

# EVALUATION OF JONES COUNTY'S ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL PROGRAM

by

DEONDRAY FARLAR

(Under the Direction of C. Thomas Holmes)

## ABSTRACT

The Jones County Alternative School Program (JCASP) was established during school year 1995-1996 and was designed for students who chronically interfere with their own learning and/or the education process of others and who require additional attention and structure beyond that provided through a traditional education program. In this study, high school students were studied with regard to academic achievement, attendance, self-concept, discipline, and goal setting opportunities before and after attendance at the alternative school. Data were gathered from school years 2000-2001, 2001-2002, 2002-2003, 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 from student records, surveys, observations, and stored computer records. Analysis of the data showed a statistically significant difference in the attendance rate, academic achievement, and discipline referrals of students who had been previously enrolled in the JCASP. Data revealed an improvement in student grade point average, attendance rate and discipline. However, no statistically significant differences were found in their self-concept or perceived opportunities for goal setting.

INDEX WORDS: alternative school, program evaluation

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my daughter, Dreonna L Johnson, and in memory of my precious grandmother, Mrs. Ellene B. Farlar. To the both of them I am forever grateful.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The vast majority of the United States' youth is formally educated in the traditional public school setting. However there are many alternatives to the traditional public school (Barr & Parrett, 2001; Lehr, Lanner, & Lange, 2003; Young, 1990). These alternatives are serving a significant number of students. Alternative schools and programs comprise one educational option that is often designated as a setting for those students who are not succeeding in traditional settings. The number of students enrolled in alternative settings, especially for youth at risk of school failure, has increased significantly in recent years (Lehr, et al., 2004). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), during the school year 1997-1998 there were well over 3,000 public alternative schools. Current estimates suggest that this number has increased to over 11,000 public alternative schools and programs for at-risk students. For the 2000-2001 school year the NCES reported 613,000 or 1.3% of public school students being served in alternative education programs (Kleiner, Porch, & Harris, 2002).

Alternative education settings became an integral part of public education in the United States in the late 1960s. Historically, alternative education programs or schools have been designed to serve that student population whose beliefs in terms of academics, social, political, or religious values differed from mainstream America. More recently, however, alternative schools and programs have focused on those students who are unsuccessful in the regular educational setting and are intended to provide a supportive educational environment for specific

groups of students (Coyl, Jones, & Dick, 2004; Kleiner, et al., 2002). According to Raywid (1994), most forms of alternative schooling are designed to respond to a group that is not served at an optimal level in regular school due to poor grades, truancy, or chronic disruption in the classroom.

Approximately 170 alternative education programs have been implemented in the state of Georgia to address issues pertaining to poor academic grades, absenteeism and disciplinary problems (Georgia Department of Education, 2002). The target population for these alternative schools has been those students who are at-risk of academic failure and/or are disruptive in the regular classroom. State and local schools systems have invested millions of dollars to provide a quality education for at-risk students. In compliance with the Official Code of Georgia Annotated (O.C.G.A) § 20-2-154.1, local school systems must provide an Alternative Education Program for disruptive students. The type or model that the school system employs is a local decision. The Georgia State Board of Education (SBOE) Rule for Alternative Education Programs (160-4-8.12) provides the guidelines and specific requirements that must be adhered to by Georgia alternative school programs. Given the expense of these programs and the implementation of A+ Education Reform Act 2000 and No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, school officials and policymakers are considering whether these varied programs are the most effective means for keeping the “at-risk” student enrolled and achieving in school.

### *Problem Statement*

The problem of this study was to determine the effectiveness of alternative education programs as they relate to academic achievement, self-concept development, attendance, discipline, goal setting and career development of students in grades 9, 10, 11 and 12. The effectiveness of these programs is unknown and has not been sufficiently studied.

### *Purpose Statement*

The purpose of this study was to examine the program effectiveness of one alternative education program in Gray, GA. The sample is limited to this program because the researcher believes that this alternative school setting would provide relevant results that can be generalized to other programs in the area. Data obtained will provide answers to the hypotheses developed in a program evaluation study design.

