), Hegener and Hegener (1992), Gregory (1993), Kelly (1993), Kellmayer (1995), Wang and Reynolds (1995) and Barr and Parrett's extensive and defining work that amassed the research, since 1970, on alternative schools (1995), all sustained the cogent argument of public alternative schools of choice.

Indiana reflected the politics of alternatives that was developing nationally. The Indianapolis Star reported that all four candidates in the 1996 race for governor favored creating alternative schools to house "especially disruptive" students (Buckman, 1996). Another article that year noted, "Members (of a legislative committee) wrestled with defining which students should be served (by alternative schools legislation). They agreed to focus on chronically disruptive students who aren't 'actively engaged in learning' or whose presence disrupts the learning of others" (Albert, 1996). In early 1997, \$10,000,000 was cut from Governor O'Bannon's proposal to fund alternatives. Although the definition of who could attend was expanded to these guidelines: Students would have to be failing academically, or at-risk of dropping out, frequently disruptive in class, employed or unable to pass the high school exit exam (Albert, 1997a), the alternatives continued to be limited in definition to "...schools for troubled youths..." (Senate education panel, 1997). Neighboring states like Kentucky passed legislation (Kentucky Board of Education, 1997) and Pennsylvania also defined alternatives in terms of discipline and behavior instead of learning (Houck, 1997). In general, all the Indiana districts seemed to be after alternative education funds (Albert, 1997b).

Perhaps it was no coincidence then that in 1997 both the Indianapolis Public Schools and the Indiana Department of Education created special divisions of alternative education and hired directors. That summer, IPS hosted its first annual Chartwell alternative conference. In the spring of 1998, IDOE ended its At-Risk Conference(s) and replaced this concern with a first annual alternative meeting.

In the spring of 1999, SKOLE (Leue, 1996), "The Journal of Alternative Education" became Paths of Learning: Options for Families and Communities (Prystowsky, 1999). In early 2000, two IPS employees founded the National Center for Alternative Education (Loflin and Ogle, 2000) in Indianapolis. In March, the first issue of the Alternative Network Journal (Culpepper, 2000) was published.

## **Alternative Education Since 1930: Conclusions and Questions**

It is interesting and provocative to consider the history of the alternative school movement for the last seventy years. The term itself was most often used to describe schools that were alternatives to the existing public schools. Be it through curriculum reforms or different infrastructures, alternative schools attempted to compensate for the political and academic limitations inherent in traditional public schools. Through the establishment of schools with missions that were intentionally created to begin to challenge the traditional notions of power, the early 20<sup>th</sup> century brought with it ideological departures from Horace Mann's view of the common school. In many cases, the impetus seemed to be the creation of a school which could 'serve as a site for the production of alternative and/or oppositional cultural practices.'

I relate this brief history primarily because the term alternative has re-emerged over the past 5-10 years. But in the late 1990s it does not carry nearly the romance of innovation it once did. In general, most students now attend alternative schools not because of the school's innovate, creative curricular approaches, but because they are no longer succeeding in the traditional school system, including magnets (Bauman, 1998, p. 258-9).

These remarks beg the question: How did the original concept, that was so idealistic, so "romantic," so child-centered, that stood for innovation and possibilities, and acted as a template for re-evaluating/challenging the traditional school system, get so twisted? Or how did a way of schooling that continues to be supported by the latest brain research -- Educational Leadership's "How Children Learn," (1997), Sternberg's "What does mean to be smart?" (1997b) and Williams' concept of equity in intelligence, "Democratizing our concept of human intelligence," (1998), become something the general public defines as a "place for bad kids?"

The next section will attempt to review the ideas of several educators and their explanations of how and why alternative education's original positive image became negative.

### **The Political Psychology of Alternatives: The Rationalizations of the Status Quo**

The more informative way to begin a review of the explanations of the reasons behind the negative image of alternative education is to become familiar with the ideas and assertions of alternative education advocate Mary Anne Raywid. Researching and writing since the early 1980s, Raywid (1994) proposed that alternatives be categorized into 3 kinds. Groves (1998) summarized them as;

#### Type I Popular Innovations

These programs of choice are based on the belief that if school is challenging and fulfilling for all students, educational outcomes can be met. These programs are alternative in pedagogy and the types of instructional innovations used, rather than in regard to the students served (p. 252). In other words, it's the school and the way they teach that's alternative, not the students (Raywid, 1994). Sometimes described as resembling magnets or other options, these schools have non-traditional administrative and organizational characteristics. They are open to all students and all learning styles (King et al., 1998). Many of the innovations developed in Type I concepts have been widely used as improvement measures for traditional schools (Raywid, 1994). Popular innovations grew out of the alternative schools movement of the 60s and were linked to free and experimental schools (Fizzell & Raywid, 1997).



The public counterpart of the private free schools, they were small and reflected the creative, more humane, challenging and compelling, flexible nature of the original alternative concepts collected and put forth at Indiana University's NCOPE conferences in the early 1970s. This concept stated clearly that alternative education's intent had nothing to do with at-risk students. It was concerned with learning, not behavior. Indiana examples of Type I programs are Learning Unlimited, Washington Township, Indianapolis; Aurora Alternative High School, Bloomington; Hamilton Alternative High School, South Bend.

### Type II Last Chance Programs

Also known as Second Chance Programs/"Reform" School Programs, in these schools, curriculum and instruction are not the issue (as in Type I), behavior is. This, behavior modification is used to "fix" the chronically disruptive students sent to these "soft-jail" reform schools (Groves, 1998; Raywid, 1994).

These are places where students are "sentenced" usually as a last chance before expulsion. The atmosphere of the program is typically oriented to maintaining discipline, order, and control (King, et al., 1998). Remember, a stay in one of these programs is seen as part of the penalty given to students who have failed to meet the codified norms of behavior and achievement of the school. The aim of these programs is to return students to the mainstream. Nontraditional methods of learning/teaching are not popular. In fact, some programs have the students do the work of the home school classes from which they have been removed. (Raywid, 1994). A local example of these programs is the juvenile court/public school's New Direction Academy in Indianapolis.

### Type III Remedial Focus

Also known as Transition Programs/Beef 'em up and send 'em back Schools (Fizzell & Raywid, 1997)/Get-back-on-track Programs, this "alternative" usually emphasizes academic and social rehabilitation. After successful "Treatment," the student is sent back (Groves, 1998).

Type III programs try to have "a nurturing community-like environment," to promote the social/emotional growth of the referrals (King, et al., 1998). In many ways, this kind of program was created to prevent dropping out by reacting to the needs of the at-risk. Supporters contend that the problems of individual students can be fixed/taken care of through, "...intense counseling, unusual support or remediation" (Fizzell & Raywid, 1997).

Raywid (1994) summarized her types by noting that individual programs can be a mix of the 3 kinds. Regardless, how students are affiliated--choice, sentence, or referral--reflects the underlying assumptions about students, learning, and education. Below these may be smoldering cultural/political/economic suppositions. The Type II/III programs attempt to fix the child due to their belief that the problems lie within the person. In contrast, Type I schools believe school failure/success can best be explained by the student-school match. Thus by changing a schools' climate, the student's response will change (Raywid, 1994).

## **Why does alternative education have a negative image: The ideas of Deirdre Kelly**

Kelly, in her definitive work, Last Chance High: How Girls and Boys Drop In and Out of Alternative Schools (1993), provides an in-depth understanding of this questions through her study of California's Continuation School alternative. Created in the early 1900s for students whose education had been interrupted due to dropping out or being pushed out, these programs were designed to provide part-time schooling and part-time on-site work experience for youth 14-18 who did not go on to high school or

college (Altenbaugh, 1999). Kelly points out, however, that the previous aim of continuation schools to counter increasing dropout rates and decreasing unskilled labor possibilities changed due to the following pre-WW II conditions:

- a. The 1930s Depression caused a decrease in employment.
- b. More students were remaining in high school
  1. Employers were demanding high school diplomas
  2. Compulsory school attendance laws were being enforced
- c. The concept of "maladjustment" explained the psychological deficiencies of youth.
  1. Thus began the emphasis on vocational guidance, not just job placement.
  2. Schools began expanding the curriculum and began tracking and ability grouping (Kelly, 1993).

After WW II, between 1945-65, the shift from vocational to "Life Adjustment/Guidance Education" models continued to be influenced by the idea that deviance/maladjustment was evidence of individual or family pathology. These guidance programs:

- sought to differentiate those who drop out of school to work and those who seem to have no interest in preparing for future employment and often become school rebels.
- were necessary for those youth whose problems were not primarily vocational.
- were for the 60% who did not plan to attend a vocational school.
- would work with those who did not conform enough or were below average academically (Kelly, 1993).

Now Continuation Schools were no longer a bridge between school and work, but treatment programs to redirect the problem cases of regular schools, who had dropped out and return them with a much better understanding of the "requirements of society." Now the students had counseling to overcome "disturbances" from within and mental hygiene especially for females who rejected middle class norms on sexuality. Now, dropping out to get a job was not the reason for the interruption of schooling, maladjustment—the lack of adjustment to school—was. Now, since the emphasis was on maladjustment, not school/work transitions, Continuation Schools became to be perceived as a dumping ground for retarded and disciplinary cases (Kelly, 1993). Thus the stigma was created.

In the late 1960s, due to the influence of the creation and promotion of educational alternatives, Continuation Schools became more like current discipline oriented Type II/III alternatives. This orientation was a response to continual public concern over dropout/pushout rates. It was also a way to legitimize traditional schools in as far as they could say they continued to meet the needs of all youth (even those no longer in the system) who were ill-served by this same system. Unfortunately, this was bad for everyone in the long run since:

- a. such programs may postpone more far reaching restructuring of the regular school since rebellious/failing students are successfully segregated and labeled deviant.
- b. yet, if successful and popular, the more parents and students will accept it, and thus it becomes a financial burden for the system.  
a threat to the mainstream monopoly.
- c. they may provide a safety value to keep the regular school pure, it is no guarantee the mostly "poorer" 2<sup>nd</sup> chance will be a better chance. (Kelly, 1993).

## **Continuation Schools and Alternative Schools**

We can see in the history of California's unique alternative a picture of what would happen with the alternative school movement in the 1980s. The history of Continuation Schools, like current alternative programs, was tarnished by its reputation as the "step-child" or wastebasket of the compulsory school system. Although its resources have increased, its history has been a continuing process of "catch-up" due to the fact that most alternatives remain subordinate to the conventional schools, dependent for its students on the "mainstream's evolving definition of failure." (Kelly, 1993)

This reputation catches many that are associated with second chance alternatives in the contradictions of attending a stigmatized organization. Students learn to fear continuation/transition schools because administrators, parents, and others portray them as places for "losers," "druggies," or "bad kids." Even though Type II/III options do meet some of the needs of the at-risk—ironically, these needs existed because of the relative inflexibility of the traditional system—once enrolled, embarrassment replaces fear and students are left alone to cope and maintain their self-respect. (Kelly, 1993)

In light of this contradiction, one might ask is the stigma necessary? Is it possible/is it better to create alternatives without negative overtones? Although Type I alternatives try to shed the stigma, many districts regard labeling alternative schools as a convenient way to maintain the "safety value" function of these options. By creating Type II/III alternatives, many districts can rid the home school of failures and misfits without holding the district itself, fully accountable. (Kelly, 1993).

This policy is pure political spin. Through sleight of hand, districts make the public think the school system is being responsible—it says it has alternatives for the disruptive; yet, where is the liability when the district says it is the student who needs repair? Maybe school administrators are fooling no one but themselves since this policy backfires.

Being sent to a discipline school can reinforce a student's "disengagement" from school altogether. By maintaining the reputation that alternatives are for bad or troubled kids only, schools can use them as a district-wide disciplinary threat in order to "marshal students into conformity." (Kelly, 1993)

Type I, schools of choice, act as a "safety net" for students since they are proactive programs that provide the school climate to keep them engaged by meeting the learning style, social and scheduling needs of those the conventional system can not or will not help. (Kelly, 1993) Type I programs are truly accountable because they readily share the blame for school failure and back their liability up by making the necessary schooling style/teaching style/learning style changes so that school works for kids. Type I school staff are not trying to get students back-on-track, they are offering a whole different track.

The majority of alternative schools have a negative image because of the "types" of students who attend them. However, Kelly asks the question, "Is who gets defined as deviant and for what reasons a matter of political and economic power?" In the social matrix that attempts to define deviant, do some groups have the advantage due to age, gender, ethnicity, class, or race? Kelly argues that schools actually create nonconformity by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and then applying the rules, labeling those students who break them as "outsiders." (p. 69) She proves her idea by pointing out the fact that most of the students who attend so-called alternatives have violated the White, middle class gender norms created according to the traditional school system's standards of behavior and social/academic success. (Kelly, 1993) It is no coincidence that in major urban districts, that Black youth are expelled more often and for longer than their white counterparts (Solida, 2000) and/or sent to alternatives.

To iterate, what is odd and truly unfortunate is that the continuous negative labeling of alternatives by districts, as disciplinary measures for bad kids (that manifests at the levels of the community, the school system, and the individual student at the alternative) is so grounded in the “routines of daily life,” that it actually interferes with the student’s attempts to stay engaged at the school and consequently questions the very claims of the school system’s rationale for the alternative. (Kelley, 1993)

Still, alternative education’s stained reputation continues. School districts maintain alternatives that relieve the regular school of students who defied academic/social norms. Although many try to help, these alternatives for the maladjusted or different are a “more refined type of differentiation.” Even the most reforming or restructuring ideas like flexible or shortened schedules, simplified curricula, customized learning, small classes and special counseling—thus making alternatives advertised as more caring and innovative than the regular school—are superficial, and largely a parody of the mainstream. Second chance/remediation alternatives create the “illusion of change.” They perpetuate the status quo since they fail to question the “deep structure of (mainstream) schools.” With Type II/III options, deeply held beliefs concerning what is knowledge and learning, what is the purpose of education, or what is the relationship between race, class, gender and the present traditional school system and success in life, go unchallenged (Kelly, 1993).

Oakes (1993) has these successive comments about Kelly's Last Chance High:

- The study joins a growing body of work showing that this schooling style (Type II/III) is at best a naïve and at worst a pernicious prescription and very likely to perpetuate social, political, and economic inequalities.
- Although created to uphold the traditional school system's standards and authority, it is ironic that last chance or second chance programs "expose the underbelly" of the system's public relations claim about American schools. The very existence of Type II/III "alternatives" shows that the system has failed in its promise to accommodate all students. This is why districts and school boards have to rationalize and define second chance alternatives as a "remedy for individual rather than institutional failings."
- Since both the school and the students are stigmatized, this exposes the true status/ranking nature of tracking, grouping, and labeling in the American schools and so belies their promise of an equal educational opportunity that would result "by providing fairly for the common good and for individual attainment" (p. xi-xiii).

### **Alternative schools negative image: The ideas of Mary Anne Raywid**

With close to twenty years of association with alternative education as an educator and researcher, the assertions of Raywid must be seriously considered.

As was mentioned in the history section, alternatives began in both the private and public sectors, although not at the same time. Freedom or "Saturday schools were set up in the south in the 60s to do several things including teaching Black history and educating citizens about registering and voting. Other "free school" (Kozol, 1972) programs were created throughout the country. Public alternatives were primarily in urban and suburban areas. The purpose of the urban alternatives was to make school work for the minority, the poor or alienated students. Chicago's Metro is an example (Barr & Parrett, 1995). The early suburban programs sought to create and develop new ways to educate students or structure schools. Learning Unlimited is an examples (Ellsbury, 1997).

Both movements have been a major part of the American school scene for over three decades. Both continue to thrive. Is this very success why alternative education/schools eventually acquired the "negative image" being discussed? Raywid (1998) says yes!

Part of the reason is that many of the early alternatives appeared so successful that alternative schools were adopted to serve all sorts of purposes, including the answer to juvenile crime and delinquency, a means of preventing school vandalism and violence, a means of dropout prevention, a means of desegregation, as well as a means of heightening school effectiveness (p. 12).

Eventually, it appears that this widening of alternatives to the status quo on to include alternatives of the status quo was based on assumptions or goals (of what was trying to be changed/influenced) that differed from those that characterized the original intent of alternative education.

### **Broken kid vs broken system**

Due to the misapplication of the concept of alternative education, compared to the initial intent of educators, the public thinks the point of alternatives is to change the student and their performance. As a result of the efforts to change the student, most alternatives are temporary assignments. In some cases, the programs are not successful with getting students "back-on-track." And without a choice, the student may be permanently placed at the alternative. This can be a problem since most transition programs are small and not designed to serve what would be a growing student body (Raywid, 1998).

Consequently, this creates problems for this type of program. Gold and Mann (1984) concluded that the behavior of those sent to transition alternatives improves--and so does the attendance and academic performance. Their research attributes this change to a more supportive and flexible climate. Yet, the success may be temporary. Studies in the Austin, Texas, schools (Frazer & Baenen, 1988) and by McCann & Landi (1986) reveal that students return to their previous disruptive behavior, truancy status, and poor academic effort after being sent back to their home school. To explain this, educators who create alternatives to remediate conclude that the program failed to "fix" the student. Raywid (1994) notes that unfortunately, it is rare that educators would conclude that the small school's flexible and more caring climate was the factor that enabled students to be successful at the alternative.

This is quite predictable. If the district agreed that a smaller, more personable climate at large high schools was part of the problem. However, districts can not say this because they would have to admit that the traditional system does not work for everyone. Such a confession, districts might say, would undermine their authority and authenticity as an institution. Yet, without such a statement of true accountability, nothing changes and this is not what is best for children and youth.

This implies that some students act up so they can return to the alternative school. In fact, I have heard of many instances where students liked the alternative. In one particular account from Dr. Sharon Wilkins (1996), principal of 2 IPS "alternatives," she said students have acted up before they were to return to their home school. The "reward" for students who act decently, come to school daily and on time, do their work, respect themselves and their teachers, is to be returned to the place that was a part of the problem in the first place.

Thus, many outsiders are surprised, despite the low status of alternatives, when students prefer them to the mainstream school and seek to remain (Kelly, 1993). This creates a dilemma for many districts: Last/Second Chance alternatives can not be too good or the students will want to stay. Districts can not make these programs too attractive, can not make students like this schooling style too much or they will

want to stay! This, of course, makes Type II/III program staff spend some of their time making sure the air is somewhat harsh or students will really enjoy school. Interesting. The question now is: Why do not districts create proactive Type I, small innovative schools of choice open to all students, thus eliminating the need for the punishment/discipline schools...and their harmful stigma?

Contrast the treatment or discipline alternatives that attempt to continue to make all students fit the one size offered by the traditional system to the proactive, one-size-fits-none original alternative intent to change the school/system, not the student. Fizzell & Raywid (1997) assert:

The Innovative School focuses on providing options that are appealing and well suited to individual students. This type (I) of program assumes that kids want to come to school and learn, and that they simply need the best environment for doing so (P.8).

