General Directions for the Pseudo-Alternative Checklist

1. Alternative program/school staff: Respond to Form ONE
   (very general best practice criteria) or Form TWO
   (more specific best practice criteria), add up the points,
   transfer the totals to the last page, and compare grand
   total number to the standards.

2. Read "Understanding the Pseudo-Alternative Checklist." (Attached at end)

3. Read the "The Best Practices of Authentic Alternative
   Schools."   (Attached at end)

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PSEUDO-ALTERANATIVE SCHOOL CHECKLIST

Form ONE

School _____

Date_____

Checklist Scorer_____

Score_____

Form ONE p. 1

Directions This checklist will help you see how your alternative program/school compares to a variety of very general best practices of alternative education. To complete the list, review each statement in a lettered section (A through J). Select one or more statements in each section that you agree describe your school/program and circle the number(s) in the column to its right. Then add the total circled in each section. When completed, adds the various sections (A-J) together on p.7 for a grand total. Compare your amount with the very general benchmarks.

People Issues

A. <u>CONTROL OF WHO ATTENDS</u>   Circle score if you agree with one or more
                                             of the statements and add at each total   Notes

Students are allowed to pick our program/school…………..……………………5

Our alternative program does not take students referred or sent by other
schools unless this is a free choice by the student or parent/guardian………5

Only in a few cases are we forced to accept a referral…………………………...4

In less than half the cases does someone else pick our students for us…….3

Most of the time the district/school principal requires we accept a student….2

Students are not allowed to pick our program/school…………………………1

In no case do we have control over who attends our program/school……….1

                                                                           A Total _____

B. <u>HETEROGENEITY OF THE STUDENT BODY</u>

Our program/school is open to any student in the district…….…….…………5

We actively recruit a heterogeneous student body--a mix of
students similar to the demographics of the district.………………………….5
..
Everyone in the district knows about our program/school……………………4

We screen students to assure a good fit.………………………………………3

Only students who have behavior problems may attend……………..…………2

Only students with drug problems or violent behavior attend.………………..2

Only students who lack interest in school or who have
attendance problems attend our program/school……………………………..2

Our program/school maintains a "low profile" in the district/community…….2

                                                                           B Total _____

C. TIME OF ENTRY

We have complete control over when students enroll
and begin our program/school………………………………………………….5

Our entry procedures are a special event marking an important
beginning, orientation and welcoming to the program/school………………..5

Our entry procedures are routinized; they're not that special..………………2

We are required to take students on a daily and weekly
basis, or at the convenience of the sending school…………………………1

We have no control over when students enter our program/school………….1

<div align="right">C   Total _____</div>

D. CONTROL OF WHO TEACHES

We have complete control over who teaches at our site……………………...5

Out teachers are here by choice…………………………………………………5

Our teachers share the program's/school's philosophy and values………….3

Some in the district view being required to teach at "the alternative"
a form of punishment or a sign they are ineffective teachers………………..2

Many of our teachers are assigned to our site……………………………….2

Most or all of our teachers were assigned to our site…………………………1

<div align="right">D   Total_____</div>

Identity Issues

E. DEFINING A SCHOOL

We have complete control over defining the identity our program/school…..5

We have complete control of the information about
our program/school made available to the public……………………………..5

Our staff assists in the creation of our purpose/ mission………………………5

The parent(s)/guardian(s) of our students assist in the creation
of our program/school, its mission and objectives……………………………..5

Our program/school can be an example to lead other district
programs/schools toward restructuring…………………………………………5

Our staff understands the purpose/mission of our program/school………….3

We feel some in our district are confused about our program/school………..2

Some in our district speak disparagingly of our program/school................2

We feel many in our district misunderstand our program/school................2

The greater community needs to know more about what
goes on in our program/school..2

Our program/school accepts the district's definition of our program/
school as "a school for _____"--a particular kind of student *(at-risk,
pregnant girls, adjudicated youth, expelled, underachieving, low-motivated)*...................2

We have only partial control of determining the identity of our
program/school...2

