

Alternative Education

Intro IDEA 15 Alternatives of the status quo vs. alternatives to the status quo

Today most school districts have so-called “alternative schools.” This is stated this way because these are punitive programs *of* the school district where students (under-served by traditional schooling approaches) are sent. These programs are alternatives in name only. Teaching and learning resemble the classrooms the student experiences when returned to their home school.

“It’s our school and the way we teach that’s alternative, not the student.”

~ Paul Schwarz, Central Park East, NYC

Genuine alternative schools are programs students attend voluntarily: alternatives *to* the status quo. Voluntary attendance implies that the traditional school climate is partially responsible for student failure; it's not just the student. Alternatives where students are sent protect the tradition system from criticism since it is the student who needs "fixed." These are alternatives *of* the system, not the original alternatives *to* the system. So, alternatives that students attend voluntarily are both an educational and political threat to school districts.

IDEA 15 Alternatives of the status quo vs. alternatives to the status quo

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Alternatives-of-the-status-quo-vs-Alternatives-to-the-status-quo.pdf>

Intro IDEA 16 What are the characteristics of real alternative programs and schools?

What is understood as alternative education started in the early 1970s. The movement was inspired by the mid-1960s Southern Freedom Schools and the Black Independent Schools Movement. Both dovetailed into the Free School Movement and then into the 1970s movement toward Alternative Public Schools of Choice. The creation and development of Magnet Schools followed and developed into the current Charter movement.

Research has been collected regarding the characteristics of genuine alternatives schools and how the original model is mis-used as districts create disciplinary (“soft jail”) programs for students under-served by the systems schools, curriculum, pedagogy and assessments. See <http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Alternative-Educations-Spoiled-Image-When-it-happened-how-it-happened-why-it-happened-and-what-to-do-about-it.pdf>

IDEA 16 What are the characteristics of real alternative programs and schools?

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/What-are-the-characteristics-of-real-alternative-schools.pdf>

Intro IDEA 17 “Don’t call us alternative...”

As a local, national, and global-class consultant in learning alternatives, I found it necessary to use an alternative method to make my point about real alternatives vs. alternatives in name only. To do so, I composed a poem under my stage name, Dr. Monday. It is written from the stand point of a student in an alternative school setting.

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IDEA 17 “Don’t call us alternative...”

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Dont-call-us-alternative.pdf>

Intro IDEA 18 Embracing real alternative education: From second chance or last chance “soft jail” models emphasizing behavior to a pro-active academic model emphasizing learning, teaching, and assessment alternatives

It is confounding to take a concept coming out of:

- our courageous Freedom Schools in the South during the mid-60s
- the innovative and democratic urban alternatives and free schools
- the culturally pioneering Independent Black Schools movement
- the efforts of professors and students at Indiana University in the early 70s to challenge the “one best system” paradigm, and

turn this concept into our current involuntary and rigid IPS alternative programs punishing children for not doing well in failing schools!

“While acting as a salve for the conscience of the school board and district administrator who claim they care, IPS alternatives enable these same actors to avoid deep questions about the political relationship among race, class, ability, culture, gender, poverty, and school failure. Academies called Positive Supports, Step Ahead or Phoenix actually protect IPS from needed criticism since it is the student who needs ‘fixed’; meanwhile, the district goes unquestioned.”

~ John Harris Loflin, international alternative education consultant
<http://learningalternatives.net/weblog/post/category/loflin-john/>

- Here is the issue: In response to higher expectations and standards, districts developed alternative programs for students whose behaviors disrupted the learning of others.
- Here is the question: What is the best educational setting for these “school refusers”?

IDEA 18 Embracing real alternative education: From second chance or last chance “soft jail” models emphasizing behavior to a pro-active academic model emphasizing learning, teaching, and assessment alternatives

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Embracing-real-alternative-education-From-second-chance-programs-or-a-last-chance-soft-jail-model-emphasizing-behavior-to-proactive-academic-models-emphasizing-learning-teaching-testing-options.pdf>

Intro IDEA 19 Why wait until students become disruptive? Give under-served Black male students real alternative programs by following Recommendation #47 of the Indiana Commission on Disproportionality

Current IPS alternative schools and programs are alternative in name only. Once providing a *safety net* for students underserved by the traditional schooling approach, alternatives have become a *safety valve* for school staff, warehousing students that districts under-serve. Once a laboratory for innovation, alternative are now likened to “soft jails” where “bad” students are sent to be “fixed” and returned to the mainstream.

Perhaps districts also need genuine of alternatives which provide proactive options of choice where students want to be: *Why wait until students become disruptive?* Now the Marion

County districts have support from the 2008 report “Indiana Commission on Disproportionality in Youth Services” regarding alternative education: Recommendation No. 47, Legislation will be formed and adopted allowing existing school districts to establish proactive (“Type 5”) learning alternatives for students, teachers, and families within their given district.”

IDEA 19 Why wait until students become disruptive? Give under-served Black male students real alternative programs by following Recommendation #47 of the Indiana Commission on Disproportionality

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Why-wait-until-students-are-disruptive-Give-under-served-Black-male-students-real-alternative-programs-Follow-Recommendation-47-of-the-2008-Indiana-Commission-on-Disproportionality.pdf>