Regardless, the number of Last Chance/transition schools has grown in the last few years. The increase in public/media perceptions of school violence and the pressure on districts from parents, teachers, and students to remove the "chronically disruptive" have caused instruction policy makers to create state laws that mandate discipline school-type alternatives. On paper, this would allow the home school teachers to conduct class "without distraction upon academic performance" while troublemakers "would receive the structure and discipline required for eventual re-entry." This sounds so generic and bland.

What the real issue is and what is still in doubt is, do Last/Second Chance/remedial programs (alternatives of the conventional system) do what they were created ultimately to do: lower dropout, suspension, and expulsion rates? The theory goes: create discipline schools that will provide behavioral rehabilitation (while reaching academic objectives) and by being such a punitive environment, the programs will be such a disciplinary threat, that students will re-think/change their behavior or lack of effort due to the fear of being sent to the alternative. No research is available to support the theory that Type II/III alternatives have directly lowered a district's rates of this sort.

What is not in doubt is that students in these programs are disproportionately lower income and minority students. Although politically popular (Albert, 1996) and thus used by candidates like Sue Anne Gilroy (Schneider, 1999) and the present Governor's television ads for more "discipline schools" for disruptive students--if he is elected; the questions about their effectiveness and equity remain (King et al., 1998).

Barr and Parrett (1995) conclude:

Last Chance programs by their very design and intent to provide a quick fix and rapid transition back into the traditional classroom can not work (p. 57).

Perhaps Type II/III alternative schools that : (1) are not a freely chosen option to the mainstream, (2) are not based on the tradition of the Romantics of the 1700s nor the innovate reformers of the 1960s who assumed the problem is in the school climate, not in the child, (3) whose effectiveness and design are in doubt since they (a) are not viable in the sort-term, (b) are designed not to work (too well) or students will like them, are not really alternative at all. Kellmayer (1998) agrees:

Despite the thousands of alternative programs throughout the United States, a significant percentage of 'alternative' schools are alternative in name only. These pseudo-alternatives represent ineffective and often punitive approaches that isolate and segregate from the mainstream students who can be difficult (p. 29).

Moreover, compared to books and research on Type I schools and ideas, very little support and research can be found in publications for Type II/III programs. Articles by Glass (1995), Harrington-Lueker (1995), and Henley, Fuston, Peters and Wail (2000) stand out.

To conclude this section on the ideas of Raywid concerning the cause of alternative education's negative image, two questions need to be asked: (1) Why do school districts maintain potentially ineffective Type II/III alternatives? (2) Why do Type I/Popular Innovations "lack institutional legitimacy" despite the research that shows these schools, in comparative studies, are much better for particular students and teachers than conventional programs?

Raywid (1994) offers two conflicting answers:

a. The Image Problem

1. The flexibility or adaptability of alternative education have helped alternative schools last, but this has also brought confusion (Arnove & Stout, 1978; Broad, 1977) about what alternative education is. This has left alternatives rather marginal or fringe rather than being fully accepted.
2. The discrediting "school for losers" status has given alternative education a chronic public relations problem.

b. The Success Problem

Will alternatives schools/education gain mainstream acceptance their success warrants? The accomplishments of Popular Innovations alternatives inherently raise important questions about how traditional public schools organize and coordinate education. Raywid puts it honestly:

"They (Type I concepts) call for diversity in preference to common standards and uniformity," (p. 31).

Challenging the status quo's ideas about administration, control, and arrangement by posing a organizational alternative to their bureaucracy, can be threatening.

If Type I alternative schools can serve as models for any school that seeks innovative change, perhaps the public school system can fulfill its promise to successfully educate all its citizens.

### **Special issues in alternative education: The ideas of Bill Johnston and Karen Wetherill**

Johnston and Wetherill (1998) educators with the University of North Carolina view the negative image being investigated here through the four observed characteristics of traditional school:

1. The vehicle for teaching and learning is the total group in a classroom.
2. The teacher is the strategic pivotal figure in the group.
3. The classroom norms governing the group are mainly based upon what maintains this strategic role.
4. The emotional tone is "emotionally flat" or bland.

If a student does not fit well in this basic mold, the main response of the system is, "What's wrong with this student?" This may be followed by attempts to induce conformity through rules and then threat or coercion.

Within this framework, 'alternative school' becomes little more than a euphemism to describe places of detention for the maladaptive and seditious (p. 177).

From this viewpoint, these authors agree with Raywid (1998)--alternatives have become ways to maintain the status quo, keeping the current system intact by simply removing those the school is failing and with Kelly (1993) who sees current alternatives as a safety valve for the adults in the conventional schools, not as safety net for students. Despite all the reasonable arguments of accountability, standards, and excellence, it is apparent that the order and control which dominate the aura and design of conventional school, now dominates many alternatives (p. 178). The public schools must maintain student compliance and they have created alternative schools to be the "soft-jails" (Raywid, 1994) to house and punish the student offenders. The conventional school's alternatives were created to support its authority.

So here is the dilemma: How can the regular school system maintain or balance student compliance with the demands of an insipid institution which few people enthusiastically support, which is charged with the task of socializing, enculturating and training the young to participate in a future which is difficult to imagine, while simultaneously raising academic standards, reducing the demand for additional resources, and avoiding any changes that might generate a political challenge from the left or right (Johnston & Wetherill, 1998, p. 178).

Johnston and Wetherill conclude their essay by giving several reasons why school districts do not desire to create Type I alternatives and thus maintain the negative image of alternatives:

- Apprehension arising during the age of conservative restoration of the 1980s (Shor, 1986).
- Apprehension of being viewed as a soft-hearted liberal which then prevents a more vigorous and sustained pursuit for academic alternatives.
- The general mistrust of the unleashed passion and energy of youth, plus the pull of nostalgia to preserve the institution of one's youth, which again forestalls change.
- The heartfelt belief that only by pummeling students and teachers with the barons of accountability and standards of the traditional cannon may students be guided along the path to excellence (P. 178).

Simply put, Johnston and Wetherill believe that the conventional school systems sees alternative education as competition and they won't be a rival as long as they carry the "scarlet letter" of stigmatization.

### **Educational alternatives not alternative education: The ideas of Don Glines**

Dr. Glines is one of alternative education's founders. His many years of experience in this area give him a particular depth of insight into the negative image issue. He was first "sold" on the idea of alternatives in the late 50s after reviewing the conclusive Eight Year Study and through observing educators implementing nongraded schools. In 1968, he directed the "transformation" of the Wilson School (at Mankato State University, MN) from a traditional college laboratory to an alternative program recognized at the time as the most experimental public school of choice in America.

Glines begins the explanation of his ideas about alternative's image by summarizing that the current popular concept of alternative--with emphasis on students labeled "at-risk"--has little chance of success. His point is that unless school systems make alternatives available for all youth, regardless of their background, and not out of political expediency, limiting alternatives to only "bad kids," will not be a comprehensive solution. He reflects on the stigmatization effects of the current distinction between the regular program and the alternative program for the at-risk and other "non-conforming" youth by



quoting educator Herbert Khol, "...Khol expresses the (same) concern (about the ill repute of alternatives) when he stated, "I don't use the term alternative education. I talk about decent education. People who call themselves 'alternative' are putting themselves on the margin" (Glines, 1992, p. 1).

What Glines (1992) calls "...our efforts as 'innovators' of the late 50s/early 60s to 'sell everyone' on a conversion to the then 'new education'..." (p. 1), was part of the beginnings of the alternative educator movement. Going by the motto--If schools are to be significantly better, they must be significantly different--Glines's "new education" consisted of such "changes" as the elimination of A B C report cards, personalized curriculum/individualized instruction, open-pod facilities, carpeting, team teaching, flexible scheduling, and no grade levels. Lloyd Trump's book, A School for Everyone, also reflected these suggestions.

Education leaders, during the late 1960s, began to promote methods of implanting alternatives to address the reality that less than 5% of the schools in the nation had actually changed to the "new education" concept. Originally intended to involve options for everyone within the public schools, choices from liberal to conservative began to develop (Glines, 1992). Glines phrases it this way as he attempts to explain the new system of multiple options:

The important historical pattern to be highlighted was the notion of alternatives--the plural. Every program was a regular program for the student who selected it; every choice was an alternative. There was to be no regular education and no alternative education. There was no intent for remedial/at-risk, teenage pregnant minor, gifted, and dropout prevention labels. There were only Wong, and Clarissa. The concept was that of educational alternatives for all; the offerings were not to be restricted to small non-comprehensive programs for students unhappy with the traditional norms.

Parents, students, and teachers could select any one of the (alternatives) --whichever fit their learning philosophy and lifestyle--and they could transfer if they decided it was the wrong choice. All were equally praised, equally supported. ALL WERE REGULAR PROGRAMS: ALL WERE ALTERNATIVES.

Individual schools could develop their own pattern of what they perceived as best fitting into one of the models. The same was true for all...variations. The key, though, was that there was no alternative education. The philosophy was alternatives for everyone, for all were regular programs (p. 3).

### **What went wrong: The spoiling of alternative education's image**

Glines (1992) laments that "...such a beautiful environment was not accepted by the traditionalists..." (p. 3). He blames this ignoring or rejection of the "new education" on the politics of the 1980s.

Indeed, the public school system and particularly their high schools were the focus of critiques by a wide variety of writers in the early 1980s. Moore's Voices from the Classroom (1982), Boyer's High School (1983), Goodlad's A Place Called School (1984) and The Shopping Mall High School, (Powell, 1985), all pointed to the failure of the comprehensive high school to meet the needs and interests of a continuously varied student body.

Reporting that: (1) students were dissatisfied with teachers and classroom interactions, (2) students described school as boring and unpleasant, (3) the sameness and narrowness in classroom instruction

resulted in student passiveness and nonengagement, (4) while the high school did serve the top 25%, the rest were treated as "unspecial"--these books substantiated what many citizens suspected (Young, 1990).

Yet, no publication was as influential as A Nation At-risk (1983). Representing "conservative criticism directed toward public education," the federal government report expressed alarm that America would not remain competitive with other countries unless the schools imparted the basic education standards necessary to develop sufficient academic talent. The reaction of school systems was to "get tough." To make America more competitive, academic standards were raised, graduation requirements were increased, and a back-to-basics curriculum was implemented (Young, 1990).

The political swing in the country to 'back to the good old days' with the election of educationally conservative politicians and state commissioners all contributed to a return to uniformity. Alternatives were being eliminated. Many people saw them as a reflection of the 60s, the 'hippies,' and the free school movement. They saw them as an acceptance of Summerhill (student governed resident learning) as a model.

To survive, to keep the concept alive, and to function as they felt they could best contribute to facilitating learning for their students, teachers who believed so, resorted to whatever they could bargain (Glines, 1992, P. 3-4)

Since there was no time for experimenting and since alternative schools were generally non-competitive, "survival" for alternative education came to mean working with those who, having academic difficulties before the reforms were in place, were not motivated by the get-tough prescription of more of the same only harder (Young, 1990).

Continuation schools in California expanded, for they housed 'non-regular' students--those not making it in the conventional setting. Ironically, the criterion for admittance to 'continuation'--which have been some of the best schools in the state--was to be 'bad.' To further survive, the movement accepted 'fundamental schools'--though they originally were primarily designed for semi-affluent students to succeed in the 'core curriculum' to enter the elite universities. The latest attempt became 'charter schools.'

The greatest deviation, though, that led to 'alternative education,' rather than the plural 'educational alternatives,' came through accepting the concept of 'at-risk' students. To the great credit of those in alternatives, they saw a clear picture. Here were 30% of the students receiving Ds and Fs; many were dropping out. To meet their needs, to develop student-centered learning, these teachers and innovators established multiple varieties of programs to provide for the 'out-of-sync' youth. Unfortunately, such approaches led to the notion that alternative education was for students who did not function properly in conventional classrooms, thus regular and alternative education was for students who did not function properly in conventional classrooms; thus regular and alternative became, to the public, the 'good' and the 'bad' -- or the conforming and the non-conforming. They could not understand student-centered social justice approaches to eliminate the inequalities of the content, teacher-centered, uniform world of the conventional -- geared towards the historical past; middle and upper class white communities; and the SAT successes in many rural states, as in the Dakotas, Iowa, and Minnesota (Glines, 1992, p. 4).

The situations involving alternative education became so confused, so twisted around at that point, that if you were a "good" student, you had no choices. Nevertheless, no one seemed to care. With Type II/III

"alternatives" prevailing for the suspended, expelled, or those who dropped out, parents had a babysitter, the police had youth off the street, and principals had no "troublemakers" in school.

Consequently, alternatives lost their "comprehensiveness" - the view of the whole. Glines's vision of the whole was a K-12 school, with 500-600 students --an alternative school that was comprehensive, like today's schools. His "comprehensive alternative" would maintain competitive sports teams: cheerleading squads; regular and advanced courses; a preschool; shop, art, home economics for all; band and drama; and clubs during and after school. There would be no graduation requirements, no report cards, no schedules, no bells, or any state test requirements. Students would progress at their own rate; all would be personalized and individualized (Glines, 1992).

Glines understands why alternative education acquired its low status; he was there. His vision is rooted deep in the legacy of philosophers and innovators of the past and their view of reality, human nature, and the meaning of life. His ideas will be a major contribution to the eventual removal of present stigma.

### **Meeting the needs of at-risk students is not enough: The research of Paula Groves**

Groves (1998) reports on the Day and Night School, a Last Chance "alternative" in southeastern North Carolina. With a non-traditional schedule, small classes, and student-centered instruction in a caring environment, the staff implements their philosophy and mission of "meeting student's daily needs." The main reason students are referred to the Day/Night School is sporadic attendance at the home school. However, Day/Night's school climate, classroom environment, and mentoring satisfy the students' sense of belonging, friendship, and self-actualization. Students come to Day/Night; they like the school. They are doing their work and going on to graduate.

Most students feel successful in the alternative environment, and although the school is intended as a transitional school, most do not wish to return to the regular day school setting (Groves, 1998, p. 256).

What better compliment for options than the desire of the students to stay. And Groves points out Kellmayer's research (1995) underlines the fact that it is not unusual for students to prefer the alternative over the regular program. Students feel they are receiving a better education in the non-traditional setting.

Even so, Day/Night School's guidance counselor reports that the school continues to struggle with community perception of the program and students--the students are stigmatized and the school is seen as a "dumping grounds for the problem kids." In addition, although Day/Night reflects the most positive aspects of effective alternative schools in (1) meeting student's social/emotional needs (Smith, Gregory & Pugh, 1981), (2) the respect students have for their teachers' flexibility and efforts (Gold & Mann, 1982), and (3) the school and security staff's reports showing fewer discipline problems and less violence (Barr & Parrett, 1995; Epstein, 1998) in proportion to the other high schools, the school's director adds, "We are trying to rid ourselves of the image of being the "redheaded stepchild"" (Groves, 1998).

The school's negative image makes the staff oversensitive. They feel the school's physical condition is a factor. Built in the 1930s, it is, in fact, old and dilapidated. By improving the "physical plant" of the school they reason, the image will be enhanced. The guidance counselor sees things differently. The poor image and stereotype of the students is due, "...to the lack of communication between the regular

home school and the alternative school. The county's high schools know little or nothing about the Day and Night School, and they make little effort to learn about the program."

Groves agrees with Kelly's (1993) conclusions about the inability of even effective alternatives to overcome the negative labeling:

Many alternative schools experience this same stigmatization, as the few community members who do interact with the school, such as the county sheriff, social workers, probation officers, and judges, often unwittingly reinforce and spread the school's stigma (Groves, 1998, p. 256).

Obviously, the location and appearance of a public school facility is important. Yet, the issue here seems to be "improving communication and relations with the home school or parents," and all those few professionals who interact with the school. Good "public relations" or techniques that can erase any "unwitting" reinforcement of the stigma, appear to be just as important to certain "alternatives" as any other part of their budget or program.

Regardless of some district's active or passive reinforcement of alternative education's low status so that the programs can be used as district-wide disciplinary threat (Kelly, 1993), Groves's conclusions far outweigh the usefulness of such a policy and her advice reflects the intent of this paper:

If alternative schools like the Day and Night School, can overcome the negative image communities often hold while continuing to improve pedagogy and the use of instructional innovations to reach the at-risk populations, they prove to be valuable assets for students and society as a whole (Groves, 1998, p. 257).

### **Are Type II/III alternatives actually wolves in sheep's clothing?: The accusations of Richard Sagor**

Sagor (1997) has a unique answer to why alternative education continues to get a bad rap from educators and the public. He asserts that the fault is surely not with the well-meaning individual alternative education teachers and administrators; rather, it lies within the system in which they are caught and the education policies which perpetuate those systems.

Sagor relates a story of a district superintendent's boasting concerning the system's exemplary alternative program. After listening to the administrator's praising of the program curriculum, the staff and their innovative teaching methods, a prospective visitor was excited to see the school the superintendent's children attended. Confused, the superintendent remarked that the alternative was for the at-risk students. This story begs the question: If the alternative was really that outstanding, why would not the superintendent send his children there? Unfortunately, the superintendent was being patronizing. Sagor concludes:

(The) story paints a human face on a phenomenon that Slater first labeled 'the toilet assumption' (1980). The 'toilet assumption' asserts that when society is faced with an annoying and difficult social problem, often the expedient policy of choice is to flush the problem 'out of sight,' and consequently 'out of mind' (Sagor, 1997, p. 19).

Traditional educators/administrators are not callous or uncaring, Sagor says. The issue is that since the late 1960s, educators have been faced with an ever increasing number of disheartened, disaffected, and

disenfranchised students. Facing this increasing amount of youth failing to thrive in school, the adults have taken two stances:

1. View the failure to thrive as evidence of a systematic problem and to go about fixing the system.
2. View the failure to thrive as a clinical disorder residing in the student and to send the defective student away for treatment.

Sagor wonders why so many districts choose the second stance.

Other professional areas have an instinctive reaction to problems--corporations identify the cause and apply preventive measures. Prevention through proactive ideas and measures is seen as preferable to reactive measures. This is what keeps big business out of the red. Why do not (K-12) educators think this way? Sagor iterates, it is not intentional irresponsibility that is at work. At most, it is politically easier to "stay the course" and continue to offer "traditional" secondary schools into more hospitable, inclusive, and proactive organizations (Sagor, 1997).

### **Consequence of a policy**

Does "political expediency" make some educators reluctant to alter tradition even in the face of increased failure? So what if districts set up alternatives? They must work--straighten up students and keep them engaged--if these programs are, in fact, as wonderful as their administrators say they are. After all, these are well educated, well paid professionals we are discussing.