Our staff is sometimes confused about the purpose and mission
of our school...2

Our program/school has a stigma...1

Our program/school is used as a district wide disciplinary threat.…...……..1

Our program/school is treated like a "second-class citizen" by the district....1

<div align="right">E Total_____</div>

F. <u>UNIQUENESS</u>

Our program's/school's purpose is to create powerful engaging
programs that stretch students in ways they never envisioned.................5

The students in our program/school require a very different
delivery system for their learning compared to the conventional...............5

Our program/school is small--between 50-300 students..........................5

Our program/school is very non-traditional...5

Our students may freely participate at their choice in courses
and extra-curricular programs at the conventional schools on the
same basis as students in the conventional program............................5

Our program/school enables easy movement back and forth with the
conventional school so our students have free choice and/or can take
advantage of the conventional school's special/unique offerings..............4

Our program/school is a safety net for students who are underserved
by or fall through the cracks of the regular school system........................4

Our program/school is somewhat non-traditional...................................3

Our program/school operates as another "track" of the
student's home school...2

Our program's/school's purpose is to prepare students to re-enter
the mainstream/return to their home school…..…...............…………2

Our program/school operates as a safety valve for the home
school and allows it to remove students they find difficult……………….2

Our program/school enables our students easy movement back and forth
with the conventional schools to convenience the conventional school…… 2

Our program/school is very much like the traditional since our job is to
return them to their regular school……………………………………2

Our program is quite limited in breath of courses and
extra curricular activities it can offer……………………………...1

F Total_____

Equity and Parity Issues

G. <u>THE PLACE OF SCHOOL</u>

Our facilities are equal to any in the district.……………………………5

Our program is so different from standard schooling we require
new forms of space………………………………………………..5

Our facilities send a positive message to our students about their worth…...5

Our facilities are about average when compared
to most facilities in the district………………………………………….3

Our facilities are sub-standard compared to others in the district…………2

Our facilities send the wrong message to students about their worth……….1

G Total_____

H. <u>A FAIR SHARE OF THE RESOURCES</u>

Our program/school receives its fair share of the district's resources……….5

Our program/school receives its fair share of the
infrastructure/overhead costs from the district…………………………5

Our program/school sometimes receives it fair shared
of the district's resources………………………………………………3

Our program/school seldom receives its fair share
of the district's resources………………………………………………3

We fear our district considers our program/school too costly………………..2

Our district considers our program/school too costly…………………………1

H Total_____

Programmatic Issues

I. PROGRAM INTEGRITY, COMPLETENESS, AND STUDENT LEARNING/ASSESSMENT/ PARTICPATION

Our program/school is complete; it is not necessary for our
students to do a portion of their work at the conventional school…………….5

Our program/school defines learning in other ways than
group instruction and occurs in places other than school……………………..5

We believe our students have different learning styles and our
teachers have different instructional styles…………………………………..5

Our students are allowed to participate in the planning and
governance of the school/program.………………………………………….5

We use multiple intelligence learning inventories and concepts……………..5

Each of our students has a Personal Learning Plan…………………………..5

We define our graduation requirements in more authentic ways
than traditional grades and credits………………………………………………5

We use cooperative learning.…………………………………………………..4

We use community and service learning…………………………………….4

Our students have some input into our school rules/school climate…………3

We do not modify our curriculum and instruction to meet the
Individual needs of our students…………………………………………………2

We do not use any non-traditional concepts/methods since our students
must be prepared to be successful in the traditional schooling approach…..2

Our program/school is on a half-day schedule………………………………2

Our students do not help define the character of our school…………………1

The staff, not students, determine the rules/regulations
of our program/school…………………………………………………………1

Our school calendar/bell schedule matches that of the regular school(s)….1

<div align="right">I Total_____</div>

J. GRADUATION AS CLOSURE

Our students may stay and be graduated from our program/school…………5

We do not believe in returning our successful students to the large,
less personalized environment of their home school………..………………..5

Some of our students, who must return to their home school,
would stay at our program/school it they could………………………………..4

Many of our students would agree with this statement: You mean
I have to go back now because I'm being good? But, I like it here!