### *Definitions*

The definition of the terms related to alternative schooling is necessary to provide a conceptual basis for understanding and communicating about the basic premises with regard to educating this special population of students. The definitions provided are in accordance with Georgia rule 160-4-8.12 regarding alternative education programs. The following definitions that are pertinent to this study are listed below:

Alternative Education Program: Any educational program that is provided in a setting other than a student's regular classroom. These programs serve students who are eligible to remain in the regular classroom, but are more likely to succeed in a nontraditional setting such as that provided in an alternative education program.

Alternative School: A school with an alternative setting for those students at risk of academic failure and/or who are disruptive in the regular classroom.

At-Risk: Exposure to inadequate educational experiences in the family, school, or community that leads to the probability that a student will fail academically and/or drop out of school. . Additionally, an at-risk student may be a nontraditional student, but may also be a student who has family difficulties, drug abuse problems, legal issues, and the like.

Chronically disruptive: Those students in grades 6-12 who have been excluded from the regular classroom setting. This exclusion is due to disciplinary problems to include violent behavior and /or carrying weapons on the school premises.

CrossRoads Alternative Education Program: A type of alternative education program where students are engaged in educationally relevant and meaningful learning experiences in the school and larger community. The academic curriculum is infused into work-based learning and structured work experiences utilizing partnerships among business, industry, government, community, and school.

Disruptive behavior: Behavior that is characterized by continual, willful, and overt undesirable student behaviors that significantly interfere with the teaching and learning process or the orderly school environment.

Goals-Based Evaluation: Evaluating the extent to which programs are meeting predetermined goals or objectives.

Grade Point Average: The average of the core academic subjects in science, language arts, math and social studies for a nine weeks grading period.

Program Evaluation: Evaluation that consists of carefully collecting and organizing information about a program or some aspect of a program in order to make necessary decisions about the program.

Self-concept: Refers to the person's own view of him- or herself.

### *Justification for the Study*

A preliminary review of the literature revealed limited data on the effectiveness of alternative education programs. Each year more alternative schools are appearing across the

country. The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 1999) reported an increase of the number of alternative schools from 2,606 in school year 1993-1994 to 3,850 in school year 1997-1998. In the first national study on public alternative schools, the NCES (2003) reported 39% of public schools offered alternative education programs. Nationally, that totaled about 613,000 students in approximately 10,900 alternative schools and programs. Despite this growth, there are few data on what alternative education is and how successful it is in terms of meeting the needs of those served (Lehr, et al., 2003). According to McNamara (1998), some of the frequent reasons why program evaluation is helpful are because program evaluation can:

1. Verify or increase the impact of services to clients.
2. Improve delivery methods to be more efficient and less costly.
3. Verify that the program is really running as originally planned.
4. Produce data or verify results that can be used to promote the program.
5. Fully examine and describe effective programs for duplication elsewhere.

It is the intent of the evaluator to contribute scholarly information to the development and design of effective alternative education programs in the area. From these findings it is hoped that alternative school program components will be improved and generalizations be made to plan future program implementations in alternative learning environments. The following program objectives of the Jones County Alternative School will be evaluated:

- Increase student academic achievement
- Provide opportunities for positive self-concept development
- Increase school attendance
- Help students identify causes of negative behavior and develop strategies for change
- Aid students in developing educational and career goals for their futures.

Upon evaluation of the stated objectives, the researcher hopes to add to the body of literature and aid school administrators in policymaking for alternative education programs.

### *Guiding Questions*

The study consisted of a program evaluation of an alternative school program and its effectiveness for high school students generates several guiding questions for consideration.

1. Did enrollment at the Jones County Alternative School increase student academic achievement?
2. Did enrollment at the Jones County Alternative school increase positive self-concept development?
3. Did enrollment at the Jones County Alternative School increase student rate of attendance?
4. Did enrollment at the Jones County Alternative School decrease the number of student disciplinary referrals?
5. Did enrollment at the Jones County Alternatiave School increase the students' perception of perceived opportunities for goal setting?

### *Limitations of the Study*

Subject selection, time limitations, generalizability, and other factors are recognized as potential limitations. This study is limited in the following capacity:

1. The study was limited to a five-year time frame.
2. The study was limited to high school students.
3. The study was limited to those students assigned by tribunal action.
4. The study was limited to one school system in the state of Georgia.
5. The sample size was small due to limited available data.