In 1954, the Supreme Court concluded that segregated education is always inferior education. If this is the case, then it would follow that it would be "unequal" when and if it were based on a student's at-risk status. So, why is there a difference in policy/treatment for the at-risk? The at-risk are vulnerable in two ways: (1) they are disadvantaged by their educational status, (2) they are disadvantaged by the political powerlessness of their families. Thus, the at-risk student comes from a community that does not see itself as a community and this results in the community not having a voice that politicians have to listen to (Sagor, 1997).

One of the most "insidious" aspects of segregation, is that it can isolate the affected youth from exposure to other possibilities. Sagor found evidence that remedial or special alternatives lacked even normal rates of credit attainment and academic growth despite the research that noted how well students thought of the programs. Kelly (1993) noted that Second Chance often meant second best. This is odd, Sagor deduces, in light at all the noise about accountability in terms of student performance criteria. He states that districts and alternative program administrators rarely evaluate the productivity of their schools. They seem instead to be more concerned about how students/families "feel" about the school and often brag about the program's waiting list. While alternatives do provide a safe haven from the many stresses of the mainstream, it is done at a cost. Students who liked (Type II/III) alternatives said, however, that they would not recommend it to an otherwise traditionally successful student. This was due to their being "put down" for their attendance at the alternative (Sagor, 1997).

### **"Spoiled image" problems**

If admission to a program is based on a handicap, the program becomes to be seen as the "handicap" program. If admission is based on aptitude, it is called the "gifted" program. Thus, if a program is designed for those "who don't fit in," it is seen as a special program for "those kids." It does not take a

college degree to see that school programs place an "identity" on their participants. When the label is negative, the program is seen "as carrying and spreading a 'spoiled image.'" (Sagor, 1997).

### **Learning from those who have failed: The conclusions of Amy Bauman**

Bauman (1998) was part of a group of researchers studying alternatives by asking the question, "Are alternatives effective ways of meeting the needs of children who cannot function in the traditional school? One of the programs studied was the Jackson School, a 5-year-old program located in and around "a moderate-sized southern city" and serving suspended 6-8<sup>th</sup> graders. The program is located on 3 sites, each housing a single grade. This "transition" alternative emphasizes academics, although mainly it wants students to (1) see how their behavior disrupts the classroom and the school, (2) see how their behavior antagonizes the authority figures, (3) realize how power dynamics work in authoritative relationships. The staff feels this is important since due to the balance of power, students will end up in trouble. The goal is to help students to develop and internalize a series of "coping skills" that will enable them to better deal with power/authority and thus avoid getting into similar (like the ones that got them sent to Jackson) crisis situations.

This Last Chance before expulsion program, Jackson's mission statement say that:

When a student's behavior in the (home) school disrupts the learning process or poses a serious threat to the well-being of others, that student will be offered an alternative. The alternative will provide an atmosphere conducive to learning and improving behavior...Students will remain...until they demonstrate their ability to abide by the rules (Bauman, 1998, p. 260-1).

The program's director gives an interpretation:

To provide a continuation of education for kids who get put out of school. We are not a long term treatment facility. Our goal is behavior modification and return to the home school. Kids don't come here because of academics. They're here because of some behavior problem. The home school either can't or won't deal with them (p. 261).

The school's philosophy is to provide "consistency, attention, and care." Believing that discipline is the most effective way to "achieve behavioral change," the staff, "...focus, almost exclusively, on individual accomplishments rather than on the large scale curriculum design, describing the work they do as relying heavily on patience and the ability to see the goodness in a child when no one else has been able to" (p. 265). This has brought some complaints about the curriculum's "lack of fine arts or alternative methods of self-expression beyond the traditional academic realism..." yet, due to the orientation of the school, "...the curricula is uninspired because there is not a lot of time or energy to make it innovative."

### **Bauman's concluding thoughts**

Bauman (1998) makes some very important and insightful conclusions about current Type II/III programs that must be presented in her own writings from the High School Journal article. Bauman (1998) states:

As suggested by Bowers (1987) 'successful socialization leaves the child with the increased capacity to perform behaviorally in a manner congruent with the expectations of others.' Particularly in places like Jackson school, an alternative focused on issues of discipline and behavior modification, the

students' failures in their home schools are attributed to based systems of exclusion through which most of these children must traverse (p. 259).

Although alternatives like Jackson attempt to compensate for the political and academic limitations inherent in traditional public schools, in light of the above statement, the school's Mission Statement and its official sound "sanitizes" the social, cultural, and economic struggles that have brought many students to the alternative program (Bauman, 1998).

The danger of any case study of alternatives like the Jackson school is that it fosters a belief that it is the children who must be fixed while the education system remains essentially intact.

Jackson does not see its students as living in a social vacuum. (Due to the director's interpretation on the Mission Statement)... Instead they readily acknowledge that the school is part of a greater socio-economic system which hinders the success of certain groups. Thus the school realizes that part of their job must be to help their children learn to negotiate a world of complex power dynamics. Unfortunately, many large public schools avoid the politics of poverty, race, and power, forcing their young to find their own answers to many enormous social questions. And sometimes they get in trouble for the answers they find. One can hope that the home school will look to the Alternative schools for guidance, rather than denying the wisdom they have acquired about groups of children who seem so 'unreachable' (p. 267).

In considering the following case study, it is important to examine, within a greater social context, the function of alternative schools in the 'unequal social formation' of a large section of society. Instead of directly challenging traditional structures of the public schools, the existence of alternative schools allows legislators, policy makers and many educators to avoid the necessity of making any major reforms to the institution of schooling. The result is that policy makers are able to attribute academic failure to characteristics of the students (e.g., at-risk student's maladaptive behavior) and foster sympathy for the home school's decision to remove these disruptive voices (p. 259).

Bauman's insights expose the perhaps hidden motives behind the creation of many alternatives and thus call on districts to show true responsibility by sharing the blame for school failure.

### **Does this mean all alternatives are bad?**

To some, this is a good question, to others it is another way of saying that the negative image will never be removed. What makes this question so complex is that increasing dropout, academic failure, and suspension/expulsion rates indicate that the mainstream schooling style is ineffective for many students. Offering a diverse menu of proactive viable schooling learning options in each school system will go a long way towards insuring that every young citizen receives a free and appropriate education (Sagor, 1997).

### **How Can We Avoid the Negative Image?**

A review of the various ideas about the causes of alternative education's past and present negative image centers around the concept of public relations. If the public had been kept constantly informed about how well alternative education/schools were for many children, perhaps public alternative schools would be a part of the status quo--just another particular choice for another particular family or student. There would be no stigmas because there would be no differences. Alternative would mean a variety of

different and equal paths to the same goal: learning, education, graduation, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Simple enough. Unfortunately, this is not the case.

Then how can we avoid the negative image? Citizens, educators, and especially politicians at the local, city, and particularly the state level must be informed about the history and development of alternative education. This suggestion puts direct pressure on those administrators at the state alternative education and learning options warranted stain of ill repute placed on alternative educators, schools, and students as a result of causes ranging from naivete, to being misinformed to policies of political expediency. As was shown in this work, stigmatization is bad for everyone concerned.

What would a public relations campaign look like? This is a good question. What is certain, is that all citizens must be exposed to all the various Types (I/II/III) of alternatives and most importantly, the advantages and disadvantages of each.

### **Putting the horse back in front of the cart**

A more and thus better informed public would come to see alternative education as it should be viewed--an alternative to, a different way of doing education compared to the standard for anyone who would choose it. This year's state alternative education conference was absolutely fabulous; yet, nothing was in the public newspapers--no lengthy article leading up to, or during or after this national-class event. Why? Indeed, a great public relations opportunity was missed principally with respect to the forum.

### **Looking forward: The Indiana connection, the ISTA connection,...**

Connecting the viability of educational alternatives--public schools of choice to Indiana history is a obvious public relations windfall. News shows, articles, a documentary about alternative education and Indiana University could be released. Moving alternatives from just a placement/referral program to schools of choice for all students--illustrating how effective many alternative schools can be along side the traditional system and how an expanded choice program can help neutralize the attractiveness of vouchers (families with vouchers do not send their children to large schools, but to small ones)--can be a useful way to convince teachers and their unions that small alternative public schools should/can be among the first schooling choices families can have. Just as pertinent here is that in some instances, teachers, if they had a choice, would prefer a smaller, more flexible, more innovative, more personable alternative setting.

### **Why alternative schools work and "Why don't they understand?"**

A good public relations campaign must inform the public as to why alternative schools work and give examples of those that do. Johnston and Wetherill (1998) put forth the idea that the most important characteristic that makes alternatives work is the student/teacher relationship(s). When teachers are genuinely understanding and adaptive to the individual needs of the students, the pupils gain a sense of independence, responsibility, and self-esteem because they see the teacher's flexibility and interest in the them as persons as indicative of personal respect. This climate of concern and regard is what creates family, a sense of community at the school which leads to a commitment to learning.

According to Johnston and Wetherill (1998), this personalized climate is very important to students who have a "marginal status position in society and bordering on feelings of alienation and estrangement." They conclude:



Many of these students recognize the importance of learning, but are unwilling to assume a submissive posture in educational institution which routinely denies them a sense of autonomy and self-worth. The same students frequently thrive when they are provided a school alternative which grants them personal respect, responsibility, and support. Most of us would want the same for ourselves or our children (p. 182).

Reflecting research done on Minnesota's Area Learning Centers Lange (1998) reported that students who meet the state's criteria for at-risk status may attend. Schools of choice, the ALCs serve youth through flexible innovative programming that allows students to finish their high school courses at their own pace. Lange emphasizes the power of alternatives that are continuous--allow pupils to stay as opposed to those that transition students to the home school--by noting, "Innovation and acceleration appear more compelling themes in these Minnesota schools than remediation." She emphasizes the power that choice has to play in the eventual success of those students who are our most disenfranchised from the traditional system. She also stresses the ALC teachers who in general believe that small alternatives are not close to meeting their concept of the ideal educational environment, but are much closer to reaching this ideal than the conventional high school. Finally, the study of Minnesota's state-wide alternative program's success and subsequent popularity asks this public relations oriented question:

"Can alternative schools be more than a holding tank for students, but an actual first choice for those students who do not desire the conventional high school?" (p. 184).

The Exploration Alternative High School is located in a small western North Carolina town. The program serves 15-20 at-risk students "who are in academic or other difficulties in the regular high school due to abandonment, neglect, drug abuse, violent acting out, absenteeism, or learning disability." Although students are there by choice, the present goal of the school is getting the students back into the home school community. Using a philosophy of low tolerance, high expectations, the program staff creates a community spirit to facilitate social skills and help students succeed academically. The school uses informal, group-based learning, a constructivist approach coupled with individualized instruction based on multiple learning styles concepts. The school goes on field trips 1-2 days per week. This hands-on learning is balanced with work on computers and worksheets. The student's efforts are collected for their portfolios. The small size allows the class to participate in curricular decisions. This creates a sense of "autonomy and investment in their learning," the results of the program's shared decision making policy (Rayle, 1998).

Exploration's many field trips are a controversial policy. Some in the town's community feel that the 1-2 exploratory excursions per week is rewarding bad behavior--the alternative should have a punitive orientation. Besides, the kids at the regular high school do not go on 1-2 or more field trips per week! Rayle sees this important quandary of single alternative schools differently. Her public relations sound bite illustrates how to make the public see that many alternative ideas are very useful and could be incorporated into the traditional system:

Among the strengths of the Exploration program is the recognition by administrators, teachers, and counselors that not all students learn best in structured, blackboard classrooms (Rayle, 1998, P. 250).

In 1992 in El Paso, Texas, an alternative program, the New Directions Academy was created. Extremely popular since, under a special waiver from the state, it allows students a flexible choice of attending school a minimum of 2 hours per day, the program serves the city's 17-21 year old students. The philosophy of the program is to put students first and the academics will follow. Treating students like

mature young adults, the students are asked to take responsibility for their education. By choosing New Directions, by being assertive and taking control of their schools, "students no longer blame the school system for their lack of achievement." A nurturing climate and individualized attention provide for the at-risk, the spirit of community necessary for the sense of belonging many need to feel secure enough to reengage in the learning process (De La Rosa, 1998).

Although the 2 hour minimum is standard practice, many students attend 4 or more hours to accelerate their progress. Otherwise, the standard must be supplemented by 2-3 hours daily at school or home (De La Rosa, 1998).

We can see here, quite clearly, how alternatives can offer a completely different kind of school experience that can be oriented to particular groups, as did New Directions. Choice, flexible scheduling, learning styles (computer-based learning, individual or small groups, self-paced independent studies, and vocational components), caring teachers (who are also there by choice), small size--all complemented by a sense of autonomy, self-control, and responsibility students have for their education: "...it is no wonder that students and their parents search for alternatives to traditional education." De La Rosa (1998) writes:

Educators, politicians, school board members, parents, and the (El Paso) community now seem to recognize and value the importance of creating non-traditional options to help meet the needs of all students. As evidenced by programs like New Directions, alternative education works and traditional schools can only benefit from using the non-traditional methods employed by these programs (p. 272).

Finally, researcher De La Rosa puts it this way--in an incredibly useful public relations statement, "In many ways, New Directions offers the type of educational experience we might desire for all students."

### **From a Type II to a Type I alternative: Lakeside, A School of Choice. Our Choice**

The story of Lakeside is the real story of alternative education and the problem removing the negative image alternatives have. It is the real story because now everyone in the community can see the difference between a discipline oriented alternative and an academic alternative. They can see how and why the change took place and the effects on the students both before and after the move. This is the kind of story state alternative education divisions must get out to the public so that finally they understand, they finally get it: alternative education is not about how to behave, it's about learning. There is no better story than Lakeside and the dawning of the realization that it is the school and the way they teach that's alternative, not the students.

Originally developed as a Last Chance program located in a southeastern North Carolina district, this school's goals were to provide academic instruction in the basics, vocational training, and in light of its purpose, provide discipline and control to academically at-risk 6-12<sup>th</sup> graders. The disciplinary climate was "reflected in the school slogan, 'Consistency, Structure, Order,' read daily over the intercom by the school principal. Also created in response to some students' destructive behavior, each school in the district had so many slots/placements available for their students. The district's juvenile courts could and did place students too. As a result, over time, it became a dumping grounds for disciplinary problems and was considered little more than a detention center (King, et al., 1998).

In 1995 as a result of "on-going dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of the detention center approach," the district's leader, "...charge(d) a newly appointed principal to significantly and fundamentally alter

the structure and mission of the school." Several changes were made: (1) the middle school students would be removed, (2) no longer would the school be a "catch-all disciplinary" program because now, as well as being referred, students could independently initiate an application (3) the district would admit that behavior problems in the regular school were often times produced by "mismatch between student needs: and (4) a "student assistance philosophy" would guide the program (King, et al., 1998).

What choice really meant was that now students would not be placed at the school. Principals could no longer simply dump the chronically disruptive student at Lakeside. This would be, under normal circumstances, threatening to a district's order and authority, but the adults involved, having a genuine understanding of the power of authentic alternative education, realized that with a majority of teens, choice is the most important factor in making alternative public schools work for those "mismatched" with the conventional schooling style.

Other changes made by the new principal were a 4 day instructional week, 3x3 block scheduling, regular "Friday Staffings," and student/family/school contracts for academics, behavior, and attendance. The 4 day week, the most obvious change, allowed students an opportunity to work/hunt for jobs, attend to family needs, do internships/service learning, or relax. The staff meetings in the morning allowed the adults to discuss students, assess performance, etc., while the afternoon meeting gave the staff time to meet with community people or to promote interagency collaboration among social services that would benefit the school and/or the students (King, et al., 1998).

### **How choice works**

King and his associates (1998) interviewed the staff as the school developed from a "soft-jail" to an alternative public school of choice. One teacher exclaimed:

"So, to be able to look at kids and say this (school) is your choice. This is the behavior that is expected or you can go away, and no one is holding you here. It had a profound effect" (p.237).

Choice, backed-up by consistent "enforcement" of what the school said it was about and expected of the students and of what the students freely agreed to in the first place, is what makes this more responsible, more respectful approach of a student's needs, work. Students see what democracy is all about: freedom and responsibility are two sides of the same coin. This is why King reported that when the Lakeside staff did "make" the students follow the rules that the students, by choice, said they would follow and freely knew the consequences of not following school policy, the students viewed this consistency as caring, "...they want me to make it," rather than view making students live up to their part of the agreement/enforcing rules, as "a repressive administration." This may seem complex, but any one familiar with Type I alternatives knows this is why teens like this more adult approach. To add to this point, King notes that students became among the most vocal supporters of the new discipline orientation after a few students tested the policy and had to be removed from the building (King, et al., 1998).

Other signs of respect from the staff were allowing students to leave campus for lunch, starting a school yearbook, and a school prom. The more "alternative" readjustment was inviting students to be a part of the open meeting. The previously poorly attended Lakeside parent-teacher association was changed to the Parent-Teacher-Student Association. The opening meeting, held in the lunchroom, was packed with city officials, the mayor, the district attorney, and others showing support of the school's new policy of shared decision making. (King, et al., 1998). The transformation had taken place; "consistency, structure, order" were replaced with consistency, choice, responsibility, respect. The Lakeside "juvenile

detention" program was now the Lakeside "academic alternative" High School. King and his team (1998) publish it this way:

Most students expressed the view upon entering Lakeside that they considered this a temporary placement and that they intended to soon return to their traditional school. A limited survey of students and focus group interviews revealed, however, that growing numbers of students were identifying with Lakeside as 'their' school. This is corroborated by the slogan adopted for printing on school T-shirts, 'Lakeside, A School of Choice. Our Choice' (p. 238).

As well, many students admitted that they preferred a diploma from their home school because Lakeside was still perceived negatively by certain parts of the community.

Nonetheless, students who had no other choice than traditional high school, who were low achievers academically, who simply did not like school; thus, who continued to struggle, and due to their many bad school experiences or other extenuating circumstances or who often became rebellious and dysfunctional within the traditional school settings, liked Lakeside.

The problem with the traditional system was that typically, nothing was done to assess why the offenders continued to offend; impeding their own learning and success as well as that of other students. What the staff at Lakeside realized, through the insights of their "student assistance" approach, that students are people first; kids need respect, trust, support, and simple human courtesy. In the past, the students were restricted to traditional public school agendas. Instructional delivery methods were used which required students to receive a daily schedule of disconnected curriculum in a time frame that did not recognize student differences (King, et al., 1998).

The idea that a school of choice like Lakeside, that is small, that treats students like they have common sense as well as brains, that respects the variety of learning styles, connects curriculum to the needs and interests of the student, has strong leadership with a vision and a cohesive committed faculty, has a non-traditional schedule and a Parent-Teacher-Student group to help the school, and consequently has "demonstrated substantially improved academic performance and behavior" on the part of its students, begs the question: Rather than adopt an inherently punitive approach to managing student behavior through the creation of reactive Last Chance or Remedial Focus programs, would not it be more effective and more consistent with the currently popular principle of choice to expand the availability of proactive academically oriented alternatives? To King, the answer is obvious and challenging to the current proliferation of the Type II/III programs. They conclude:

This leads us to the opinion that the increased emphasis upon typical last-chance type alternative schools may be misguided policy alternative which is unlikely to reduce the district-wide level of student disruption nor is it likely to facilitate the academic success of these type of at-risk students (p. 243).