Well, how bad do I have to be to stay?……………………………………4

Since our goal is to prepare students to re-enter the conventional
setting, they may not graduate from our program/school……………..……..2

Our program/school tends to ship students back to the mainstream
to make room for students who need our program/school more…………….1

J Total_____

Section Totals

A _____
B _____
C _____
D _____
E _____
F _____
G _____
H _____
I _____
J _____

GENERAL BEST PRACTICES SCALE

Totally genuine alternative…. 286-242
Mainly genuine alternative…..241-194
Mostly genuine alternative…..193-145
Somewhat "alternative"........144- 97
Pseudo-alternative…………. 96 and below

+_____
  Grand Total

Comments

<u>Pseudo-alternative Checklist References for Forms ONE and TWO</u>

The major contribution to the survey came from:

Gregory, T. (2001, April). Fear of Success? Ten Ways that Alternative Schools Pull Their Punches. *Kappan Special Edition: Alternative Education.* Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa.

Other contributions were from:

Barr, R. and W. Parrett. (1995). *Hope At Last: For At-Risk Youth.* Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Barr, R. and W. Parrett. (1997). *How to Create Alternative, Magnet, and Charter Schools that Work.* Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.

De La Rosa,. D. (1998). Why Alternative Education Works. *The High School Journal* 81, 4: 268-272.

Glines, D. (2002). *Educational Alternatives for Everyone.* Minneapolis, MN: International Association of Learning Alternatives.

Gregory, T. and G. Smith. (1987). *High Schools as Communities: The Small School Reconsidered.* Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa

Kellmayer, J. (1995). *How to Establish an Alternative School*. Thousands Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

King, L., M. Silvey, R. Holliday, and B. Johnson. (1998). Reinventing the alternative school: From detention to academic alternative. *The High School Journal* 81, 4: 229-243.

Learning Through Choice: Another Choice, Another Chance. (1995). Brochure report of the Michigan Alternative Education Organization (MAEO).

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. *The High School Magazine* 6, 2; 10-14.

Smink, J. (1998). All Students Can Learn: Best practices for alternative schools. *Reaching Today's Youth*. 1, 2: 65-68.

PSEUDO-ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL CHECKLIST

Form TWO

School _____

Date_____

Checklist Scorer_____

Score_____

<u>Directions</u>   This checklist will see how your alternative program/school compares to the specific best practices of alternative education. To complete the list, review each statement in a lettered section (A through J). If one or more statements in each section describe your program/school, circle the number(s) in the column to its right. Then add the total for each section. When completed, add the various sections (A-J) together on p. 6 for a grand total. Compare your amount with these specific best practices benchmarks.

People Issues

A. <u>CONTROL OF WHO ATTENDS</u>   Circle score if you agree with one or more
                                                                    of the statements and add at each total   Notes

We have complete control over who attends our program/school……….....5

Students are allowed to pick our program/school…………...……………….5

Only in a few cases are we forced to accept a student…………………….....4

In less than half the cases does someone else pick our students for us…….3

Most of the time the district/school principal requires we accept a student….2

Students are not allowed to pick our program/school………………………….1

In no case do we have control over who attends our program/school……....1

                                                                                A Total _____

B. <u>HETEROGENEITY OF THE STUDENT BODY</u>

Our program/school is open to any student in the district……………………5

We actively recruit a heterogeneous student body--a mix of
students similar to the demographics of the district…………………………..5

Everyone in the district knows about our program/school……………………4

Our program/school is designed for certain students………………………….3

Only students who have behavior problems may attend………….…………2

Only students with drug problems or violent behavior attend………………..2

Only students who lack interest in school or who have
attendance problems attend our program/school…………………………......2

                                                                                B Total _____

C. TIME OF ENTRY

We have complete control over when students enroll
and begin our program/school………..…………………………………………5

Our entry procedures are a special event marking an important
beginning, orientation and welcoming to the program/school………………..5

Our entry procedures are routinized; it's no big deal………………………….2

We are required to take students on a daily and weekly
basis, or at the convenience of the sending school……………………………1