### *Organization of the Study*

This study was organized into five chapters. Chapter I included the problem statement, the purpose of the study, definition of terms, justification for the study, limitations of the study, guiding questions, the organization of the study, and a chapter summary. Chapter II contains a review of related literature on alternative schools, definitions of alternative education, a historical overview of alternative education, a national perspective on alternative education programs, a summary of the Georgia's Alternative Education Program (AEP), a comprehensive overview of Jones County Alternative School and the at-risk students, identification of program benefits, effective program elements, unsuccessful program elements, and a chapter summary. Chapter III presents the research design, research questions, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures, instrumentation used, and a summary of the chapter. Chapter IV presents the findings of the research, and an analysis of the findings. Chapter V contains a summary of the study, conclusions, and recommendations.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter provides an overview of the alternative education programs and schools from a historical perspective. It also provides a history of alternative programs in Georgia and the Jones County Alternative School.

#### *Defining Alternative Education*

Alternative education is a term with many definitions in today's educational literature. Although it is a popular term in educational delivery, the definition and application of alternative education differ across the nation. This makes it difficult to make generalizations about alternative education programs and their effectiveness (Lange & Sletten, 2002). Gold and Mann (1984) defined an alternative school in a broad context as being "all that is different about an alternative school is that their programs are somehow different from the curriculum followed by the large majority of the community's students" (p. 12). Duke (1978) defined an alternative school as "a school accessible by choice, not assignment" (p. 32). Morley (1991) defined alternative education as "a perspective, not a procedure or program...It is based upon the belief that there are many ways to become educated as well as many types of environments and structures within which this may occur" (p. 11). The U.S. Department of Education (2002) defined an alternative education school as "a public elementary/secondary school that addresses needs of students that typically cannot be met in a regular school, or falls outside the categories of regular, special education or vocational education" (p. 55).

Meyers (2001) considered alternative education to be schooling outside of the public school system. The New Jersey Department of Education (1984) defined alternative education as:

an education program that embraces subject matter and/or teaching methodology that is not generally offered to students of the same age or grade level in traditional school settings, which offers a range of educational options and includes students as an integral part of the planning team. (p. 19)

In a national survey of state initiatives on alternative education, Katsiyannis and Williams (1998) found that many schools had state-adopted definitions which included some common components. These common definition components included location and/or setting of services, type of curriculum, instructional methodology, and reflective objectives for providing the alternative education opportunity.

As evidenced by the numerous definitions for alternative education, there is a precise need for a concrete definition of the term so that determining program effectiveness can begin. Current variability of the term limits our understanding of this important mechanism for educating the youth and further limits our ability to assess the present state and future potential of various programs (Lange & Sletten, 2002). For the purpose of this study an alternative education is defined as any educational program that is provided in a setting other than a student's regular classroom.

### *Historical Perspective*

Alternative education schools and alternative education programs, terms that are often used interchangeably, have existed in the United States for decades. Many educators believe that if students who are at risk of failing in school are to succeed then such schools and programs must be in place. Many see them as the most effective educational combatant for the at-risk student (Raywid, 1994).

Alternative education can be traced back to the American educational philosopher John Dewey and his ideas of progressive education or to Harvard College in 1636, which was founded for the education of Puritan ministers (Neumann, 1994; Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1997; Reimer & Cash, 2003)). However, in terms of an organized movement, the era of the 1960s is viewed as the beginning. Young (1990) described the early history of alternative schools and programs as being derivatives of the civil rights movement. Prior to that, access to the American educational system was based on race, gender, and in some cases, religious beliefs. Limited access to education brought about discrepancies in opportunities for different people. During the 1950s and 1960s, schools were criticized for their racism and lack of educational equity. Mainstream public education was often viewed as being racist and designed for the success of the few (Lange & Sletten, 2002). This is especially true for the late 1950s and early 1960s. According to Raywid (1989), schools were seen as cold and dehumanizing institutions with little respect for those who attended. Young identified the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 as bringing attention to how public schools were perceived. While there had been a narrow sense of emphasis on excellence, this only encompassed an exclusive few; a paradigm shift emerged with a goal of providing an equitable education for all. An alternative education movement developed from this paradigm shift. The movement consisted of two venues: alternative schools outside the school system and those within the school system (Lange & Sletten, 2002).