### **So, why don't they get the message?: One administrator talks to others**

In his commentary, "On the Agenda," High School Magazine Associate Executive Director John Lammel (1998) in a special issue on alternative education asks the questions to the nation's high school staff of employees, "Why don't we get the message? Why don't we understand? Why don't those in traditional, comprehensive high schools realize that alternative schools are already implementing school improvement initiatives as the primary basis for providing an effective teaching and learning environment? He notes that such standard alternative ideas as smaller schools, personalized learning

environments, shared decision making, a respect for student learning styles, and community involvement through service learning and social service at the school site are cogent.

Finally, he suggests school leaders consider that parents, students, teachers, and various districts are pursuing educational alternatives because they see a program that better meets the needs of students. Lammel calls on all personnel to be open to continuing to improve their teaching and administrative practices by learning what they can from innovative alternative schools (p.1).

### **Meeting the needs of all students while stigmatizing none: The suggestions of Richard Sagor**

To Sagor (1997) to keep alternatives from conveying a "spoiled image," districts need to make alternatives mainstream.

As long as the cost of admission to an 'alternative program' is declaring yourself to be 'unfit,' then attending an alternative programs will put a scarlet letter on all who enroll (p. 20).

The first step to making educational alternatives mainstream and thus developing equitable alternatives for everyone is to ask: What do all students need and desire from their education? Sagor's (1997) answer is Competence, Belonging, Usefulness, Potency, and Optimism. Since, obviously, no one approach or schooling style could insure that "every student can and will experience a daily fulfillment of these principal needs of youth," Sagor jumps suddenly to what appears to be an unrelated assertion, yet is not:

In fact, when schools seriously consider who needs alternatives, they often find that many of their seemingly most able and advantaged students would prosper even more in other than traditional settings. However, it is too much to expect advantaged students to venture into alternative settings when doing so is taken as a statement that they are resigning from the mainstream (p.21).

### **Avoiding the "Spoiled Image"**

Sagor (1997) suggests several direct ways schools can meet the needs of all students: Part (a.) Every program should strive to project a positive image by making extensive efforts to have high-prestige staff and students participating in large numbers. So that programs will not be seen as "at-risk," no program should contain more than 25% of students who are most in need; Part (b.) Use the concept of "in-school diversion"--this strategy provides continuous at-risk prevention without ever installing anything called an "at-risk" program.

To implement Part (b.), the school staff will list all of its programs, clubs, and activities. Next, 15% of the available "slots" will be set aside for referrals. When a student is at-risk of failing, or getting into trouble, a school adult will "divert" the youth to a "positive prestigious program." This way virtually all the at-risk can be included without the label of programs for "those kids" (Sagor, 1997).

In summary, according to Sagor (1997),

- There is nothing inherently wrong with alternatives; they are a major way to recognize that all youth are individuals with different learning styles, preferences, and needs.
- The best school systems will offer educational alternatives to all, regardless of class, race, gender, or "at-risk" status; such systems celebrate diversity, rather than homogeneity.
- In what ever form, segregation is harmful and particularly insidious when based on a status of being in need.

- The problem is not just that these (Type II/III) programs are incapable of meeting the needs of the at-risk, but that in many cases they further weaken the disadvantaged students by stigmatizing them as unfit people.
- Communities must honestly review and examine the rationale for creating alternatives that segregate the at-risk from the rest of the school population by openly debating the obligations we have to those students who fall through the cracks. Only then will the public know if a school system has the examples and data to support this policy or if the motives are less admirable and the schools are pursuing an off-campus plan to put the at-risk out of sight and out of mind.
- We must stop letting our most vulnerable young people run the risk of being sent into the woods alone, only to be devoured by a well-meaning, but misguided, wolf dressed in sheep's clothing (p. 22).

### **Philosophy not politics: The suggestions of Dr. Don Glines**

Drawing forth conclusions from a review of the development of alternative education, Glines thinks that the proposed voucher systems, schools of choice, charter schools, and magnet programs that have arisen out of political expediency would not be necessary if the focus was/is philosophy. By focusing on educational ideals and ideas, erasing politics from the equation, those concerned with children and youth would inevitably come to the realization that a variety of (what Dr. Glines calls) educational alternatives is a significant way to meet the learning/schooling needs of most students. To remove the negative image alternative education has, he suggests:

- Each concerned individual, school, district and state alternative education division abandon the currently popular notion of alternative education and accept alternatives as a plural.
- Do not have "waiting-lists/lotteries" for popular alternatives, magnet programs, or options. If the program is that good:
  - a. duplicate the program at another site,
  - b. balloon the capacity at the original site,
  - c. use multiple-tracking, year-round program and schedule at the site.
- Expand alternatives beyond "at-risk":
  - a. to provide for the A/B/C students who are progressing well and will graduate on time, but who would much prefer--if available--a student-centered, personalized climate. Encouraging a cross-section of students, including those who "fit," but who "cry for the flexibility that can be offered through alternatives" will help remove the stigma that alternatives are just for those who don't fit in,
  - b. provide more comprehensive alternative schools to allow these alternatives to draw football players, cheer leaders, orchestra members and advanced foreign language and math students. They can attract fine arts students who need a flexible schedule that allows the time for their interests.
  - c. besides small alternative programs for 50-250 students--especially for those with "problem parents"--larger alternatives, with up to 500-600 students and a complete self-contained staff, are needed.
  - d. "Person Centers" designed for those youth who are not ready for either regular or alternative education can be added to the smaller general sites that also focus on teen parents, dropouts, and other similar 'non-regular' students.
- Expand research, development, and the area of more open elementary programs.
- Move forward with the national association of individual alternative schools/programs and state alternative education associations. The new unification organization can grow to influence local,

state, and national education policy, centralize funding efforts, as well as educate the community about genuine alternative education and its undeserved stigmatization.

- Expand the concept of magnets as strictly for a narrow curriculum emphasis or for desegregation purposes, to one that includes learning styles regardless of the magnet's theme (Glines, 1992).

In summary, Clines (1992) suggests:

Educational alternatives (plural) should be provided for all youth, regardless of achievement scores, learning style, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, geographical neighborhood, career interests, behavior, physical and mental health, and past and present performances--and at the same reimbursement as the traditional. Most all students have one or more special talents and one or more noticeable weakness. Programs should be available--most always by choice--to meet individual and group needs, interests, and home/school realities. One curriculum field is no more important than another, except for emphasis of those topics related to safety, global issues, self-esteem, and interpersonal relationships.

There can be no 'regular education' and no 'alternative education' (both singular). Learning styles and personal preferences are equal; the key is whether they succeed for the individual, family, society. There can be no comprehensive schools for the achieving, behaving, conforming; there can be no alternative schools for 'at-risk,' low-achieving, pregnant minor, dropout, non-behaving, non-conforming--or even for the gifted and talented and special education youth. Each option is the regular program for that youth; each choice is her/his alternative--the selection among many alternatives (p. 6-7).

### **How to remove alternative education's negative (self-) image: The ideas and suggestions of Tom Gregory.**

On March 7, 2000, Gregory (2000) presented a paper at Indiana's alternative education conference. The work, titled "Fear of Success? Ten Ways that Alternative Schools Pull Their Punches." In it he described what could be called the "present psycho-political status" of alternative education. Drawing a picture, Gregory painted alternative education and their programs as treated as "2<sup>nd</sup> class citizens;" often finding themselves in weak (negotiating/political) positions; and, often misunderstood by the public as well as other educators. Thus, he concludes, it is quite understandable that alternative staff and programs act like relatively powerless entities. For example they: 1. work to maintain a low profile and not make waves. 2. play the "game" so that the status quo will be comfortable with the relationship, and 3. tend to act as women or minorities did in the past when confronted with powerlessness (Gregory, 2000).

Gregory takes a uniquely non-traditional take on the problem of alternative education's negative image. First of all, he makes it clear that he uses the term "alternative" by its original definition. He says that it was unfortunate that those in alternative education (and he being one of those) accepted the narrower definition of alternative. Early on districts saw how these schools were successful with a wide variety of students, but found their work with tough-to-teach youth particularly "notable." Funding came in for the at-risk programs and slowly the term shifted in meaning to being schools for only the underserved. In doing so, the power of the original alternatives was "shortchanged"! (Gregory, 2000). Thus, he levels the field of discussion, because he has had "issues" in this area too.

Secondly, the problem of alternative education's negative image is normally seen as arising from the view of the public and/or traditional educators: This implies that if the public understood more, if school districts opened up more to alternative education and all of its possibilities for all students, the bad image, the stigma would be removed. Gregory (2000) sees it differently. He proposes that the problem is

not in so much of what others think about alternative education, but what alternative education/educators think) of itself/themselves.

If alternative education was a "patient" and on Dr. Gregory's "couch." undergoing "psychoanalysis." the 10 issues raised and covered in his paper would be the same "personal problems" or issues the "person" of alternative education would have. It is as though alternative education is a person who has been out of a very poor or abusive relationship for some years now; yet, is still having difficulty asserting themselves, asking for what they deserve, having the self-esteem necessary to not allow the past (stigma) to label them, or not letting others walk all over them because they feel that they are not as worthy-as everyone else.

Dr. Gregory has the "person" of alternative education on the couch where they are lamenting their "step-child" status, and not realizing what he is about to reveal: Your problem is not your public image, it's your self-image. Although for no reason, (you've worked very hard over the years and in many instances with those students no one could or wanted to) you continue to feel so unworthy that you don't think you deserve success. In fact, you fear success. In doing so, you pull your punches because you do not want to upset the status quo -- which will remind you how inadequate you really are. It is all very complicated. It is all very harmful. Being an enabler only reinforces the low self-regard with which alternative education views itself. Indirectly supporting the traditional school system's pretense (that its schooling style works for all students) by not standing up to it and standing up for real alternative public schools of choice, also reinforces the low self-regard alternative education has of itself and consequently, directly contributes to the public's negative view. It is not a pretty picture. That's why Dr. Gregory wants to help. Being labeled as a "2nd class citizen" and accepting that label are two different stories.

Gregory suggests, in a very fresh manner, 10 critical issues alternative education/schools must face today. He clearly explains the 10 areas of contention, the problems involved, and what happens when alternative educators do 'not stand up for themselves, their schools and especially the students.

These problems are intricate. Over the last 30 years the pure line of alternative thought has become a twisted, inverted, and tied-up into knot. Currently, alternative education is molting. The movement is reaching a critical mass -- enough for a rejuvenation and the acceptance of true alternative public schools of choice and thus no stigma. Due to the knots and the movement's closing in on the weightlessness found at the apex of the curve, alternative education is a stalled stillness, full of potential.

Gregory untangles these knots and in doing so, through his "psychoanalysis," makes those educators on both sides of the issue, traditional and non-traditional, look at the real reasons why alternative education has a negative image. He implies that when alternative education/educators face their own shadows, face their own fears-by exposing the hidden truth behind the low self-concept, thus beginning to work towards true self-esteem and respect, demanding what is truly deserving for them, then and only then will the public respect alternative education.

Gregory (2000) begins his line of argument by pulling no punches of his own. He states clearly some of the factors behind the "fear of success" and why events surrounding alternatives are so complex:

- it is administratively convenient for the district not to face how decisions are made about who attends alternatives, shaping the very identity of the schools, their equality and the amount of parity they enjoy, and the quality of the alter-program. Thus, alternative personnel do not raise these issues.
- there are limits placed on alternative education that appear
- backward and harmful when used to guide schools whose power



- emanates from variety, choice, and- close, personal relationships
- each of the 10 issues represent a serious obstacle to students who are in quest of an education that makes sense to them.
- each of the issues is one that sheds light on the basis of alternatives: altering power relationships
- each issue is an indicator of the power districts exercise to keep alternative schools in their place
- thus, alternative educators/administrators go along with these practices; considering the politics of alternative schools of choice vs "soft-jails," it is easier to remain a good team player
- consequently, when alternative educators maintain a low profile, do not press for supportive policies and practices, they fear success and become enablers -- they are delaying real reform, handicapping their own practices, and not taking on their adult leadership responsibilities (p.2). This is not what is best for kids.

Gregory (2000) categorizes the 10 topics related to issues alternative education must deal with in order maintain a healthy self-image and thus affect its public image into 3 headings: People Issues, Equity and Parity Issues: and Programmatic Issues.

People Issues -- Some concerns arise because of how decisions are made about who will attend and when they will attend alternative schools.

1. *Control of Who Attends*: If alternative schools allow someone else to choose their students for them, if they allow only those students the home school has given up on to attend, then the alternative fears success, "pulling their punches." and contributing as an enabler to the administratively expedient premise that the home school is not a part of the problem; the student is the problem.

2. *The Heterogeneity of the Student Body*: Most alternatives have only at-risk students. If alternative schools do not let the public know that there are other different, very successful and proven ways of doing school, if they do not publicize their successes, if they do not' open up their schools to all students and thus deny the opportunity to many average and above average students who would prefer and/or benefit from a small, informal, student-centered, flexible alternative if it were available, then the alternative staff is afraid of success, thus "pulling their punches," and not confronting the issue of choice and enabling the traditional' system to continue letting students fall through the cracks.

3. *Time of Entry*: Alternative schools sometimes have little control over when students enter the program. Since "membership" in the school may be a form of banishment from the home school, alternatives actually solve many problems for standard schools: What to do with throwaway youth for whom the expulsion is the only other option. If they are getting rid of the student now, now is the time the district wants the alternative to take them. To convenience the home school, alternatives may be required to take students on a weekly or even daily basis. When alternative schools and their administration accept this arrangement they lose a wonderful opportunity to set expectations and especially build a group sense of community. The alternative is a less complete place when rituals of entry are pushed aside for someone else's convenience: and it understandably takes new students longer to connect to the new school. When alternative schools do not make sure they control when students enter the program, they fear success and come to doubt their own beliefs about the power of alternatives. This dereliction is not what is best for kids.

4. *Control of Who Teaches*: Sometimes alternative schools have little control over who will teach in them. Districts may assume all schools are alike and so not make considerations. In some cases, teachers may be sent to the alternative for "personnel" reasons, thus historically, teaching at an alternative has been viewed as a form of punishment by teachers on the outside. When alternative school administrators

do not make sure they have control over who teaches in their school, they fear success. Insecure and afraid, they do not want to upset any of the district "team." By not feeling they deserve the right to choose their own personnel, they become hypocrites, unable to do what they expect their students do: take control of their lives. No wonder the public and other educators look down on alternatives.

Identity Issues-If alternative schools do not have control over the information about them that is available, they may be misunderstood by the district and community. Alternative people contribute to the problem of a negative image when they accept that their "clientele" are a particular kind of student. Alternative schools can serve many other students equally well. When alternatives allow themselves to continue to be defined as "a school for..." they are pulling their punches.

5. *Defining a School*: Many alternatives have reconciled themselves to living with others' definition of who they are. Changing alternative education's negative image will happen slowly or not at all if schools accept this imposed identity and allow their peers to talk disparagingly of their program and students. (The Afro-centric concept of Kujichagulia [Self-determination] applies here. This Kwanzaa celebrated principal is: To define ourselves instead of being defined, named, created for and spoken for by others. Obviously, this is why "Dr. Gregory" compared the present fear of success alternative educators have with that same reaction "women and minorities have given when confronted with similar circumstances of powerlessness.") Therefore, due to feelings of inferiority, unwarranted or not, if alternative schools do not make sure that they alone determine their school's identity, they become enablers. They actually "assist" those who disregard them. Since alternative educators can not stand up for themselves, no wonder others easily determine their public image and make it a negative one.

6. *Uniqueness*: Alternative schools often operate as another track of their big sister schools' programs. If it is easy for students to move back and forth, if students can not graduate from an alternative school, it probably is not very different than the big standard school. Alternative educators must make sure the school system understands that their schools are unique; that they are options to the traditional way of school, not an option of that system. Alter-schools are not a convenient safety valve for big, impersonal high or middle schools. The purpose of alternative schools is not to "recondition damaged goods" and ship them back to the institutions that may have damaged them in the first place. Their business is to create powerful, engaging programs, programs that "stretch kids in ways that they never envisioned." Big schools work for many students. The programs that work for everyone else require a different delivery system, one much like the best of our alternative schools. Alternative educators who maintain programs that enable easy movement back and forth with conventional schools are retarding the school district's progress towards achieving those more potent programs. Only alternative educators who are naive or lack courage in their convictions would enable a system to ignore over 30 years of development of alternative public schools of choice.

Equity and Parity Issues-Two issues have a very direct impact on the equality of alternative schools and the amount of parity they experience in their districts.

7. *The Place of School*: Alternatives regularly and often uncomplainingly accept substandard facilities. That needs to change and it will not unless alternative schools push for a change. Alternative schools need to publicize the inadequacy of their current conditions and campaign for redress. Educators send messages to kids about their worth in many ways including the quality of the space to which we assign them. Alternative people need to stop being quiet accomplices to these inequities. But, creation of a powerful program that truly is different from standard education must precede an effective argument for a very different kind of facility. And none of this will happen if alternative educators fear success because they feel or think they do not deserve it.

8. *A Fair Share of the Resources:* Alternative schools almost never seek their fair share of the district's resources. The argument that alternative education costs more than traditional forms is not the case. Recent studies in the new, small high schools created in New York City in the wake of the success of Central Park East Secondary School, an alternative school, find that when costs per graduate rather than per student of these new, small high schools, that they are comparable in cost or even lower in cost than big, city high schools. When alternative educators are defensive about their costs they are "pulling their punches." Afraid to ask for their fair share, afraid to face the condescending questions of state legislators, district school boards or superintendents, alternative educators, because of their lack of self-regard-- and pride, simply make due with what they are given. This perpetuates the negative image that others have of them. Who can respect an educator who has no self-respect?

Programmatic Issues-Other issues besides financial play key roles in determining how alternative schools are perceived by the public, other educators, and alternative education supporters.

9. *Program Integrity and Completeness:* Alternative schools seldom become complete programs. Students often do portions of their work at the home school. Some alternatives are half-day, sometimes due to the needs of their students. The more an alternative draws on a home school to be complete, the more it becomes like the traditional model. To help, alternatives must begin defining learning in ways other than group instruction and as occurring in places other than school buildings. To do this alternatives must define their graduation requirements in more-authentic ways than grades and credits. (This seems to be asking a lot of alternative educators-to stand up against over 100 years of tradition and standard graduation criteria: however, compared to what it has to lose-a continuing bad reputation that limits alternative education to the status of "reform" schools, holding tanks, warehouses, or worse, re-education camps-alternative professionals have two choices: either continue to be second-class/second-rate educators or to cease being afraid of success.)