We have no control over when students enter our program/school…………1

                                                                    C   Total _____

D. CONTROL OF WHO TEACHES

We have complete control over who teaches at our site……………………...5

Out teachers are here by choice……………………………………………………5

Our teachers share the program's/school's philosophy and values…………3

Some in the district view being required to teach at "the alternative"
a form of punishment or a sign they are ineffective teachers………………...2

Many of our teachers are assigned to our site……………………………………2

Most or all of our teachers were assigned to our site…………………………1

                                                                    D Total_____

Identity Issues

E. DEFINING A SCHOOL

We have complete control over defining the identity our program/school…..5

We have complete control of the information about
our program/school made available to the public………………………………5

Our program/school has a clear mission and objectives………………………5

The parent(s)/guardian(s) of our students assist in the creation
of our program/school, its mission, and objectives.……………………………5

Our program/school can be an example to lead other district
programs/schools toward restructuring.…………………………………………5

Our staff assists in the creation of our mission/objectives….…………………..3

We feel some in our community/school district are confused
about the mission and purpose of our program/school………………..……..2

We accept the district's definition of our program/
school as "a school for _____"--a particular kind of student *(at-risk,
pregnant girls, adjudicated youth, expelled, underachieving, low-motivated)*……………….2

We have only partial control of determining the identity of our
program/school……………………………………………………………………2

Our staff is sometimes confused about the purpose and objectives
of our program school……………………………………………………………1

Our students are sometimes confused about the purpose and
objectives of our program/school……………………………………………..1

<div align="right">E Total_____</div>

F. <u>UNIQUENESS</u>

Our program's/school/'s purpose is to create powerful engaging
programs that stretch students in ways they never envisioned………………5

The students in our program/school require a very different
delivery system for their learning compared to the conventional…………….5

Our program/school is small--between 50-300 students……………………..5

Our program/school is very non-traditional.…………………………………5

Our program/school is a safety net for students who fall through
the cracks of the regular school system.………………………………………..5

Our program/school is somewhat non-traditional……………………………...3

Our program/school's purpose is to prepare students to re-enter and
be successful in the mainstream/home school…………………………………3

Our program/school operates as another "track" of the
student's home school……………………………………………..……..2

Our program/school operates as a safety valve for the home
school and allows it to remove students they find difficult.…………………..2

Our program/school enable easy movement back and forth with
the conventional schools………………………………………………….2

Our program/school is very much like the traditional since our job is to
return them to their regular school……………………………………………2

F Total_____

Equity and Parity Issues

G. THE PLACE OF SCHOOL

Our facilities are equal to any in the district.…………………………………5

Our program is so different from standard schooling we require
new forms of space………………………………………………………..5

Our facilities send a positive message to our students about their worth…...5

Our facilities are about average when compared
to most facilities in the district.………………………………………………3

Our facilities are sub-standard compared to others in the district……………2

Our facilities send the wrong message to students about their worth………1

G Total_____

H. A FAIR SHARE OF THE RESOURCES

Our program/school receives its fair share of the district's resources……….5

Our program/school receives its fair share of the
infrastructure/overhead costs from the district.………………………………5

Our program/school sometimes receives it fair shared
of the district's resources.……………………………………………………3

Our program/school seldom receives its fair share
of the district's resources………………………………………………………………2

H Total_____

Programmatic Issues

I. PROGRAM INTEGRITY, COMPLETENESS, AND STUDENT LEARNING/ASSESSMENT/ PARTICPATION

Our program/school is complete; it is not necessary for our
students to do a portion of their work at the conventional school…………….5

Our program/school defines learning in other ways than
group instruction and occurs in places other than school…………………….5

We believe our students have different learning styles and our
teachers have different instructional styles…………………………………….5

We use multiple intelligence learning inventories and concepts……………..5

Each of our students has an Personal Learning Plan…………..…………...5

We define our graduation requirements in more authentic ways
than traditional grades and credits……………………………………………5

Our school/program is democratic. Our students are completely
involved in school decisions such as vision, curriculum, school rules,
school activities, and school policies……………………………………….5

We use cooperative learning………………………………………………….4

We use community and service learning……………………………………..4

Our students have some input into school/programs rules and climate……..3

We do not modify our curriculum and instruction to meet the
needs of our students………………………………………………………..2

