

Recommendation #47 Alternative Education

The 2008 Indiana Commission on Disproportionality in Youth Services Report
Legislation allowing existing school districts to establish proactive
learning alternatives for students, teachers, and families

In 2008, the commission published its report. One of the many ideas was Recommendation #47 dealing with alternative education. <https://education.indiana.edu/docs/section-specific/policy-council/2008-09/november-12,-2008/09.18.pdf> See p. 44.

Recommendation # 47 Legislative

Provide an expanded range of alternative options and vocational programs for those students who are at-risk for failure in the mainstream

C.) 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.

Rationale Currently, Indiana provides 4 types of alternatives.* The main goal of these options is to lower suspension and expulsion rates, and increase graduation rates. Statistics and graduation numbers imply Indiana alternatives do not work for marginalized students.

This recommendation seeks a policy were “difficult” students, who are normally sent to Indiana’s Type 1 (short term placement, <15 days) and Type 3 (long term placement for the chronically disruptive), may volunteer to attend an alternative. Let’s call them “Type 5” alternatives, options which are based on best practices of alternative public schools of choice. Here educators (who are also there by choice) know these programs provide a safety-net for students. They know students want to come to school and learn, and simply need the best environment for doing so.

Besides being based on choice, these programs are characterized by individualization, small size, close relationships within a family-like atmosphere, shared decision-making, caring and demanding teachers, and learning, scheduling, and assessment alternatives. Type 5 options, due to choice and school democracy, will be intrinsically viable and neutralize issues of/needs to “modify behavior” characteristic of Type 3 programs. The major goal of these programs cannot be to prepare students to return to the mainstream --though student may. This policy is flawed and encourages the safety-valve side of alternatives which perpetuate the flaws in our traditional school approach.

Type 5 programs could be charter-like schools individuals could start, or schools within a school, or any number of innovations that would spring up if educators where challenged and provided funds to create alternatives of choice—schools where students want to be.

Research and resources supporting Recommendation # 47

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Research-and-Resources-Supporting-Recommendation-47.pdf>

* Type 1 Short-term placement of <15 days for disruptive students; Type 2 Basically, these are credit recovery programs; Type 3 Long-term placement for the chronically disruptive. While continuing class work, modifies behavior and returns students to the mainstream; and, Type 4 Serves dropouts, teen mothers, and working students.

Recommendation # 47 was submitted by John Harris Loflin, Director of Education and Youth Issues of the Black & Latin@ Policy Institute.