#### *Alternative Education Outside of the Public School System*

With roots going back to the social and political unrest of the 1960s and 1970s, several different types of alternative educational settings began to emerge (Reimer & Cash, 2003). Two types of alternative schools came from the reform efforts of legislation to provide equity in

education for all students in the United States: Freedom Schools and the Free School Movement. Low-income and minority students became the principal beneficiaries of alternative schools (Meyers, 2001).

Freedom Schools were located largely in urban areas and were intended to provide quality education to minorities. These schools were developed as community-school models run outside of the public school system. The settings for the school were often churches, basements, or even storefronts. It was at this point that community control of education became prevalent. Freedom Schools were viewed as the most innovative response to repairing the problem of substandard education afforded to minorities in the public education system (Lange & Sletten, 2002).

Also emerging during this time was the Free School Movement. This movement was in opposition to the current system of education, but emphasized individual achievement and fulfillment. Free Schools were an attempt to bridge the gap between the perceived irrelevance of public schooling and the need for some form of formal education (Meyers, 2001). This movement led to the creation of thousands of alternative schools in urban settings (Miller, 1995; Stewart, 1993). Their aim was to empower impoverished and minority students by providing them with the opportunity to explore their natural intellect and curiosity. Freedom Schools were intended to give each student the freedom to learn and the freedom from restriction. Schools had the following unique characteristics:

1. There was no required learning or set discipline controls for students.
2. The only moral value emphasized was the equal right to fulfillment.
3. Evaluation of progress did not consist of goal achievement but of providing an environment that facilitated student fulfillment (Young, 1990).

These types of schools provided many innovations in the educational system with numerous implications with regard to curriculum, delivery, and structure. However, these schools had a very short lifespan (Raywid, 1989; Young, 1990). The reason for this relatively short lifespan is unknown, but what is known is that these circumstances laid the groundwork for the alternative school movement.

### *Alternative Education within the Public School System*

Based on many of the characteristics of the alternative education programs outside of public education, public educators began to design alternatives to traditional education. In the late 1960s, alternative schools began to emerge in public school systems (Reimer & Cash, 2003). Some of the earliest alternative schools were based on the “open school” concept. These schools had as their basis a child-centered approach balanced by student, teacher, and parent choice. In addition, the atmosphere was one that emphasized non-competitive evaluation and students learning at their own pace. Open schools created learning activities or centers that were individualized and organized around interest centers within the classroom or building. Three of the earliest alternative high schools in the United States were Murray Road Annex in Massachusetts, St. Paul Open School in Minnesota, and John Adams High School in Oregon. From these early schools, various other types of schools were developed to include the following:

1. *Schools within Walls* emphasized learning activities that focus on interaction between the school and community.
2. *Schools within a School or Wall* focused on creating smaller learning communities to meet individual educational needs and interests.

3. *Multicultural Schools* were created to emphasize cultural pluralism and ethnic awareness in the curriculum among a diverse student body.
4. *Continuation Schools* intended to provide options for students whose education in the traditional setting has been interrupted because of dropout, pregnancy, etc.
5. *Learning Centers* were used to meet the needs of students in the community by providing additional resources in one central location.
6. *Fundamental Schools* were created in response to the lack of academic rigor in Free Schools to provide the basics in education.
7. *Magnet Schools* developed as a response to racial integration as a way to attract diverse groups of students from various racial and cultural backgrounds.