We do not use any non-traditional concepts/methods since our students
must be prepared to be successful in the traditional schooling approach…..2

Our program/school is on a half-day schedule………………………………2

Our school calendar/bell schedule matches that of the regular school(s)…..2

Our students do not help define the character of our school…………………1

The staff, not students, determine the rules/regulations
of our program/school……………………………………………………………1

                                         I Total_____

J. GRADUATION AS CLOSURE

Our students may stay and be graduated from our program/school…………5

We do not believe in returning our successful students to a
unsupportive, even hostile environment of their home school………………..5

Some of our students, who must return to their home school,
would stay at our program/school it they could……………………………..4

Since our goal is to prepare students to be successful in the
conventional setting, they may not graduate from our program/school……..2

Our program/school tends to ship students back to the mainstream
to make room for students who need our program/school more…………….1

                                         J Total_____

Section Totals

A _____

B _____   SPECIFIC BEST PRACTICES SCALE

C _____

D _____   Totally genuine alternative……260-220

E _____   Mainly genuine alternative…...219-176

F _____   Mostly genuine alternative…...175-132

G _____   Somewhat "alternative"……....131- 88

H _____   Pseudo-alternative……………..87 and below

I _____

J _____

+_____

Grand Total   Comments

Pseudo-alternative Checklist References for Forms ONE and TWO

The major contribution to the survey came from:

Gregory, T. (2001, April). Fear of Success? Ten Ways that Alternative Schools Pull Their Punches. *Kappan Special Edition: Alternative Education.* Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa.

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Barr, R. and W. Parrett. (1995). *Hope At Last: For At-Risk Youth.* Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Barr, R. and W. Parrett. (1997). *How to Create Alternative, Magnet, and Charter Schools that Work.* Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.

De La Rosa,. D. (1998). Why Alternative Education Works. *The High School Journal* 81, 4: 268-272.

Glines, D. (2002). *Educational Alternatives for Everyone.* Minneapolis, MN: International Association of Learning Alternatives.

Gregory, T. and G. Smith. (1987). *High Schools as Communities: The Small School Reconsidered.* Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa

Kellmayer, J. (1995). *How to Establish an Alternative School*. Thousands Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

King, L., M. Silvey, R. Holliday, and B. Johnson. (1998). Reinventing the alternative school: From detention to academic alternative. *The High School Journal* 81, 4: 229-243.

Learning Through Choice: Another Choice, Another Chance. (1995). Brochure report of the Michigan Alternative Education Organization (MAEO).

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. *The High School Magazine* 6, 2; 10-14.

Smink, J. (1998). All Students Can Learn: Best practices for alternative schools. *Reaching Today's Youth*. 1, 2: 65-68.

UNDERSTANDING THE PSEUDO-ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL CHECKLIST

Since the early 1970s, the concept of "alternative education" has been applied rather indiscriminately to so many different types of programs there is confusion and misunderstanding about its meaning. To some educators, students, and the public, it means small innovative public/private schools of choice. To others, alternatives are programs for violent youth, those who have abused drugs or alcohol, or who were raised in abusive homes. Still, to others, alternatives describe discipline oriented last chance "soft-jails" (Raywid, 1994) or programs that intend to rehabilitate or remediate students and return them to the mainstream. Over and above these options, some educators question any alternative for the at-risk (Sagor, 1997).

In *The High School Magazine*, alternative educator and researcher, John Kellmayer, noted, "Despite the thousands of alternative programs throughout the United States, a significant percentage of 'alternative' schools is 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" (1998, p. 29).