10. *Graduation as Closure:* Since most districts create alternatives based on the premise that it is the student, not the school, that is the problem. Ironically, some schools are remarkably effective in "turning kids around" and they desire to stay at the alternative. Unfortunately, alternatives in most cases have to send the newly productive student back to unsupportive, even hostile environments. In other words, now that the student is doing much better in school, perhaps mainly due to the more informal, flexible, community oriented, student-centered climate small schools provide, this student is "rewarded" by being returned to the home school. What is interesting is that we should not be surprised when their old behaviors resurface as quickly as they had disappeared in the more reasonable smaller, alternative. Allowing a student who is having difficulty with school--and whose school is having difficulty with that student--to have an option to attend the Type I alternative school described above and be allowed to stay and graduate, would be what is best for all parties concerned. Extending a school's reach through graduation is an important for students who can then can experience a fitting closure to what may be the first successful experience they have ever had in their young lives (p. 3-8).

### **A Summary of Gregory's (2000) ideas and suggestions: The barriers within**

It is untimely and a disadvantage that while some schools have beat the issues discussed above, some, due to alternative school people seeing the problems as bigger barriers than they really are, have not. Gregory encouragingly insists, "Many obstacles-even some scary ones-tend to evaporate when we muster the courage (of effrontery) to attempt to push them aside, that most real obstacles to change in education are not 'out there,' but inside us. The fear makes weaklings of us and empty shells of the programs we create. Certainly, some alternatives are farther along on these 10 issues because they are

lucky enough to be in a progressive district. But more schools are farther along in solving them because those who lead and teach in them are continually testing how real the barriers are that are placed in their path" (p. 8).

One of the suggestions he gives concerns being assertive with what it takes to overcome the barriers that keep alternatives at the Type II/III level. Instead of hiding the fact that an alternative may have "broken or bent" a rule to keep an alternative school going or to keep a student going to the school, courageous alternative educators with a healthy self/professional-image tell their superiors what they have done, and why, so that a dialogue is initiated within the system that may result in change. Although it may not work, now the educator's peers can no longer assume 'that they are working with someone who views themselves as a "second-class citizen." Impudence, in the face of bad policy, may allow an alternative school to be a better place for it.

In closing, Gregory writes to almost confront any alternative teacher or administrator, challenging them to not be cowards and enablers, "We need to be deserving of the students who do come to us, trusting that we will give them our best. We'll be deserving of that trust only when we mount and sustain the best damn alternative we can envision. Anything less is too little" (p. 9). Or to put it another way: get back on the "couch" or get out of alternative' education.

### **The suggestions of Robert D. Barr and William Parrett**

By reviewing over 25 years of research on alternative schools, Barr and Parrett (1995) have collected an impressive body of evidence supporting Type I/ Popular Innovations alternative public schools. Putting all the findings into one form, these alternative educators have clearly defined essential characteristics of effective programs. Letting school districts and the community know about what makes alternative schools work, what makes Type II/III alternatives less effective than schools of choice, and the research that supports these findings is what is needed to change the negative image of alternative education. These essential characteristics are the positive, powerful, and unique side of alternative education. Regardless, a very thorough review of these findings will bring the realization ' that there are now several overriding conclusions that can no longer be ignored. The essential characteristics are:

**Comprehensive and Continuing:** Too many districts make the mistake of creating programs to be attended a short time -- days, weeks, a semester, or a year. The goal must not be a quick fix or transition back to the home school. Thus, a comprehensive (academic, social, economic, family, and health components) and continuing (students can stay to graduate) school can serve as a more responsive and respectful bridge to work or continuing education.

**Choice and Commitment:** By definition, alternative schools must allow teachers and students to voluntarily participate in the program. By creating schools that meet the needs and interests of youth, education and learning become attractive and their choice elicits commitment. Pride, not stigma, is the climate alternative school students choose.

**Caring and Demanding Teachers:** Of all the components involved in effective alternative schools, the teacher is the most powerful.

**Using the Needs and Interests of Students to Design Program:** Alternative schools have a broader set of instructional goals and have the flexibility to meet them. The needs and interests of the students are the determining factors. These schools are not there to sort students based on narrow standards, but created to find ways all students are smart and can be successful.

**Designing Instruction to Address Learning Traits:** Individualized and personalized instruction based on learning/thinking styles (an instructor's teaching- style, as well) is the hallmark of alternative education. Students are given the same options as gifted/talented students by allowing them to learn at their own pace.

**Small, Supportive Environments:** These schools view themselves as communities of support.

**Out of School Experiences:** Some of the most powerful learning experiences that get the attention and respect of the ' at-risk student, take place outside the classroom walls. Genuine alternative schools use travel/field trips, internships, career exploration, apprenticeships, independent studies, and action learning/hands-on approaches to give students knowledge and understanding.

**Transition to Work:** These programs provide students with classes concerned with surveying career and job opportunities. Counselors are just as concerned with finding employment, career selection, job data, and choice of vocation as with graduation and college entrance requirements.

**School and Community:** The alternatives involve partnerships with business, industry, and social agencies. They help all students obtain the community help and services they need.

**Students as Resources:** Alternative educators know that school and community service is essential to the growth, health, and development of youth. Volunteering builds character and self-esteem. Tutoring others helps one to understand since: "To teach is to learn twice" (p. 54-62).

Barr and Parrett (1995) also put forth what alternative educators know about effective alternative schools after 25 years of development. What we know is:

**Schools Make a Difference:** The behavior and expectations of the principal, teachers, and parents, are more important in determining a child's success at school than are socioeconomic level, race, or I.Q.

**All Children Can Learn:** Schooling can no longer take refuge in the false concept that some students can not learn, or are too slow, dumb, disadvantaged or deprived.

**No One Best Way to Learn:** Students learn in different ways and in different settings. The use of learning/thinking styles implies and encourages a variety of teaching styles.

**The Power of Teacher Perception:** If teachers believe all children can learn, develop realistic expectations, cater to learning styles, and plan appropriate learning experiences all students can and will learn. It remains all but impossible to overcome negative precepts held by the teacher.

**The At-Risk Are Not Just a School Problem:** The at-risk are influenced by social, family, and community problems. Effective programs are comprehensive and integrate/coordinate school and the community resources for a complete look at the situation.

**Shared Vision and Shared Decision-Making:** If teachers, parents, administrators, and students can develop a shared vision regarding goals, agree to pursue and then monitor them, remarkably positive developments occur.

Alternative Education is Not Special Education: At-risk youth do not need slow learning; they need accelerated learning. Those who are not learning or who misbehave are too easily 'labeled as learning disabled. Alternative education can be a viable response because it is not limited to one way of learning, one 'way of teaching, one way of showing what you know, or one way of being smart (p. 50-54). That's why it is called alternative.

What Barr and Parrett have brought forth from the crucible of time is exactly the kind of boost alternative education needs. Just imagine, after all the doubts, the misunderstanding, the rejection, yet the tenacity, the unrelinquishing faith in human nature, and the hard work of all the educational reformers -- after all that history came rising to the top like cream, the essential characteristics or best practices of alternative education. This is the positive self-image of alternative education. This is the alternative image that will remove the spoiled one.

### **A system of schools, not a school system: Two publication's positive image of alternative education**

It may be no coincidence that two recent publications presented special issues on educational alternatives. The American School Board Journal highlighted and encouraged districts to expand the number and kind of alternatives. Hardy's (2000) article, "Public School Choice: The idea of options in public education is taking hold," is an excellent review and cogent idea of how to remove the stigma from alternative education. He cites Fayetteville, NC, School Board Chairman, Richard Glazier's insight as to why educational alternatives are a way to educate all students (compared to the singularity of the monolithic traditional schooling approach), 'I think it's the recognition that every child learns differently: One size never has and never will fit all.'

Hardy begins his article's premise with a reference to the fact that school choice is not new and actually began in the 1960s as part of the alternative schools movement. The concept is becoming popular across the nation: Consequently, the 36 varieties of alternatives in the Fayetteville system is explained by, 'It's not the '-what-' that differs from school to school, it's the 'how.' My sense is that vouchers and tuition tax credits are on the horizon, and it's time for us to-be-more consumer oriented.

Hardy titles one section of his article, "Multiple intelligences, multiple choices" to illustrate that a variety of schools -- educational alternatives -- can meet the variety of intelligences, learning styles, thinking styles, needs and interests of students (and infers that this variety of programs can be a better way of utilizing the diversity of teaching styles instructors have, but are of no use in a traditional lecture/objective test oriented school).

Finally, Hardy (2000) concludes his case by noting how districts are turning to educational alternatives/open enrollment to counter the "highly charged movement for private school choice." By providing more alternatives within the public schools, disadvantaged children stuck in neighborhood schools that are failing will have an alternative.

"Alternative Answer" is the "Perspective" commentary by Wolk (2000) in Teacher Magazine. Wolk begins by stating how the present standards movement as an ultimate form of evaluating school and student performance, threatens the very schools that are having the greatest success with our neediest students: the nations alternative schools.

These programs have lower dropout rates and higher attendance rates than most traditional schools with similar enrollments. What's more, they are sending higher percentages of their students on to

college. The irony is that alternative schools are doing exactly what standards-setters aspire to: They are changing -- improving -- the way we educate kids (p. 4).

As a result, Wolk suggests policy makers move quickly to create a new alternative system of public schools, "...one that would operate parallel to the mainstream system" and help save the present 3,000 or more non-traditional public schools.

"Alternative Answers" is not promoting Type II/III programs which are actually arms of the traditional schools and so by definition can not be non-traditional or use *non-traditional methods* since their purpose is to change students so that they can succeed traditionally. Describing the principles on which these alternatives were built, Wolk (2000) writes:

- They are small and possess a clear sense of mission, which is shared-along with power and responsibility-among students, parents, and teachers.
- They personalize learning, which means they are child-centered rather than curriculum centered.
- And they use teaching methods that reflect what we have discovered in the past 30 years about *learning*.

These newest alternative schools are trailblazers -- the vanguard of what could become a sizable parallel public education system. Incubating new ideas and testing new approaches, they 'are providing fundamentally different *learning opportunities* than the traditional schools. Some are even semi-autonomous, almost like private schools, *controlling their* own budget and personnel policies.

A parallel system of public schools would introduce more variety, more choice, and more competition without undermining public education. Those public school defenders who fear vouchers and privatization would be wise to get behind the idea (p. 5).

Alternative public schools of choice for all students, with small, flexible, informal, student-centered climates that respect learning/ teaching styles, shared decision making, and a family/community orientation, can work. This is what the public, educators, and policy makers need to know. This will remove the poor image. Disseminating this information is the responsibility of state and local alternative education and learning options divisions.

### **Involving more African-Americans in alternative education: Continuing the legacy**

Presently there is quite a contradiction in alternative education, especially in urban areas. Most of the students in alternatives are' Black males. Most are in Type II/III alternatives where they are ' sent, some say warehoused, and returned to the mainstream after they are "rehabilitated" or their time is up. On the other hand, there are very, very few proactive, urban public Type I alternatives of choice for Black families and their children. This may be due to the fact that the African-American community, like the general public, is both uniformed and misinformed about alternative education. Evidently, they think alternative schools are "soft jails" that re-educate and fix youth so they can be successful in the traditional manner. In this perspective, alternative schools are simply another form of oppression, discrimination, and the first steps to the future incarceration of their young Black men-no wonder alternative schools have a bad image -with many African-Americans. As well, perhaps Blacks do not want to be seen as "alternative" since they are marginalized as it is. Perhaps the community thinks that if African-Americans are to be successful in the United States, they must be successful traditionally: they can not afford to put their faith in some "experimental" alternative that allows youth to be successful in non-traditional ways and terms. This makes sense.

Regardless, it is ironic that the poor and minorities, who have the most to gain from Type I alternatives, are represented the most in the conventional school's Type II/III options. This would not be the case if these groups were informed about genuine alternative education and their place in its history.

Presently, inner-city Black families are being courted by voucher proponents. Agreeably, urban public schools have not successfully educated the African-American population as a whole. In fact, this same realization was behind the original alternative/free school movement in the 1960s-70s. The voucher idea claims that if inner-city students are sent, with the voucher money, to other schools -- most likely private or parochial schools (which by the way are mainly small schools)--they will be successfully educated, especially in terms of standardized tests.

Being thoughtful, however, it is hard to deny the alternative educator's argument that suggests: What does it matter if a child is in a private or faith-based school, if they do not teach the child the way the child learns? If, these mainly non-public programs have only a traditional definition of school success, only the traditional definition of what it means to be smart (Sternberg, 1997b), if there is only one way a child can learn or show learning -- no non-traditional schooling -- then the children of African-American families will get sorted out as being unintelligent, just like in the "only-one-way-to-be-smart" public schools. Remember, the job of public schools is to see who has it and who does not. This "it" is based on memory and analytical skills (Sternberg, 1997b). Alternative educators believe that each child has it, and they find out the way(s). Alternative educators see human beings as multi-intelligent, with many abilities, not just Memory-I.Q./academics (Skromme, 1989). This is what the African-American community` does not realize. Any discussion about schooling must include philosophy. Vouchers are about politics. Alternative education is about learning: A Yale study, based on the premise that intelligence has creative and practical aspects as well as memory and analytical, shows that if schools start valuing all 4, they may find that thousands of kids are smarter than they think (Sternberg, 1997b).

To iterate, alternative education is about learning -- the different ways to learn and show learning. The African-American community does not understand alternative education. If they were informed about the contributions of the Southern Saturday schools and freedom schools of the 1960s civil rights movement and the anti-establishment free schools in the north to the present level of Type I alternatives, they would be more inclined to support them. If the Black community were informed about the ability of Type I options to meet the educational needs and thus the career goals of any/all students due to the flexibility that allows students to be successful, even in their own right, and thus not according to the majority, academic, left-brain dominated traditional public school system, they would create and/or support Type I alternative public schools.

What has been the problem with *African-Americans and* the public schools? Why has there been such a push and pull relationship? And most important and pertinent, what can alternative education do to make public schools work for African-Americans?

Historically, many African-Americans were denied the opportunity to attend school past the elementary or middle level, let alone to learn to read and write. Education was seen as a way to realize the American dream, to move up the economic ladder and thus obtain the opportunity, equality, and prosperity the vision offered. Remember, the goal of the public school was to provide everyone with a common knowledge while encouraging individual talents, abilities, and achievement. Yet, over time, despite the elimination of "separate but equal" facilities and school desegregation, plus general progress, writer and social researcher, Hamovitch (1999) reminds us that race continues to be "...the most salient



factor explaining different patterns of student achievement," due to the issue that "...race acts inside the school to give groups of students systematically different experiences." Although schools promised and were a source of success for Blacks, in many instances they found schools to be "...a source of self-doubt rather than self-development (p. 57).

According to Hamovitch, schools perpetuate the status quo by helping convince African-American students that they are "unfit for authority or status." By looking down on or ignoring African and African-American history, accomplishments, and contributions to society, schools develop self-doubt in Black children and youth (1999).

Another issue is the language and cultural "divide" between the African-American experience and the public schools that also contributes to school failure. African-American values such as cooperation, as to opposed to individual competition, and asking students to " ..endure a context that values breadth over depth and noninvolvement .over personal engagement" invert American Black culture (Hamovitch, 1999).

The public schools were to be a place where different cultures, nationalities, ethnic groups, and so-called races would pass through and be "Americanized." This general "American," this general American culture, this general American idea/ideal of what school success was and what it meant to be smart was essentially European/WASP. Like the American Indian boarding schools (where their hair was cut, their clothes changed, where they were not allowed to practice Indian customs and language so that the students could be assimilated into non-Indian society) public schools tend to emphasize similarity and standardization and de-emphasize diversity. Hamovitch (1999) argues, as Ogbu (1995) does, that for African-American youth doing well in public schools -- due to its reassimilation tendencies -- was difficult because the youth interpreted school success with acting or speaking White as this was seen not as education, but an "imposition on Black people by White people." Thus the traditional public school system is seen as a place that competes with and is not complementary to a Black student's own cultural identity and feelings of self-Worth.

### **Schooling vs education**

In Hamovitch (1999), Shujaa's ideas are brought to bear on the issue:

Shujaa (1993) articulates a conceptual distinction between schooling and education that is useful in trying to understand (Black) students' plight. Schooling, as he understands it, implies a tie to the social order and nationstate. It suggests an institution that represents the dominant white Anglo-Saxon culture that seeks to assimilate oppressed groups such as poor African-Americans. Education, on the other hand, involves learning that transmits the cultural uniqueness of nondominant groups to the next generation (p. 74).

Alternative education can solve this historic problem between African Americans and the public schools. Alternatives by their very definition, get rid of "schooling." Too much "schooling" has not been exclusively detrimental to African-Americans. Many other groups and so-called lower classes or regional groups in Appalachia have rejected assimilation. In fact, entire groups have founded their own schools through the graduate level. Again, it was both Black Power advocates and anti-establishment reformers that helped create the alternative education movement. As well, the rejection of a school system dominated by a single cultural monopoly led to the present multi-cultural education curriculum.

Alternative education inherently neutralizes any "schooling" or proselytizing because it emphasizes personalized, constructivist, individualized learning, based on the needs and interests of the student. It has no one definition of how to learn, or one definition of when or where to learn. And especially, it has no one definition of how to be successful in school or what it means to be smart. It is very post-modern (Powell, 1999). Alternative schools know that education comes from the Latin "educere," which means to "draw out" (Costello, 1994), not "put in" as schooling suggests.

Type II/III programs could be seen as actually analogous to re-education camps -- an expansion and more concentrated form of the home school that attempts to use behavior modification to "refashion" its students so they may be easily and successfully re-assimilated into the mainstream.

This is why urban compensatory programs (Type II/III) that attempt to force African-Americans to deny their own experiences, their own cultural and common sense views, are destined to failure (Hamovitch, p. 75).

Genuine alternative schools (Type I) refute the assumptions of Type II/III programs and their creators because they believe that no amount of reconditioning is likely to successfully return inner-city youth to the traditional schools. The students may return, but their involvement may be superficial. Authentic participation may call for schools to respect the idea that compared to what they consider as standard or mainstream (thus the need for rehabilitation \*of misfits) that many of the student's responses to the traditional school climate are integral, culturally healthy, and normal.

African-Americans know instinctively what every dictator knows and what every lobbying or interest group, business, union or religious organization knows, whether they admit it or not: When you control the schools, you control the future (Loflin, 1987). Each group seems to desire to use the public schools to create the kind of children or youth, person, worker or citizen they deem best. These groups want schools to be curriculum-centered, irrespective of the individual or culture. Alternative education gets around the "schooling" or training aspects of education. They, like most groups and individuals, want schools to produce thinking citizens, not working robots. They want schools to meet the needs of students and cultivate their interests and abilities so that they may enjoy life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Informing the African-American community about the story and purpose of alternatives, how options can provide the education and the kind of respect for diversity they deserve, will not only help remove the negative image that alternatives are merely "soft jails" for their children, but convince them that alternative public schools of choice will liberate their youth and their community from the misguided, over-schooling orientation and sorting mentality of the traditional public school system.