In the 1980s, there was a trend that took alternative programs from a more open context towards a more remedial and conservative one. The advent and emergence of continuation and fundamental schools caused an influx of students who were below grade level, disruptive, or failing. Today, most alternative schools and programs have several key characteristics in common. Raywid (1994) grouped alternative schools into three major categories defined by purpose: Type I, Type II, and Type III. Type I programs were schools of choice. They were characterized by themes and the use of innovative programs to attract students. Type II schools were often deemed as “last chance” schools. Students are sent here as a last resort before expulsion. The emphasis in the Type II school was usually on changing the behavior of the student. Type III schools were for those students who were behind academically and/or had some emotional issues that need to be addressed. This study focused on the Type II model. Students who have entered such a program do not do so by choice, they enter because of disciplinary infractions that have occurred in the regular school setting. Gregg (1999) outlined

the implementation issues and characteristics of types of alternative schools defined by purpose based on Raywid's research as follows:

#### Type I Programs-Academic

- Full-time, multi-year education for students of all kinds, especially those needing more individualization.
- Emphasis on student responsibility for learning; therefore, students choose to participate in the program and all work is self-paced.
- Provides the full range of instructional programs so that students may earn credit to graduate.
- Focus on deregulation, flexibility, autonomy, and teacher and student empowerment.

#### Type II Programs-Discipline

- Aim is to segregate and reform students who have not been successful in the traditional setting. Students do not choose to attend and are placed in the program for specific periods of time.
- Curriculum limited and the home school provide student assignments.
- Atmosphere highly structured and punitive in nature.

#### Type III Programs-Therapeutic

- Short-term program for students with emotional or social barriers that impede learning in a traditional school setting.
- Focus on attitude, behavior modification and rehabilitation.
- Voluntary participation by students.



Lange and Sletten (1995) proposed that a fourth type of alternative school now exists. The fourth type, a hybrid, combines school choice, remediation and innovation to guide a program that provides students with another chance for success in an educational setting.

Public education in the United States has undergone profound changes in the past 20 years. After the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), which presented data related primarily to high school students' deficits, school boards and legislatures have demanded better outcomes from public schools for all students since this national report. This includes special populations of students such as at-risk youth who are not succeeding academically. In an effort to educate all students, there has been a proliferation of alternative education programs in this country (Aron, 2003). There are various forms of alternative schools that exist across this nation.

#### *Role of Alternative Education*

The need for alternative education is well documented. Gold and Mann (1984) suggested that alternative education programs allow many young people to remain in school who in the past would have simply dropped out. Laws and practice have made it more difficult for students to drop out and for education to exclude disruptive students. It is now the aim to educate all children regardless of the inability to adjust to conventional schooling (Gold & Mann, 1984; NCLB, 2002). Gottfredson and Gottfredson (1985) noted that there exists substantial evidence that students who do not encounter success in school most often drop out and engage in delinquent activities. Raywid (2002) noted that students who have been unsuccessful need a good quality education more so than those students who would succeed under other circumstances. Zweig (2003) provided additional evidence that adolescents who are no longer a part of mainstream learning institutions are likely to encounter significant, long-term, negative

effects upon entering adulthood. The emergence of alternative education programs reflects the growing need for enrolling and educating an increasing proportion of school-aged youth. . All these research studies indicate the need to implement alternative education strategies to ensure students obtain the proper educational credentials to become socially, emotionally and financially equipped to become productive members of society (Tobin & Sprague, 2000). Meyers (2001) listed a variety of roles various forms of alternative schools perform. They include:

1. Development of basic skills not offered in a traditional school.
2. Concern for improvement of student self-concept.
3. Development of individual talents and uniqueness.
4. Understanding and encouragement of cultural diversity.
5. Preparation of students for a variety of roles in society—parent, voter, etc.
6. Commitment to be more responsive to needs within the community.
7. Provide a choice and alternative to traditional schools in the community.
8. Offer more humane treatment of students and teachers because of small size.
9. Provide a set curriculum that may be more relevant to the needs of students.
10. Taking on students who are not suited for instruction in regular schools.

### *The At-Risk Student*

According to Lange and Sletten (2002), there is a need for more research on the characteristics of alternative schools and programs and how they affect the at-risk student. The true effectiveness of such programs has not been thoroughly assessed because a complete definition of alternative schooling does not exist.