Also in the early 1970s, Indiana University, became the first school of higher education to identify and study a growing number of and small highly innovative public school options. It initiated and conducted the first 12 of the current 33 national alternative education conferences. The Indiana Department of Education published this excerpt by Indiana University professor/alternative education co-founder, Robert D. Barr, in *Alternatives in Indiana* (1977) titled, "What Is An Alternative School?" This benchmark definition notes,

> *In spite of the confusion and turmoil, there seems to be strong agreement*
> *on some criteria for defining alternative schools (regardless what you choose*
> *to call them)*
>
>   *--<u>Voluntary Participation</u> No student or teacher is arbitrarily assigned.*
>   *--<u>Distinctiveness</u> Each alternative is different from the conventional school.*
>   *--<u>Non-exclusiveness</u> The school is open to all students or voluntary basis.*
>   *--<u>Comprehensive Set of Objectives</u>*
>   *--<u>Learning Environment That Relates to Student Learning Styles</u>*
>
> *If any school or program does not have the above characteristics, it is simply*
> *not an alternative (p. 1).*

In light of the growing number of school districts, over the past 15 years, that have created alternative program(s)/school(s) due not only to the need to remove the "chronically disruptive" (Albert, 1996; Schneider, 1999), and/or keep suspended students in "school," notwithstanding the increasing funding available (Albert, 1997), it is important for district and alternative school administrators/staff to have a perspective, both current and historical, to compare/contrast with other programs based on the best practices researched and developed over the last 35 years. This

profile may provide the opportunity to see where school options fall on the genuine vs. pseudo-alternative scale and thus encourage an evaluation of the quality, potential, or effectiveness of "alternative" programs/schools.

The survey covers 5 areas. Some issues with options occur because of how decisions are made about the **people** who will inhabit alternative programs/schools. Others concern the very **identity** of these programs/schools and who or who does not shape them. Some have a direct impact on the **equality** and the amount of **parity** they enjoy. Yet, others play key roles in determining the quality of the **programs** that alternative programs/schools can mount (Gregory, 2001).

Form One covers a multitude of criteria, not necessarily based on the best practices, but on the literature in general—thus giving alternative school educators more to consider then they may have previously. Form Two is more streamlined and reflects the best practices.

Understanding The Pseudo-Alternative School Checklist References

Albert, B. (1996, November 29). Panel backs more alternative education. *Indianapolis Star*. pp. B1, B7.
Albert, B. (1997, September 12). Schools vie for alternative education cash. *Indianapolis Star* p. D4.
Alternatives in Indiana. (1997). Indiana Department of Education. Indianapolis.
Gregory, T. (2001, April). Fear of Success? Ten Ways That Alternative Schools Pull Their Punches. *Kappan Special Edition: Alternative Education*. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa.
Kellmayer, J. (1998). Building educational alternatives for at-risk youth: A primer. *The High School Magazine*. 6, 2: 26-31.
Raywid, M. (1994). Alternative Schools: State of the Art. *Educational Leadership* 52, 1: 26-31.
Sagor, R. (Winter,1997). Alternative Programs for At-Risk Students: Wolves in Sheep's Clothing? *Reaching Today's Youth.*
Schneider, M. (1999, June 11). Candidate Gilroy reiterates mayoral agenda at event in park—Expansion and long-term support of alternatives programs for disruptive students. *Indianapolis Star* p. B1

THE BEST PRACTICES OF AUTHENTIC ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

CHOICE

Students and teachers, all must be at an alternative voluntarily (Korn, 1991; Young, 1990). Options where students are sent/"sentenced" are by their very nature not alternative. For an alternative to work, it must be a place where students want to be (Scherer, 1994). Once students/staff want to be at an alternative, commitment results (Barr & Parrett, 1995). Genuine alternatives are alternatives *to* the traditional system; options where students are placed are alternatives *of* the system. Choice and alternative are the same thing.

The next most important practice is:

OPEN TO ANY STUDENT

To be a true alternative, any student may attend. Many students—the bored, alienated, the so-called below average, average, or "smart"; the progressive, political, "alternative," the so-called minority, or just "different," might choose an alternative if provided (Barr & Parrett, 1995; Glines, 2002). Many alternatives beg the question: If alternative programs are as good as many say they are, why are they not open to anyone (Loflin, 2003)? By limiting who attends, alternatives educators and citizens actually limit the potential of alternatives to help *all* students. As well, many students are sent to alternatives to be "fixed" (Raywid, 1994) while the system stays virtually intact. By limiting who attends, alternatives actually perpetuate the inadequacies of the conventional system because the very existence of alternatives may postpone more far-reaching restructuring of regular schools since rebellious or failing students are successfully segregated and labeled deviant. These alternative programs fail to question the "deep structure of mainstream schools." Deeply held beliefs concerning what is knowledge and learning, what is the purpose of education, or what is the relationship among race, class, gender, and the present traditional school system and success in life go unchallenged (Kelly, 1993). All of this can be best summarized by the assertion, "Learning alternative for everyone all the time" (Glines, 2002).