### **Alternative education: Different ways to learn, different ways to evaluate learning**

It has been one of the major points of this paper to inform the community that alternative education is about learning, not behavior. This characteristic also differentiates Type I alternatives from Type II/III programs. This paper thus proposes that if the public and the education community assume alternative education is just for "bad kids," alternative schools will have a bad image. When these communities become more informed and so more "sophisticated" about Type I alternatives, with their emphasis on learning, the stained image will be removed.

Just in time, recent brain research is bringing schools and teacher's attention back to where alternative educators suggested it be all along -- on learning. As early as 1973, Fantini was discussing, "Matching

Teaching-Learning Styles." Later on, Dunn and Dunn (1978) were suggesting that environmental factors as well as social factors and personal preferences were variables in determining learning and school success. Room temperature, noise level, mobility, group vs individualized learning, global., analytical, auditory, visual, right-left brain "hemisphericity" were all buzz words describing the many elements that said: There is no one best way to learn. Considering a student's learning style naturally became one of the main parts of the definition of alternative education and learning options.

The breakthrough for alternative education came when neuroscientists used magnetic resonance imaging on the brain. As a result, the idea of brain-based learning arose (Caine and Caine, 1991): Realizing, "The understanding of learning will become the key issue of our time," (Abbott, 1997), many educators and professional publications (Scherer, 1997a; Scherer, 1998) began to seriously consider what cognitive and neurological research was considering to be brain/mind principles for maximizing learning. One of the most important findings of this research was the discovery that every brain is uniquely organized (Caine and Caine, 1997). This reinforced alternative education's idea, "That we are intelligent in many ways and learn through many different styles underscores the need to organize our classrooms and use many teaching strategies..." (Scherer, 1997b). Research findings asserting that, "The brain does not have to be taught how to learn," (Abbott, 1997) and that the mind's search for meaning, through 'patterning,' is innate, add to a basic premise of alternative education: All children can learn (Barr and Parrett, 1995).

The concept of many learning styles is implicated in the development of Gardner's ideas suggesting a variety of intelligences (1983). Due to the thought provoking brain research of the last 10 years, not only do the traditional school system's ideas about how children learn appear narrow, now the traditional definition of what it means to be smart seems limiting. Abbott (1997) asks: What does it mean to be broadly intelligent? He calls on educators to work with all of the children's many forms of intelligence. "That is what gives us our creativity" (p. 7). Meire (Scherer, 1994) agrees and takes this line of thought to the next level:

Schools must start engaging themselves in a conversation.-about what it means to be an educated person. We must ask parents, the school board, and the kids the same question. What we will be doing is inducting kids into an intellectual conversation, a discussion about what we want the world to be like in the future. It is the most -important discussion we can have (p. 8).

Finally, Sternberg (1997b) has an answer to the question in his article.,. "What does it mean to be smart?" and implicates the need for change in the public schools. He remarks: .

In a pluralistic society, we cannot afford to have a monolithic conception of intelligence and schooling; it-'s simply a waste of time. And, as I unexpectedly found in my study, it's no random waste. The more we teach and assess students based on a broader set of abilities, the more racially, ethnically, and socio-economically diverse our achievers will be. We can easily change our closed system and we should. We must take a more balanced approach to reach all of our children (p. 23-24).

To expand this closed system, he suggests schools teach to all 4 possible abilities -- memory, analysis, practical, and creative -- and thus design alternative assessments.

When we expand the .range of abilities we test for, we also expand the range of students we identify as smart (p• 24).

## **Alternative education: Learning styles, alternative assessment, and democratizing or concept of human intelligence**

Alternative education and learning styles are the same thing. They arose together historically and complemented each other. Although the traditional schooling system is gaining respect for the idea (Scheid, 1999) that different children learn in different-ways, they have not endorsed the logical sequence or obvious implications of learning styles: Educational alternatives -- schooling alternatives-learning alternatives -- testing alternatives.

For example, let us take an average middle school student and her learning style. Let us say it is global, the student likes to move around, is visual/spatial oriented, she overflows with an obvious interpersonal intelligence and likes to draw. The student is working with a group of 4th graders on a "Where's Waldo" type of mural/collage covering the American Civil War. The piece will be a permanent fixture in the elementary school. The student is a member of a 7th grade U.S. History class.

What would be the best way to assess this student's knowledge of this very important historical event? What about a 5-page essay, double spaced, with references? Would an objective true-false/multiple choice test, the same one given to the class, due? Or would an oral presentation to the teacher or to another 4th grade class be more apropos? A video of the project, from start to finish, could be impressive. Too subjective? Are dates, places, and names what is important here? How can educators measure what the student actually learned? What does drawing, getting along with others, planning and meeting goals, or creating a presentation have to do with the civil war? All of these questions are very important.

Guild (1998) asks these same valuable questions. Sternberg (1997b) tries to compromise and has an objective exam, The Triarchic Abilities Test, that uses a multiple choice format to assess creative/quantitative and practical/figural, as well as analytical/verbal: understanding of class information and course objectives. Combs (1997) suggests that the use of alternative assessments is more "authentic." She supports performance assessment because (1) it requires students to use higher order thinking skills, (2) provides alternative formats, (3) encourages students to experiment with various media and technologies, (4) tests what students actually learn, and most importantly, (5) it provides an alternative to failure because it provides multiple opportunities to succeed.

Yet, standardization or sorting via standardized tests dominate schools and curriculum at all levels -- nationally, and the state and local districts. Alternative education, due to its emphasis on learning and learning styles, naturally encourages "testing styles." Why, although some view alternative measurement as more authentic assessment (e.g., Mazano, Pickering and McTigue, 1993), do not more districts consider other forms of assessment? Does it not make sense that students be tested in the *manner they* learn? How can one type of test assess the variety of intelligences or ways of knowing and understanding?

Of all the components of schools that we may wish to revise, none is more visible, as controversial, or as far-reaching. as assessment (Smith, 1997, p. 61)

In a word, "politics" prevents many districts from seriously considering alternatives to assessment as well as *instruction*. Smith (1997) states it bluntly: Alternative assessment implies **reform and chances** in the present state of affairs. Having a variety of ways to judge the value of a student's performance -- what they know and are able to do -- challenges the existing conditions because:

1. it supports and models the redistribution of power
2. it increases participation through practice at democratic decision making and greater access to standards; and
3. it provides greater equity through community consensus about standards, open discussion of hidden assumptions, and the virtual presence of other readers (p. 61).

Redistribution of power, democratic decision-making, and equity are indeed alternative education's code words for reform and a challenge to the status quo. Why would an established group, who holds claim to what it means to be intelligent and who creates exams that sort students based on that interpretation, open up that definition so that there are many ways to be smart? Smith (1997) answers:

Our paradigm of learning and assessment must evolve. We need assessment and learning that recognizes the social and reciprocal nature of language. We need to find ways of assessing student collaboration and problem-solving. We need to take progress into account, not just product. We need to value, through our assessment model, multiple ways of knowing, multiple perspectives on critical issues, and creative ways of addressing these issues. Students and teachers alike must be given the major responsibility for their own learning, along with the institutional support that such growth requires.

We must be willing to face what Lunsford has called 'the ideological freight of our tests,' to explore alternatives to assessment and instruction, and to continue to make changes that will prepare our children for the coming century. Not to do so would be unthinkable (p. 69).

Would alternative assessment corrupt the present school system'-or make it more diversified? Would it dumb down the curriculum or expand it? Would it affect America's competitive edge in the world or help it? Would it lead to some "perfect" society or be society's downfall? Williams (1998) suggests we democratize the concept of *human* intelligence by including in it more and different types of abilities and talents. Her research questions the standard IQ tests and their advocates who say this exam provides a meaningful measure of a person's innate intelligence. To her, this begs the question: Why are so many individuals with low or moderate IQ's so successful in their daily lives? An answer can be found, she believes, in recent research that broadened the concept of intelligence:

Researchers today are demonstrating empirically the importance of many abilities that are not measured on IQ tests (p. 41).

Are social, practical, emotional, or creative "intelligences" mere facets of a "greater" academic IQ or distinct forms? Should there be just one bell curve (academic) or 7 bell curves for each student (Skromme, 1998)? Will encouraging schools to develop and assess all our abilities, to use all of our brain, lower the (standards) ceiling or raise the floor? Will alternative -assessment and other educational alternatives create mediocrity or an aristocracy for everyone (Barber, 1992)? Williams (1998) summarizes the argument:

We owe the next generation a broader and more relevant battery of tests, designed to measure the many varied abilities that contribute to success in the real world. Better tests will lead to the admission of applicants with a wider variety of skills, thus further diversifying the pool of talent which is available to our society (p. 42).

Expanding what it means to be smart, expanding the definition of school success, expanding ways to include and diversify the pool of talent available to society is what is beneficial for everyone, including the majority.

### **Conclusions: Alternative Education Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow**

Reviewing the last 150 years of education in this country, we can see that no special variety of schools has emerged. Reflecting the diversity that is the United States, government, private groups or individuals: religious organizations, business and labor, and even students themselves, all have created and promoted a/their concept of education.

#### **"We cannot ignore alternatives"**

As well, looking over the more recent period since 1970, a similar insight can be gleaned: The public is not satisfied with the status quo. This is illustrated by the persistent discussion and debate over privatization, Charters, tuition tax credits, vouchers, options, alternatives, and even school and class size.

Consequently, the questions are no longer. - if and when various options to the traditional public schools will emerge, but what kind. This is a good place to be. Those involved with alternative education have an opportunity to prove the value of their approach to education. Now they have examples, research, and the best practices to demonstrate, beyond the doubts of 30 years ago, why alternative education works (De La Rosa, .1998).

Some educators predict that a variety of public and private alternatives are inevitable. Although there may not be a single style of alternative to the standard, there could be -instead, "levels of alternatives from the most traditional to the avant garde" (Hurst, 1994). Others see most of the changes coming from outside the public school system from home schooling, Charters, vouchers, and private/parochial school expansion -- with a special emphasis on elementary schools (*Knutson, 1996*)

#### **Alternative high schools: Models for the future?**

Knutson believes that the main, innovation that has come from within the public schools is the alternative high school. As districts realized the economic costs due to the drop out/push out problems, they have created alternative high schools for the "discouraged learner." Characterized by being small,- designed by those who are in them, are a choice of both students and staff, are exempted from standard bureaucratic procedures, and by having a sense of community in the school, many states such as New York, Wisconsin, and Michigan are creating options. Knutson envisions expanded alternative high schools that "stretch" to meet the needs and interests of the gifted/talented or any student who would be better served if they were provided options such as: flexible scheduling, courses not offered elsewhere, open enrollment, accelerated learning, college credit, informal climate, shared decision making, alternative assessment, hands-on/action learning, customized curriculum, small classes, learning options, or extended internships/apprenticeships for experience and credit. This would be an option to any student who did not prefer the present standardized and bureaucratized high school that isolates subject-matters, teaches with an emphasis on rote memory, and that have "a student management system that focuses on compliance with authority" (Knutson, 1996).

Knutson concludes his essay on public alternative high schools:

Both private innovators and existing standard schools would, do well to examine the alternative high schools.

Today's large problem-plagued high schools should look at the successful alternative high schools for a model for better meeting the needs of today's youth. The learning community formed in these schools is the key. Commonbond learning communities can be the central idea around which can be developed the complex balance of environment and forces needed to really meet the needs of today's and tomorrow's youth (p. 124)

Also, many of the non-public schools have tended to focus on the elementary level. The private/parochial sector has been reluctant to take on the more difficult problems of keeping the most at-risk high school students engaged, public alternative schools have not (Knutson, .1996).

### **Another model for the future: A K-12 year-round education school**

Futurists in the early 1980s like Toffler and Naisbitt predicted the present debate over the standardized and bureaucratic oriented, factory model school system. They indicated pressure from outside the system would come to bear if changes did not come from within. The one-size-fits-all sorting sameness that was the basis of the standard school system, could not meet the demands of the information and technological age that would require of its citizens both creativity and diversity (Knutson, 1996).

Glines (1999) has an answer to the hodgepodge of predictions mentioned so far in his concept of the year-round education K-12 school. To Glines, year-round education (YRE) would, first of all, eliminate schooling. YRE would create different school calendars, entirely new learning systems, and multiple structured choices. Glines has 69 or more characteristics of his K-12 YRE school, parts of which have been mentioned earlier, but are embellished here:

- non-graded environment. (no more 1,2,3,7,10 syndrome)
- teaming rather than self-contained classroom teachers
- daily flexible/non-scheduled self-directed student responsibility time arrangements rather than rigid conventional or block periods
- all day food service
- inter-dependent futures-oriented curriculum
- individualized learning and personalized programs
- altered facilities to create centers for services or interests
- school-without-walls opportunities
- focus on strengths, not weakness, in seeking achievement
- elimination of report cards through self-directed assessment
- students select own facilitators and advisors
- family designed conferences
- cross-age tutoring
- students go at their own pace, alone or in small groups
- there are no graduation requirement and attendance is optional
- students complete goal sheets with their selected staff --students pass courses or are graduated when ready with the approval of their advisor, parents, and a review committee (p. 1-7).

Glines (1999) suggests that a K-12 YRE school be based on these values: (1) Learning is life, (2) Learning occurs everywhere, (3) People can learn on their own, (4) Everyone is important no matter how much they know, (5) Authority is shared by all, (6) Education is a lifelong process of learning, and

should be tailored to meet the needs and interests of the individual, and (7) People will form positive social networks on their own without formal schooling (p. 5).

### **Better public relations: Two approaches**

Two possible approaches to better public relations and thus the removal of alternative education's bad image are to review what is behind the present "popularity" of Remedial and Last Chance alternatives and why Popular Innovations are better. Both state and local alternative education divisions need to create a public relations campaign informing the general public about Type I vs Type II/III options.

It would be much better for the 'public. image of alternative education if the general population well-as traditional educators and school administrators knew more about the drawbacks of what most think of when alternative schools are mentioned -- perhaps then there would be less support and more scrutiny of these transition "discipline" schools. What would happen to the public's image of the Type II/III alternatives if . they knew about Kelly's (1993) critique? She puts forward these limitations of transition alternatives:

- used as a district-wide disciplinary threat
- viewed as expecting less of students
- a source of low status and negative labeling
- an institution devalued by the mainstream educational community
- used to mask actual district drop out rates
- viewed as a dumping grounds to warehouse those students who pose problems
- have a low success rate compared to their original intent
- perpetuate social, political, economic, and gender inequalities
- segregate and stigmatize and this actually hampers success
- although viewed as a "second chance" are not necessarily a better chance
- a schooling solution that is at best, naive and at worst a pernicious prescription
- to many cases merely prolonging the inevitable disengagement of students

Insightfully, Kelly also.-notes that the creation of Remedial programs act as a "salve" for the conscience of school administrators. Or, in psychological-political terms, district administrators are projecting their school's own inadequacies onto the students they send to alternatives so that they do not have to face the fact that school-climate (large schools, depersonalization/deindividualization, inflexibility, fragmented curriculum, compliance to authority, low expectations by teachers, one size fits all over diversity) may be just as important in determining school success as is an individual student's behavior, socioeconomic level, race, gender, or academic level (Barr & Parrett, 1995). As long as it is the student who needs to change, the home school does not have to. As long as it is the student who needs "fixed," (Raywid, 1994) the school will not have to restructure. As long as a district has alternatives to beef-up-and-send-back students, school administrators will not have to face the contradictions and complications of these programs. Thus, they can continue to feel good about a tactic other educators conclude, "...may be a misguided policy alternative..." (King, et al .1998). As long as school districts can make alternative schools appear to the public as a remedy for individual rather than institutional failings (Kelly,. -1993), they won't be held responsible for the problems of the public schools. State and local alternative education divisions must expose-this-rationalization because over time this strategy will help no one as well as limit the growth and development of traditional schools.



Besides letting the public know about the objections and problems that are inherent in Type II/III "alternatives," a campaign to advertise what is best about genuine alternative public schools of choice can help change public opinion.

### **Best practices: "'The (too) Quiet Revolution'"**

There is cause for optimism for the public schools and alternative education. As a result of over 30 years of development, research and evaluation have finally begun to provide a clear, consistent set of conclusions that can be translated into recommendations for effective school programs. And the results come from a number of distinctly different, independent efforts that seem to intersect and form a core of common conclusions about alternative public schools.

State and local divisions of alternative education now have the body of information that is the best practices of alternative education. The best practices suggested by Young (1990, p. 45-52), Raywid (1994), Barr and Parrett (1995, p., 33-63), Kellmayer (1995), and Smink (1997) must be advertised and distributed to parents, students, teachers and administrators so that they will be able to make informed decisions. Presently, their information is limited to the narrow view that alternatives are "soft jails" for "bad kids."

If parents, for example, were made aware of the results of a current study, "Academic Achievement and Parental School Involvement as a Function of High School Size" (Gardner, Ritblatt, Beatty, 2000) they may change their mind about this issue. Gardner, et al., found that although academic achievement scores were higher at large schools (enrollments over 2,000), small schools (200-600 students) displayed lower absenteeism, lower dropout rates, and higher parental involvement. Although the discrepancy in academics was attributed to the greater resources, specialized services, higher teacher quality, and better facilities, the other factors of absenteeism, etc., were attributed directly to school size. Parents can not add this information into their decision making process if they are uninformed. How and who will help them and others get all the facts? Whose responsibility is it, the traditional or non-traditional schools? Perhaps if parents and school personnel had all the facts in front of them they would demand smaller schools. Unless the state and local non-traditional education divisions make sure this information is advertised, we may never know the answer.

### **Educational testing: To standardize or customize assessment?**

Another issue is assessment. Due to the politics of high stakes testing, the public continues to be misinformed and uninformed about all the facts surrounding the limitations of traditional assessment. What if parents and students were made aware of "testing styles" as a function of learning styles? What if students were given several ways or choices to demonstrate what they learned or how what they learned met curriculum guide outcomes? Would parents or students choose a standardized test? Would they choose product, authentic, portfolio or performance assessment? Perhaps Schurr (1998) is right: Both nontraditional assessment and traditional measure are essential to the schooling process. Middle school educators, for example, are moving toward authentic types of measurement that focus less on recall of information and more on processing information (p. 22). Issues raised by Reigeluth (1997) on standardized or customized learning/assessment, and by Shields (1997) on the relationship of non-traditional ways of assessment and empowering and advocating for students to improve education for all students. How much would the current negative image of alternative education change if the public knew that the present methods of testing may not be the best way to measure what students actually learn: and, a more suitable alternative assessment technique, what ever it might be, would be more authentic and valuable. The general public needs the information necessary to make intelligent

decisions about the best way to measure learning and comprehension. State and local alternative education divisions must let parents know that they do not have to accept one-size-fits-all assessments: there are alternatives.