What has been consistent is a definition of students who are considered at-risk of failing in school for a number of different factors. According to Brown and Emig (1999), some of the reported factors are family poverty level, government assistance, low parental education, living in a single-parent household, having children before the age of 18, dropping out of high school, and any combination of these reasons. Besharov and Gardner (1999) termed those youth with similar factors as disconnected from society. Adolescents who did have a connection to society through school, work, family, and the like tend not make the transition into productive and responsible adults (Zweig, 2003). Alternative schools and programs can be a resourceful measure for creating a successful connection back into the mainstream of society. It is important to explore the ways young people disconnect from society and the role that risk factors play on their behaviors and decision-making process.

Perhaps the biggest factors that cause disconnection of students to society pertain to graduation and dropout rates of students. Researchers from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported in 2000 that approximately 3.8 million youths between the ages of 16 and 24 had not successfully completed high school. This large number has contributed greatly to significant unemployment rates for this age group, which in turn tends to lead to the development of other risk factors, namely poverty. The Coalition for Juvenile Justice (2001) listed the following factors of poverty: poor educational start, community stress, race, ethnicity, language barriers, lack of adult supervision, family stress, learning disabilities, and lack of a sense of community. These factors, coupled with other environmental factors, have contributed greatly to the increasing number of dropouts in the United States.

Students who drop out of school encounter financial and social hardships. According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2003), high school dropouts are 72% more likely to be

underemployed and unemployed. Dropouts typically earn 27% less than high school graduates. Dropouts are also more susceptible to smoking, drinking, and using drugs on a regular basis. Other alarming statistics reveal that 82% of the adult prison population are high school dropouts and approximately 17% of youth under age 18 entering prison had not completed grade school (Coalition for Juvenile Justice, 2001). Statistics such as these reveal the true need for alternative educational routes and plans for those students exposed to high risk factors.

Many, students who are leaving traditional high school, are not doing so voluntarily. There have been an increasing number of students who have been expelled from schools because of chronic disruption (Zweig, 2003). Many opt to continue their education in an alternative setting while others do not. Some researchers believe that the implementation of strict zero tolerance guidelines and other policies may account for the sharp number of school suspensions and expulsions (Kleiner, et al., 2002). Approximately 50% of the suspensions or expulsions from school were for reasons such as possession and distribution of drugs or alcohol, assault, truancy, academic failure, weapons possession, or verbal assault. Kleiner, et al. further found that 25% of the time students were removed from regular school because of pregnancy or mental health reasons.

As a result of these risk factors for educational failure of youth today, there is a pervasive need for alternative education. Alternative schools are meant to serve this subpopulation with the goal of helping them to reconnect to society and allowing them to become productive members of society. The extent of the need for alternative educational programs is unclear, but the general consensus is that the need is great especially among the 16-24 year-old. Zweig (2003) estimated that 5 to 10 million individuals in this age group might be affected. Of this

nearly 10 million, 50% are 16-19 year-olds. Still more disturbing is the fact that less than half of these at-risk students are enrolled in alternative education programs (AEPs).

The Jones County Alternative School program is designed for adolescent “at-risk” students from grade 6 through graduation. This program is intended for students who have an increased risk of being expelled from school or dropping out due to poor grades, a negative self-concept of the ability to achieve academically, disruptive behavior, and poor attendance. This program is reserved for those students who chronically interfere with their own learning and/or the education process of others and who require attention and structure beyond that provided through a traditional educational program.

Currently, no comprehensive study on the effectiveness of alternative school settings on at-risk high school students was located. Such schools may afford an opportunity for students to reconnect to school and society; however, some students may disconnect. Students will disconnect from the alternative setting if it is used as a method to simply excise and ostracize problem students from regular schools. However, alternative schools, which emphasize building character and improving academic skills, can be a connecting avenue for students and can possibly lead to the transition to responsible adulthood.

#### *Important Elements of Effective Alternative Schools*

Research on effective secondary schools reveals numerous elements of school climate that contribute heavily to well-disciplined learning environments. Aleem and Moles (1993), in their review of how to create safe, disciplined and drug-free schools, found schools that focused on the academic mission, consistently enforced firm, yet fair discipline standards and promoted positive student-staff relations often produced desired academic and behavioral outcomes.