The 3rd best practice is:

CONTINUOUSNESS

Students must not only be able to choose to be at an alternative, but they must have the option to stay. Over the past 10-15 years, school districts/state legislatures have created "pseudo-alternatives" (Kellmayer, 1998). These are alternative in name only and represent ineffective and often punitive approaches that isolate, stigmatize, and segregate from the mainstream students who can be difficult. These programs were created to be a safety valve for the schools, not a

true alternative: a safety net for students (Kelly, 1993). Most districts make the mistake of creating programs where students attend for 1 or 2 periods a day, or sometimes for a semester or even a year. These programs by their very intent to quickly correct a problem and transition students back to the home school cannot work. Such programs tend to offer too little too late and cannot overcome the years of negative impact by the home, schools, and society (Barr & Parrett, 1995).

The next (4rd) most important practice is best characterized by the phrase:

THERE IS NO ONE BEST WAY TO LEARN

Alternative education and learning styles (Dunn & Dunn, 1978) are the same thing. The one size fits all concept of the traditional schooling approach cannot work for each and every student. The idea that we each learn differently (Scherer, 1997) is one of the main contributions of the alternative concept.

Traditional approaches, where large classes of students are given the same lectures, the same assignments out of the same book; given the same review and the same test, assumes all students are the same. Unfortunately, the Type II/III transition schools have no need/reason to respect learning styles, multiple intelligences, and brain-based learning concepts (Guild & Chock-Eng, 1998) or alternative assessments (Combs, 1997) since the goal is to return students to the mainstream. And in most cases, the students are not at these programs because of "learning problems," but behavior: being "chronically disruptive" (Albert, 1996; Buckman, 1996; Kentucky Board of Education, 1997). Thus, actually, these programs are more aligned with "day-treatment centers" than alternative schools/programs; and, their orientation sees no correlation between behavior and disaffection due to the traditional schooling experience (De La Rosa, 1998), and its narrow definition (Abbott, 1997; Skromme, 1989; Sternberg, 1997) of school success.

A genuine alternative school's curriculum/learning/assessment is: individualized, differentiated, self-paced, flexible, customized, personalized—providing alternatives (*a variety of different paths*) to the same goal that best suit/fit the student. If the program does not have a learning environment that relates to student learning styles, it is simply not an alternative (*Alternatives in Indiana*, 1977).

The following (5th) practice is:

SMALL

The research on small schools, let alone small alternative schools, is outstanding (Ayers, Klonsky, & Lyon, 2000; Barr & Parrett, 1997; Epstein, 1998; Gregory & Smith, 1987; Kellmayer, 1995; Newman, 2000; Raywid, 1998; Scherer, 1994; Scherer, 2002a; and Scherer 2002b). School sizes from 50 to 100 to 200 to 300

to not over 500 students have been mentioned. Small schools create a warm, friendly atmosphere that emphasizes personalization, caring, cooperation, and acceptance. In Indianapolis, Washington Township's North Central High School has 3,210 students in one very large building (Randall, Hayes, and Qualkinbush, 2003). That's just too big.

To dramatize this, in some instances, students have been known to "act up' after returning to the home school in order to return to the alternative (Raywid, 1994). In some instances students have acted up before they were to return to their regular school—all in order to stay at the alternative (Loflin, 2000). This can be attributed to the "warm, friendly, accepting" atmosphere of small schools. Here students, even though they understand that the alternative is/has a punitive orientation, like the personalized attention they receive through the "flexibility" of cfsmall programs (Gold & Mann, 1984).

This creates an interesting dilemma for "transition" schools: they cannot work too well, can't be too attractive, can't get students to do too well, or respect their teachers too much—or the students will start liking school and want to stay!