### **Educational alternatives: "...the importance of expanding options in the public school setting" and polishing the image of alternative education**

Another part of the second approach to better public relations and . alternative education is to inform citizens about the possibilities involved with the consumer-oriented approach intrinsic to alternative education. From its inception, alternative education set out to provide families and students with a smorgasbord of schooling and learning options. The growth in quality and quantity of alternative public schools of choice provides obvious evidence that when given choices, all "kinds, of students choose non-traditional schooling and learning styles. This is why Indianapolis Public School Board member Kelly Bentley went to observe the Milwaukee Public Schools and its voucher program. Although she was impressed by the system and its voucher options, she recognized what was obvious to alternative education people, "What it made me realize is the importance of expanding options in the public school setting" (Holiday, 2000).

Fortunately, for many families, students, and school districts, this is what alternative educators concluded and acted upon over 30 years ago. Now the continued development of alternative public schools has led to school districts embracing the concept of options in public schools to the extent that some educators and school boards are saying 'it is a "national movement" (Hardy, 2000). More importantly the power of public schools of choice is being reflected in educators and professional publications that suggest not only creating an alternative school or program, but give this advice, "Policymakers...should move quickly to create a new alternative system of public schools, one that would operate parallel to the mainstream system" (Walk, 2000).

These two articles and IPS Commissioner Bentley's remarks were very, very positive impressions and endorsements of alternative education. Not one of the schools mentioned or implied in Hardy or Walk articles even came near being a punitive or get-back-on-track option. And to re-emphasize, the proposals were not limited to an alternative school, but a whole district-wide system of options, different but equal to the mainstream, so that when families/students entered, they would have a choice between traditional and non-traditional approaches. These ideas are a public relations windfall. Nothing this comprehensive has been taken this seriously at this level since the first years of alternative education. How can an entire parallel system of alternative public schools, that are "changing and improving the way we educate kids," that are "trailblazers," that can neutralize the attractiveness of vouchers, and can "introduce more variety, more choice, and competition without undermining public education" (Walk, 2000) have a bad image?

### **A parallel system of educational alternatives: A vision**

What would a parallel system of innovate public schools look like? For example, 'the parallel system of public schools could be called: Other Learning Individual Options (O.L.I.O.). Barr and Parrett (1997) suggests these kinds of programs: open schools, Montessori schools, continuous progress schools, traditional/fundamental schools, self-directed learning schools, Waldorf schools, Paideia schools, schools with a focus on multiple intelligences, schools for the performing arts, schools for math, science, and technology, environmental schools, dropout and dropout prevention schools, schools with an academic/career emphasis, experimental learning and schools without walls, schools within a school, "Cluster" alternatives, extended-day schools, and alternatives in cooperation with community colleges.

Glines (1992) might suggest the parallel OLIO system look like this:

These should be designs for each individual, with multiple varieties of implementation styles, such as large conventional schools, small conventional schools, schools-within-schools, programs-within-schools, experimental learning centers, large non-traditional schools, small non-traditional schools, person centers, schools-without-walls, community based schools, special focus schools, and magnet centers. When schooling is replaced by learning, in the .21st Century, the word school should disappear from the title. Choices of 'regular programs' create educational alternatives for all youth, which in turn, lead to transitions and transformations toward the future (p. 7).

Other possible kinds of options or particular programs might be: service learning schools, political science/international relations schools, future teachers/education magnets, space science programs, fire science academies, veterinary science school in a school, Success for 'All programs, democratic schools, Accelerated schools, distanced learning programs, community learning centers, storefront/street academies, alternative adult education programs, day-night schools, the middle college high school concept, engineering magnet, food science academy, Back-to-Basics programs, brain-based learning centers, zoo schools, interdisciplinary academies, city/urban planning academies, schools within children's museums, parks and recreations career academies, psychology/philosophy/religious studies academies, human relations magnets, anthropology academies, and Tomorrow/future magnets.

The variety of educational alternatives is equal to the variety and diversity of the needs and interests of the consumer -- America's families and children. Alternative education is approaching a very critical point in its development. Provided the public is made aware of what alternative education is and has always been about, it is . possible the negative image will disappear. When, through a strong "information campaign" and a public relations strategic plan, the public comes to understand that the variety and flexibility of educational alternatives can meet the needs and interests of students that the traditional system can not, thus like. a valuable missing :part or' ingredient of a recipe, complementing the traditional system, making it balanced, integral, and whole-- they will not only remove the bad image, but directly support genuine alternatives;

### **Sustaining change: Bow do we make lasting improvements?**

The assertion concerning how to eventually get the general public to understand and then directly support educational alternatives is reflected in Scherer's (2000) 4 ways to sustain change once it does occur. She recommends 4 commitments necessary for lasting improvements:

- (1) Commitment from the community. Reforms that come strictly from within the school community die hardest for those who believe them. Reformers, must capture the public imagination and help create a broad social movement if the reforms are to live on.

If alternative education is to lose its negative image, it can begin to create a strategic plan to "capture the public imagination and help create a broad social movement." Prepared and "advertised" correctly, state and local alternative education divisions can get the public interested, supportive, and even excited about the researched and proven possibilities of this well developed alternative for those who are underserved by the traditional schools.

(2) Commitment to an ideal. Educational reforms that last reflect a deep rooted social concern for democracy, for equity, or for preparing students to lead fulfilling lives.

By definition, alternative education is about equity and the democraideal of shared decision-making. It was because of the conventional one-size-fits-all mold of the traditional public school system that alternative education was conceived. By definition, traditional Schools had no equity. By using one standard, one criteria reflected on a bell curve, certain students were deemed “failures.” Grading on the curve, by definition, labels some students as “lacking...” According to Skromme’s 7 Ability Plan, 7 bell curves, not just one, would be a more equitable way of judging and assessing a student’s strengths (1989). Alternative education, alternative learning styles, alternative assessments; this is equity. As well, by definition, genuine Type I alternative schools are created by the school staff, the parents, and the students – who share a vision, share in its monitoring, and share in the decisions that create the climate, rules, curriculum, or grading process. A shared vision and continual shared decision making is what makes these “trailblazing” schools work and thus the title: Type I/Popular Innovations. (Raywid, 1994)

(3) Commitment from educators. A reform that lasts promotes teaching and learning and in doing so insists that teachers grapple with questions about what improves learning.

One of the most important concepts that made alternative education so viable was: There is no one best way to learn. Before this idea was popular, the traditional system saw no link between individual differences and effective instruction. It did not respond to the many different ways in which students absorbed, processed, and retained information and skills.(Dunn & Dunn, 1988) Alternative schools realized this and applied it to the understanding that “failing” students could and did learn quite well outside of the classroom in their own activities and hobbies because they were free to learn in a “style” that was natural for them and reflected their mind’s innate and individual approach to processing information and understanding the world. Alternative learning styles came to mean “a biologically and developmentally imposed set of characteristics that make the same teaching methods wonderful form some and terrible for others.” (Dunn & Dunn, 1988) Alternative education by its very definition is research and development oriented. Alternative educators are constantly doing what Scherer (2000) suggests teachers must make a commitment to do in order to sustain the restructuring alternative education has brought about and that is by experimenting and manipulating factors so that school works for kids. Teaching students the way they learn and allowing students to learn in their “style” is what makes alternative schools so successful.

(4) Commitment from leaders. Leadership is the key to reform that has breath, depth and is sustainable over time. (p. 5)

State and local divisions of alternative education and their directors must provide leadership by taking on the responsibility to inform both the civil and educational “public” about genuine alternative education. They must, through public relations campaigns, challenge the policy that alternative education is just for the “chronically disruptive,” but a schooling and learning approach open to any student who, if a choice were there, would choose a non-traditional climate, non-traditional learning options, and non-traditional assessment. Going beyond legislative lobbying, going beyond education conferences, and going to the general public so that they can see that there is a way to educate those students who do not function well within the system by providing alternative schools of choice, will remove the bad image.

## **In closing . . .**

A review of the present public school system throughout America would reveal that it is most likely not the way the Romantics of the late 1700s would have preferred. It is much more like what many of the educational reformers of the 1960s and 1970s wanted. Looking back over the past 40 years alternative educators can be pleased. Barr notes:

Before alternative schools, our definition of education was narrow. We believe that everyone learned in the same way and should be taught in the same way using a common curriculum. We believed that everyone learned in the same way and should be taught in the same way using a common curriculum. We thought all schools should be alike. We thought that children and their parents were incapable of making decisions about what and how they learned. We now know that we were wrong, that there is no single best way for all to learn. We also know that though open/alternative education worked for some, it is not necessarily best for all: Not everyone should be in the same traditional classroom, but the inverse is also true. Alternative schools helped us understand that different students could best learn in very different ways. (Young, 1990, p. vi)

This will be the legacy of alternative education – that it was the rainbow lens through which citizens viewed their schools to see if America was living up to its promises, especially equal educational opportunity. Alternative education has set a benchmark that will be used to judge, challenge, and resolve any interest, biases, or agendas that would keep our children and youth from developing their talents, using their abilities, and reaching their full potential.

Traditional education has brought the United States this far. Yet, characteristically, it was limited and exclusive because its “definition of education was narrow.” Now American education must be inclusive. American education must embrace diversity. It must respect and nurture variety. It must bring its promised equity to education. And it will. Alternative education is the American education.

Thus, alternative education can no longer be a “second-class citizen.” Continually confining it to this status helps absolutely no one. Those administrators and policy makers in the public schools can no longer drown out suggestions and ideas for many different types of alternative schools for many different types of students. The public schools must not fear that popular/innovation alternatives of choice will “kill comprehensive schooling.” Farrace (1998) has an intriguing and surprising view of this. Pointing out that traditional schools should not feel challenged by alternative education proposing new models, ideas or new reforms, but instead see that alternatives complement the traditional system. By feeling secure enough and flexible enough to co-opt alternative education’s successes, they make the conventional stronger. Will the more mainstream use of alternatives give this schooling style the “institutional legitimacy” many educators feel it needs? “For the sake of continued progress, let’s hope never” is Farrace’s answer. (p. 2)

Is the goal of alternative education still to become mainstream, to restructure the traditional schools, to have no regular education and no alternative education as Glines suggests, or as Khol suggested earlier, just “decent education?” Or is it more valuable to society to have a dynamic, a dialectic – a continuing evaluation and evolution by having both traditional and non-traditional systems? If alternative education is absorbed into the mainstream (many of its ideas are presently being promoted, e.g., Patterson, 2000; Zakariya, 1999) will American schools lose their vitality without this critical, outside-the-box antagonist?

Kunjufu (1996) warned many reformers, as well as traditionalists, that this could be the case. His insights came from those civil rights veterans who, when looking back, pointed out the irony of that historical movement with respect to the present and concluded: “When we got what we wanted, we lost what we had.” When African-Americans were, so deservedly, welcomed into the mainstream, they lost the cohesiveness, the community/economic solidarity they had and had to have to survive. Many became complacent, moved up “the ladder of opportunity,” losing the historic neighborhood roots that kept them identified, strong, and vigilant. The old neighborhood “village” it took to raise a child was gone, eventually eliminated by the success of this same civil rights and universal justice movement.

Will this happen to the American public school system? If alternative education becomes mainstream, a part of the status quo, will the present “traditional” school system lose its pestering “gadfly,” its shadow conscience that keeps it honest? And what will happen to alternative education? Will it lose its identity, its “fight,” its flexibility, its creativity, its very “Romanticism” when it is no more the stepchild of the system, no longer a second-class citizen, no longer the “wastebasket” of the traditional schools, no more stigma, no more labels, no negative image? What if, in fact, this homely stepchild turns out to be the beautiful and handsome “good genius” of the public schools?

Today, alternative education is characterized by a duality. This is illustrated in the wide spectrum of schools that have come to represent this approach. Viewed through the classifications and Raywid’s Type I, II, III “alternatives,” alternative education can presently be seen as embodying both the strengths and weaknesses of the public schools. In many respects, Type II and III programs, by their very being, represent the inadequacies of the traditional schooling style. Type I alternatives also expose these deficiencies because these non-traditional schools claim to do education better by “doing it differently.” In very broad terms then, the necessity and existence of alternative schools can be viewed as a reminder of both institutional/societal and individual failings.

On the other hand, alternative education can be viewed as a vanguard of change, an example of hope, the crucible of research and developments that will improve education for everyone. Physicists created “quantum mechanics” to understand how light could be both a wave and particle. In what ways can we understand how alternative education has come to represent both the worst and best practices of the public schools and what this present duality implies about the essence of the situation being discussed?

To help solve this puzzle, while at the same time bring insight into the past, present, and future of alternative education and the public schools, let us see what two researchers have to say. Their writings review and present in a nutshell the thesis of this work – the issues, arguments, and implications of alternative education’s so-called negative image. Let the following final two paragraphs act as a koan for contemplation. Perhaps, intuition, not reason, will bring enlightenment.

A review of a very typical Type II/III alternative school can help both traditional and non-traditional educators look in the present for understanding. Johnston and Wetherill (1998) write:

‘Finding experts in unexpected places’ by Amy Bauman situates alternative schooling within the critical tradition of educational research. Jackson School serves primarily as a last chance, remedial function for students aged 10 to 15, most of whom have been suspended from their home school for serious violations (e.g., fighting, carrying weapons, drug possession). The curriculum of Jackson is oriented toward providing instruction to facilitate development of students’ self-control and social skills in order to adapt to the demands of the regular school system. A predominant theme among faculty is one of imposing discipline through ‘consistency, attention, and care’ while avoiding negative stereotyping. One of the continuing difficulties noted in the study is that by privileging

behavior management, student may not be receiving the types of academic instruction necessary to maintain progress once they return to the regular school. In this regard, the long-term effectiveness of Jackson maybe marginalized, while the district is able to rationalize eventual student failure by arguing that every effort was made to provide appropriate alternatives. (p. 181)

Bauman (1998), herself, concludes with these caring, encompassing, discerning, and thought provoking remarks:

Ultimately, we need to examine why certain groups do not have the institutional access to acquire the cultural capital necessary to succeed in the existing schools. And why for them, a school like the Jackson School becomes their only ‘choice.’ (p. 259).

## References

- Abbott, J. (1997). To be intelligent. Educational Leadership 54, 6: 6-10.
- After Breakfast (circ. 1969-1971). Underground publication of a group of Arsenal Technical High School students in Indianapolis.
- Albert, B. (1996, November 29). Panel backs more alternative education. The Indianapolis Star pp. B1, B7.
- Albert, B. (1997a February 28). Governor's school and police bills clear panel. The Indianapolis Star p. D5.
- Albert, B. (1997b, September 12). Schools vie for alternative education cash. The Indianapolis Star p. D4.
- Altenbaugh, R. (Ed.). (1999). Historical Dictionary of American Education. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Alternatives in Indiana (1977). Indiana Department of Education.
- Arnove, R. and T. Strout. (1978). Alternative schools and cultural pluralism: Promise and reality. Functional Research Quarterly, 2, 4: 74-95.
- Barber, B. (1992). An Aristocracy for Everyone. NY: Ballentine Books.
- Barr, R. (1972). The age of alternatives: A developing trend in education reform. Changing Schools, 1, 1: 1-3.
- Barr, R. (1973). Reflections on educational reform. Changing Schools 2, 2: 1-6. .
- Barr, R. (1975). The growth of alternative public schools: The 1975 ICOPE Report. Changing Schools 12, 9.
- Barr, R. and V. Smith. (1976). Where should learning take place? Issues in secondary education: The 75th yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education. Van Til, W. (Ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Barr, R., W. Parrett, and B. Colson. (1977). An analysis of 6 school evaluations: The effectiveness of alternative public schools. Viewpoints, 53, 4: 1-30.
- Barr, R. (1981). Alternatives for the 80s: A second development; Phi Delta Kappan 62, 8.
- Barr, R. and W. Parrett. Hope At Last for At-Risk Youth. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Barr, R. and W. Parrett. How to Create Alternative, Magnet, and Charter Schools That Work. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.
- Bauman, A. (1998). Finding experts in unexpected places: Learning from those who have failed. High School Journal 81, 4: 258-267.
- Bhaerman, S. and J. Denker. (1971). No Particular Place to Go: The Making of a Free High School. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Bishop, J. and J. Spring. (Eds.). (n.d.). Formative Undercurrents of Compulsory Knowledge. Cuernavaca, Mexico: CICOC.
- Blackburn, S. (1994). The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Bowers, C. (1987). The Promise of Theory. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Boyer, E. (1983). High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America. New York: Harper and Row.
- Broad, L. (1997). Alternative Schools: Why, What, Where, and How Much. Arlington, VA: National School Public Relations Association.
- Brown, L. (1971). The Way We Go to School. Boston: Beacon Press.



## References

- Buckman, R. (1996, April 17). Candidates say 'alternative' schools needed. The Indianapolis Star, pp. E1, E6.
- Bullock, A. and S. Trombley. (Eds.). (1997). Harper Dictionary of Modern Thought. New York: Harper and Row.
- Caine, R. and G. Caine. (1991). Making Connections: Teaching and the Human Brain. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Caine, R. and G. Caine. (1997). Brain/Mind Learning Principles Chart. Educational Leadership, 54, 6: 14.
- Changing Schools (n.d.). Since 1972: The Journal of Alternative Education. Bloomington, IN. Now published in Education Revolution. Roslyn Heights, NY: AERO.
- Combs, D. (1997). Using alternative assessment to provide options for student success. Middle School Journal September: 3-8.
- Costello, R. (Ed.). (1994). The American Heritage Dictionary. (3rd ed.). New York: Dell Publishing.
- Culpper, B. (Ed.). (2000). Alternative Network Journal. Ithaca, NY: At-Risk Programs Network Inc.
- De La Rosa, D. (1998). Why alternative education works. High School Journal 8.1, 4: 268-272.
- Dunn, R. and K. Dunn. (1978). Teaching Students through Their Individual Learning Styles: A practical approach. Reston, VA: Reston Publication Company.
- Dunn, R. and S. Griggs. (1988). Learning Styles: Quiet Revolution in Secondary Schools. Reston, VA: NASSP
- Ellsbury, J. (1997). Learning Unlimited program: The four C's of creating caring communities. Reaching Today's Youth 1, 2: 54-57.
- Epstein, K. (1998, March 3) An urban high school with no violence. Education Week.
- Fantini, M. (1973). Public Schools of Choice: A plan for the reform of American education. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Farber, J. (1969). The Student as Nigger. New York: Pocket Books.
- Farrace, B. (1998). Considering the alternatives. High School Magazine 6, 2: 2.
- Fizzell, R. (1975) The Schooling Style Inventory. Vancouver, WA: EduServe.
- Fizzell, R. and M. Raywid. (1997). If alternative schools are the answer ...what's the question? Reaching Today's Youth 1, 2: 7-9.
- Frazer, L. and N. Baenen. (1988). An Alternative for High-Risk Students: The School-Community Guidance Center Evaluation, 1987-88. Austin, TX: Office of Research and Evaluation, Austin Independent School District.
- Freire, P. (1970). Pedagogy of the Oppressed. New York: Continuum Publishing Company.
- Friedman, M. (1962). Capitalism and Freedom. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gardner, J. (1983). Frames of Mind: The theory of multiple intelligences. New York: Basic Books.
- Gardner, P., S. Ritbatt, and J. Beatty. (2000). Academic achievement and parental school involvement as a function of high school size. High School Journal 83, 2: 2.1-27.
- Glass, R. (1995). Alternative schools help kids succeed. The Education Digest 60, 5: 21-24.
- Glines, D. (1992). Educational Alternatives: Philosophy and History. Sacramento, CA: Educational Futures Project.

## References

- Glines, D. (1999). Changing Learning for 21st Century Year-Round Education. Sacramento, CA: Educational Futures Project.
- Gold, M. and D. Mann. (1984). Expelled to a Friendlier Place: A study of effective alternative schools. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Goodlad, J. (1984). A Place Called School. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Goodman, P. (1960). Growing Up Absurd. New York: Random House.
- Goodman, P. (1964). Compulsory Miseducation. New York: Vintage Press.
- Gregory, T and G. Smith. (1987). High Schools as Communities: The Small School Reconsidered. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa.
- Gregory, T. (1993). Making High School Work: Lessons from the Open School. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Gregory, T. (2000, March). Fear of success? Ten ways that alternative schools pull their punches. Paper presented at Indiana Alternative Education Conference, Columbus, IN.
- Groves, P. (1998). Meeting the needs of 'at-risk' students: The day and night school. High School Journal 81, 4: 251-257.
- Guild, P. and S. Chock-Eng. (1998). Multiple intelligence, learning styles, brain-based education: Where do the messages overlap? Schools in the Middle 7, 4: 38-40.
- H. A. L. O. (Hoosier Alternative Learning Options). (1995, June 29). Back Home Again in Indiana: The Silver Anniversary Meeting of Alternative Education (Program Guide) p. 2. Bloomington, IN.
- Hamovitch, B. (1999). More failure for the disadvantaged: Contradictory African-American student reaction to compulsory education and urban schooling. Urban Review 31, 1: 55-77.
- Hardy, L. (2000). Public school choice: The ideas of options in public education is taking hold. The American School Board Journal 187, 2: 22-26.
- Harrington-Lueker, D. (1995). Ideas for alternative schools for troubled kids. Education Digest 60, 8: 18-22.
- Hegener, M. and H. Hegener (Eds.). (1992). Alternatives in Education. Tonasket, WA: Home Education Press.
- Henley, P. and J. Fuston. (2000). Rescuing elementary school troublemakers. Education Digest 65, 8: 48-52.
- Hentoff, N. (1967). Our Children are Dying. New York: Viking Press.
- Herndon J. (1968). The Way It Spozed to Be. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Herrmann, N. (1990). The Creative Brain. Lure Lake, NC: Brain Books.
- Holiday, R. (2000, April 13). When adults discuss options in education, the kids win. The Indianapolis Star, p. B1.
- Holt, J. (1964). How Children Fail. New York: Delta Books.
- Holt, J. (1967). How Children Learn. New York: Dell Books.
- Holt, J. (1976). Instead of Education: Ways to help people do things better. New York: Dutton.
- Holt, J. (1981). Teach Your Own: A hopeful path for education. New York: Delacorte Press.
- Holt, J. (1989). Learning All the Time. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Houck, T. (1997). Alternative Education Programs in Pennsylvania. Harrisburg, PA: Government Relations and Publications.
- How to Organize a High School Underground. (n.d.). Washington, DC: Cooperative High School Independent Press Syndicate.
- Hurst, D. (1994). We cannot ignore alternatives. Educational Leadership, 52, 1: 78-79.

## References

- Illich, I. (1971). De-schooling Society. New York: Harper and Row.
- Johnston, B. and K. Wetherill. (1998). HSJ Special Issue Introduction: Alternative Schooling. High School Journal 81, 4: 177-182.
- Kellmayer, J. (1995). How to Establish an Alternative School. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Kellmayer, J. (1998). Building educational alternatives for at-risk youth: A primer. High School Magazine 6, 2: 26-31.
- Kelly, D. (1993). Last Chance High: How Girls and Boys Drop in and out of Alternative Schools. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Kentucky Board of Education (1997). House Bill 330. Mandates alternative (Type II/III) schools. Frankfort, KY.
- Khol, H. (1967). 36 Children. New York: New American Library.
- King, L., M. Silvey, R. Holliday, and B. Johnston. (1998). Reinventing the alternative school: From detention to academic alternative. High School Journal, p. 81, 4: 229-243.
- Knutson, G. (1996). Alternative high schools: Models for the future? High School Journal 79, 12: 119-124.
- Korn, C. (1991). Alternative American Schools: Ideals in Action. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Kozol, J. (1967). Death at an Early Age: The destruction of the hearts and minds of Negro children in the Boston Public Schools. Boston, MA: Houghton-Mifflin.
- Kozol, J. (1972). Free Schools. New York: Bantam Books.
- Kunjufo, J. (1996). Restoring the Village, Values, and Commitment: Solutions for the Black family. Chicago, IL: African-American Images.
- Lammel, J (1998). On the Agenda. High School Magazine 6, 2: 1.
- Lange, C. (1998). Characteristics of alternative schools and programs serving at-risk students. High School Journal 81, 4: 183-198.
- Leue, M. (Ed.). (1998) SKOLE: The Journal of Alternative Education. XV, 3. Albany, NY: Down to Earth Books.
- Loflin, J. (1987). Convenient Coincidences: A History of the Indianapolis Public Schools Since 1921. Unpublished oral history.
- Loflin, J. (1995). Who is Homo Curaos? Unpublished paper presented at IPS Chartwell Summer Alternative Conference. July, 1997. Indianapolis, IN.
- Loflin, J. (1997). A history of the development of alternative education: 1600 to 1997. Unpublished paper presented at the IPS Chartwell Conference. August, 1998. Indianapolis, IN.
- Loflin, J. and T. Ogle. (2000) National Center for Alternative Education. www.natalted.org. E-mail natalted@indy.net Indianapolis, IN.
- Maeroff, G. (1982). Don't Blame the Kids: The trouble with American Schools. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Marzano, J., D. Pickering, and J. McTigue. (1993). Assessing Student Outcomes: Performance assessment using the Dimensions of Learning model. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- McCann, T. and H. Landi. (1986). Researchers cite program value. Changing Schools 14, 2: 2-5.
- Mintz, J. (1989, November) AERO-GRAMME, The newsletter of the Alternative Education Resource Organization. Roslyn Heights, NY: AERO.
- Mintz, J. (Ed.). (1995). Almanac of Education Choices. New York: McMillin.

## References

- Moore, M. and L. Olsen. (1982). Voices from the Classroom: Students and teachers speak out on the quality of teaching in our schools. Oakland, CA: Citizens Policy Center.
- Nathan, J. (1989). Public Schools by Choice: Expanding opportunities parents, students, and teachers. St Paul, MN: Institute for Learning and Teaching.
- A Nation at Risk: The imperative for educational reform. (1983). Washington, DC: National Committee on Excellence in Education.
- No More Teachers' Dirty Looks. (n.d.). San Francisco, CA: Bay Area Radical Teachers; Organization Committee.
- Oakes, J. (1993). Forward. Written to introduce Last Chance High, by D. Kelly. pp. xi-xiv. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Ogbu, J. (1995). Cultural problems in minority education: Their interpretation and consequences. Urban Review Part One, 27, 3: 189-205; Part Two 27, 4: 127-297.
- Ozmon, A. and S. Craver. (1999). Philosophical Foundations of Education. (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Patterson, W. (2000). Grounding school culture to enable real change. High School Magazine 7: 5-9.
- Poole, C. (1997). Maximizing learning: A conversation with Renate Nummela Caine. Educational Leadership 56, 4: 11-15.
- Powell, A., E. Farrar, and D. Cohen. (1985). Shopping Mall High School. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Powell, J. (1998). Postmodernism for Beginners. New York: Writers and Readers Publications.
- Prystowsky, R. (Ed.). (1999). Paths of Learning: Options for families and communities. Brandon, VT: Holistic Education Press.
- Rasberry, S. and R. Greenway. (n.d. circa 1970s) Rasberry Exercises-How to start our own school (And make a book). Albion, CA: Freestone Publishing Company.
- Rayle, J. (1998). The Exploration Alternative School: A case study. High School Journal 81, 4: 244-250.
- Raywid, M. (1981). The first decade of public school alternatives. Phi Delta Kappan 62, 8: 551-557.
- Raywid, M. (1982). The Current Status of School Choice. Hempstead, NY: Project on Alternative Education.
- Raywid, M. (1990). Successful schools of choice: Cottage industry benefits in a large system. Educational Policy 4, 2: 93-103.
- Raywid, M. (1994). Alternative schools: State of the art. Educational Leadership 52, 1: 26-31.
- Raywid, M. (1998). The journey. of the alternative schools movement: Where it's been and where it's going. High School Magazine 6, 2: 10-14.
- Reigeluth, C. (1997). Educational standards: To standardize or customize learning? Phi Delta Kappan 79, 3: 202-206.
- Reimer, E. (1971). School is Dead: Alternatives in Education. Garden City, NJ: Doubleday.
- Riessman, F. (1962). The Culturally Deprived Child. New York: Harper and Row.
- Sagor, R. (1997) Alternative programs for at-risk students: Wolves in sheep's clothing? Reaching Today's Youth 1, 2: 18-22.
- Scheid, M. (Ed.). (1999). Indianapolis Public Schools Strategic Plan. Key Result Area One. IPsis. 2, 1: 4.
- Scherer, M. (Ed.). (1994a). The New Alternative Schools. Educational Leadership 52, .1. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

## References

- Scherer, M. (1994b). On schools where students want to be: A conversation with Deborah Meier. Educational Leadership, 52, 1: 4-8.
- Scherer, M. (Ed.). (1997a). How Children Learn. Educational Leadership, 54, 6. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Scherer, M. (1997b). Perspectives/How do children learn? Educational Leadership 54, 6: 5.
- Scherer, M. (Ed.).(1998). How the Brain Learns Educational Leadership 56, 3. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Scherer, M. (2000). Perspectives/How do we make lasting improvement? Educational Leadership 57, 7: 5.
- Schneider, M. (1999, June 11). Gilroy reiterates mayoral agenda at event in park -- Expansion and long-term support of alternative school programs for disruptive students. Indianapolis Star, p. B1.
- Schurr, S. (1998). Teaching, enlightening: A guide to student assessment. Schools in the Middle 7, 3: 22-31.
- Senate education panel OKs flexible measures: Alternative schools. (1997, March 27) Indianapolis Star , p. B12.
- Shields, C. (1997). Learning about assessment from Native American schools: Advocacy and empowerment. Theory and Practice 36, 2: 102-109.
- Shor, I. (1986). Culture Wars. Boston, MA: Routledge and Kegan.
- Shujja, M. (Ed.). (1994). Too Much Schooling, Too Little Education: A paradox of Black life in white societies. Trenton, NJ: African World Press.
- Skool Resistance (n.d.) Fred Moore (Ed.). Palo Alto, CA.
- Skromme, A. (1989). The 7 Ability Plan. Moline, IL: Self-Confidence Press.
- Skromme, A. (1998). Causes and Cures of Dropouts: Seven bell curves for each student. Moline, IL: Self-Confidence Press.
- Smink, J. (1998). All students can learn: Best practices for alternative schools. Reaching Today's Youth 1, 2: 65-68.
- Smith, G., T. Gregory, and R. Pugh. (1981). Meeting students needs: Evidence for the superiority of alternative schools. Phi Delta Kappan 62, 8: 561-564.
- Smith, J. (1997) Alternative assessment and successful school reform: Power, participation, and equity. Equity & Excellence in Education 30, 3: 61-70.
- Smith, V. (1974). Alternative Schools: The development of options in public education. Lincoln, NE: Professional Educators Press.
- Smith, V. R. Barr, and D. Burke. (1976). Alternatives in Education. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Education Foundation.
- Solida, M. (2000, June 2). Blacks expelled at higher rate. Indianapolis Star, pp. A1, A2.
- Sternberg, R. (1997a). Thinking Styles. Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Sternberg, R. (1997b). What does it mean to be smart? Educational Leadership 65, 4: 20-24.
- Trump, L. (1977) A School for Everyone: Design for a middle, junior, or senior high school that combines the old and the new. Reston, VA NASSP.
- Urmson, J. and J. Ree. (Eds.). (1989). Concise Encyclopedia of Western Philosophy and Philosophers. London, England: Unwin Hyman Ltd.
- Wang, M. and M. Reynolds. (Eds.). Making a Difference for At-Risk Youth. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

**References**

- Wilkins, S. (1996, January 14). Remarks made at IPS Board of School Commissioners/Education Committee meeting. Indianapolis, IN.
- Williams, W. (1998). Democratizing our concept of human intelligence. Education Digest 64, 4: 39-42.
- Wolk, R. (2000, April) Perspectives: Alternative Answer. Teacher Magazine, p. 6.
- World Book Encyclopedia. (2000 ed.). Chicago, IL: World Book, Inc.
- Young, T. (1990). Public Alternative Education: Options and choices for today's schools. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Zakariya, S. (Ed.). (1999) Special Issue: Humanizing America's High Schools. American School Board Journal 186, 9. Alexandria, VA: NSBA.

**John Loflin** \* 2455 Shelby Street Apartment One \* Indianapolis, Indiana 46203  
317-788-6604 [johnharrisloflin@yahoo.com](mailto:johnharrisloflin@yahoo.com)

**Educational Philosophy**

Humans are learners. Students learn in various ways. Through alternative approaches, students can be successful.

**Professional Objective**

To secure a position in a school that believes it is the school and the way they teach that is alternative, not the students.

**Related Education**

Indiana University, M.S., Alternative Education, 1975-1982

Alternative Schools Teacher Education Program (ASTEP)

Purdue University, B.A., Social Studies Education, 1961-1967

**Related Teaching Experiences**

- Indianapolis Public Schools, Tech High School, *Social Studies Instructor*, 8/2001-1/2002
- Indianapolis Public Schools, Forrest Manor Middle School/Alternative Classroom, *Organizer and Instructor*, 1/2001-6/2001
- Indianapolis Public Schools, Community Academy Alternative, *Organizer and Instructor*, 8/1999-1/2001
- Ameri-Corps/Coaches for Success, Community Academy Alternative, *Organizer and Instructor*, 8/1998-8/1999
- Indiana University/Upward Bound Program, *Tutor*, 1/1993-6/1994; 10/1994-6/1995
- Indianapolis Public Schools, *Substitute Instructor*, 1/1993-6/1993; 1/1995-6/1996
- Washington Township Schools, Indianapolis, *Substitute Instructor*, 10/1991-6/1993
- Clark College/Devington Career Center, Indianapolis, *Instructor*, 11/1982-7/1989
- Cities-in-Schools, Indianapolis, Tech-300/Indy Prep Alternative, *Organizer and Instructor*, 9/1976-9/1980
- Indiana University, Urban Education Program, *Student Teacher Supervisor and Indianapolis Coordinator*, 9/1972-6/1974
- Community Action Against Poverty/Highland-Tech Youth Council, Indianapolis, Highland-Tech Street Academy, *Organizer*, 6/1969-12/1969
- VISTA, OIC/Adult Armchair Education Program, Philadelphia, *Instructor--St. Ann's Tutorial Project, Tutor*, New York City, 7/1967-8/1968

**Related Experiences**

- CTB/McGraw-Hill, Indianapolis, *ISTEP Exam Scorer/Table and Group Leader*, 7/1995; 10/1996-1/1997; 9/1997-4/1998

**Other Experiences**

- Urban Walls Project, Indy Prep/CETA, *On-Site Artist and Youth Worker*, Summer 1979 and Summer/Fall 1980
- West Indianapolis Town and Community Organization, *Youth work/Community Organizer*, 10/1972-10/1973
- Highland-Tech Youth Council, Indianapolis, *Youth worker/Community Organizer*, 10/1968-12/1969

**Organizations**

- National Center for Alternative Education, Indianapolis, *Co-Founder*, 2/2000 to present
- Parents, Residents, Educators, and Students for Type-I Options (P.R.E.S.T.O.), Indianapolis, *Founder*, 1999 to present
- International Association of Learning Alternatives (IALA), *Member*, 7/2001 to present
- Hoosier Alternative Learning Organization (HALO), *Member*, 1998 to present

**Presentations at Conferences**

- National Coalition of Title I/Chapter I Parents Region V Conference, Indianapolis, *Learning Alternatives*, 3/2002
- Indianapolis Public Schools, Chartwell Alternative Conference, *Who is Homo curaos? and The Nothing Curriculum, Quality, The Glass Bead Game, Cloning, Holograms, The Brain, Mind Maps, and Arvogadro's Constant: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Individual and Group Curricula*, 8/1998.
- Indianapolis Public Schools, Chartwell Alternative Conference, *A History of Alternative Education: 1600-1997*, 8/1997
- Indiana State Teachers Association Conference on Instruction, Indianapolis, *A Learner's Bill of Rights*, 11/1995

**Related Writings and Projects**

- *You Can't Understand Michael Fullan Until You Understand Post-modernism: Reculturing before Restructuring*--written for Indianapolis Public Schools Carnegie Grant initiative to restructure schools, 2/2001
- *Alternative Education's Spoiled Image: When it happened, how it happened, why it happened, and what to do about it*, 8/2000
- A Proposal for a K-12 Alternative Public School of Choice, 9/1997
- Convenient Coincidences: Oral Histories of the Indianapolis Public Schools since 1921
- A Proposal to Re-invent the Concept of Adolescence and Create a Community Youth Charter, 1993

**Board Memberships**

- Tindley Accelerated School--proposed charter high school, 1/2002 to present
- Indianapolis Algebra Project, 6/2001 to present

**Special Skills**

- \* Initiated individualized instruction, service learning projects, and internships
- \* Familiar with alternative assessments
- \* Created and instructed courses in Juvenile Delinquency, social studies, and developmental classes in reading, math, and English grammar
- \* Professional experiences performing music, painting watercolors, writing plays *Kimbi*--a musical drama about a young wife and mother returning to school      *Mr. Henry J. Richardson*--an historical drama about a local civil rights activist
- \* Understands Rites of Passage--*Most Honorable Tribal Elder*/Men Allied for Leadership Empowerment (MALE, Inc.)--initiation group, Indianapolis, 6/2000
- \* Ability to communicate with grassroots persons
- \* Responded to the adolescent situation in youth work and student relations