The final (6th) major best practice is:

SHARED-DECISION MAKING

From their inception in the early 1970's, having students and parents share in the decisions that affected the school was a major characteristic of alternative programs. In many ways this is what made them so different from the traditional public schools.   One would assume that the public schools in the United States would be teaching democratic ideals—modeling the ideals our government tries to spread around the world. Of course the adults, through elected school boards, have a say. And there is the PTA.

Yet, many studies on participation suggest although schools say they want parental involvement, they set up barriers to quality shared-decision making (Carr & Wilson, 1997; Khan, 1996).   Interestingly, public schools have no reputation for desiring students to help educators share in the decisions that affect these same students. They have student councils, but their power is limited. In light of the U.S. wanting democracy in China or Iran, one would assume automatically that its school system would have its students/future citizens heavily involved in learning how to be free…and responsible by giving students opportunities to be involved with school/classroom decisions at most levels (Gerson, 1997). However, they do not. This forms an environment of adult hypocrisy (Loflin, 1999).

Alternative educators knew from the beginning that this is what students needed to feel a part of a school, let alone a nation. The "Spirit of 76" was in their soul. They assumed that students tend to obey rules they helped create. They also

assumed that students would respect an authority they helped put in place. These are common democratic ideals. From the so-called Free School movement (Kozol, 1972) to today's alternative educators, providing students an opportunity to be a part of school/classroom decisions is characteristic (Barr & Parrett, 1995, 1997; Dugger & Dugger, 1998; Kellmayer, 1995, 1998; MAEO, 1995; Raywid, 1998; Smink, 1997).

Even mainstream educators are encouraging student participation in school and classroom decisions beyond the traditional (Khon, 1993; Schneider, 1996; Slater, 1994; Zachlod, 1997).

Along with these six proven best practices, can be added:

SERVICE LEARNING   From the beginning, alternative schools encouraged internships, apprenticeships, and community service. Many schools provided a special day for students to go into the community to explore, learn, volunteer, and help bring change (Barr & Parrett, 1995).

ALTERNATIVE SCHEDULING AND ATTENDANCE POLICIES   Providing the various options to the singularity of the traditional schooling system is another way alternatives were an actual alternative to the status quo's, "Our way or the highway," mentality.   Providing the flexibility through giving students class schedules and attendance options to fit their individuality and personal needs, shows kids adults care (MAEO, 1995).

ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT   Various styles of learning imply not only teaching styles, but "testing styles." Providing both teacher and student with a variety of evaluation methods creates more options for student success (Combs, 1997) than the traditional (sorting oriented) objective exam. This benefits both teacher and student. Alternative assessment also brings an equity (Smith, 1997) to grading that is missing from a "one size fits all" (Ohanian) standardized testing scheme.

CARING AND DEMANDING TEACHERS   Of all the components involved in an effective alternative school, teachers make the most difference. The perceptions and expectations of the teacher are the most important factors in determining student success (Barr & Parrett, 1995).

MODIFYING CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION   Providing an individualized curriculum and instructional approaches personalizes learning for many students who are underserved by traditional group instruction that fails to use "hands on," or community learning opportunities (MAEO, 1995).

A CARING SCHOOL CLIMATE   Programs/schools that have a warm, friendly orientation are quite successful.   Establishing a family atmosphere that emphasizes personalization, support, caring, cooperation, and acceptance work

for students who "fell through the cracks" or were "just a number" in larger, impersonal schools (Elam & Duckenfield, 2000; Gregory & Smith, 1987; Miller, 2000).

COMPREHENSIVENESS   Alternative schools must involve the community and have economic, social/family, and health components—as well as an academic orientation. These programs involve partnerships with business/industry/social agencies. They help all students to obtain the community services they need (Barr & Parrett, 1995).

CLEAR MISSION AND OBJECTIVES   There can be no confusion about the nature of the program/school. The community, school district staff, program/school staff, parent(s)/guardian(s), and students must have a clear understanding of its mission and objectives. This promotes staff and individual student choice/responsibility, and provides a clear way to assess program/school performance (Smink, 1998).

The Best Practices of Authentic Alternative Schools References

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