Research on alternative schooling initiatives reveals similar findings. Wehlage (1983) and Raywid (1994) identified three interrelated factors that make for a successful alternative school. These three factors are a sense of community, engaging instruction, and appropriate organizational structure for support. Choice and smallness are important for building a sense of community. Choice or voluntary participation in the program by teachers and students promotes bonding. Small size allows teachers and students the opportunity to get to know each other and become a caring community. The second factor, engaging instruction, requires that teachers be knowledgeable of their subject matter in order to meet individual learning needs of students across multiple grade levels. Engaging instruction promotes mastery learning, creativity, and success in students. Organizational structure, the third factor, is a network of educators, parents, students, and other collaborating agencies working together to foster and promote effective decision making about learning and living. Organizational structure is supported by the flexibility and autonomy to be responsive to the diverse needs of the students served.

Morley (1991) included freedom of standard local, district or state operating procedures, staff flexibility, separate space, and autonomous control over various features within the program as highly desirable characteristics of successful alternative school programs. Aronson (1995) added expanded teacher roles, counseling programs, a safe environment with clear discipline expectations and guidelines, access to health and social service agencies, and parental and community involvement as contributing factors to successful alternative schools. According to Schorr (1997) the following elements are needed to ensure successful alternative school programs: clear focus on academic learning, ambitious professional development, strong level of autonomy and professional decision-making practices, and a sense of community. Northwest

Regional Educational Laboratory (1997) identified certain features of successful programs associated with at-risk students as containing the following elements:

- A clear vision
- A smaller enrollment than mainstream schools
- A lower ratio of students to staff than mainstream schools
- A more informal, personal relationship between teachers and students
- A committed staff who counsel, mentor, and tutor the students
- Clear rules enforced fairly and consistently across the board
- High standards for behavior, attendance, and academic performance
- A curriculum with meaningful connection between school and work
- Student and staff voice in school operations
- A flexible schedule that allows students to work at their own pace

Katsiyannis and Williams (1998) found that effective alternative school programs usually incorporated a vocational education component, a low student to teacher ratio, emphasis on basic skill acquisition, emphasis on high school completion, commitment to reforming students, collaboration with outside agencies, opportunities for teacher mentoring, and parent education programs to assist the efforts of the school. Guerin and Denti (1999) suggested that successful programs have certain characteristics that are nearly always prevalent. They include a curriculum that is responsive to the needs of the students, assessment, teaching of social skills, social responsibility, and restorative justice, focus on core academic subjects, and the presence of some supplementary subjects.

Barr and Parrett (2001) identified the most widely associated characteristics of successful alternative education programs. The characteristics reported most are: caring and demanding

teachers, choice and commitment of teachers and students, comprehensive and continuing programs, and small program size.

The Jones County Alternative School program has a clearly defined mission statement to guide its stated goals and objectives. The faculty and staff at JCASP also have high expectations of the students regarding grades, behavior and attendance. These program elements are essential to the success of the JCASP.

Table 1 summarizes the most common elements that are indicators of successful programs in alternative educational settings. Tobin and Sprague (2000) compiled a list of alternative school strategies and benefits for alternative schools and programs (see Table 2).

Table 1  
Successful Program Elements

Element
High behavioral, attendance, and academic standards
Clear, consistent rules and guidelines
Informal relationships between students and staff
Mission statement with clear goals and objectives
Counseling component
Self-paced academics



Table 2

*Tobin and Sprague's (2000) Alternative Education Strategies*

Recommended Strategy and Definition	Benefits
Low ratio of students to teachers-reduced class size in comparison with traditional schools	More personal time for each student; higher quality of instruction, better behavioral gains
Highly structured classroom-one in which expectations, rules and routines are clearly defined and reinforced	Self-management skills are taught; high academic gains; high rates of positive reinforcement
Positive rather than punitive emphasis-using positive reinforcement more than punishment for inappropriate behaviors	Provides rewards for acceptable behavior; directly teaches clear classroom rules; allows progressive level movement
Adult mentors at school-person advises and guides student progress	Mentors provide positive reinforcement; mentors track behavior, attendance, etc.
Functional behavioral assessment use-identifying antecedents and maintaining consequences of problem behavior	Identifies causes of behavior; identifies "what is keeping it going;" uses multi-component interventions
Social Skills Instruction-teaching appropriate ways of getting along with others	Improves problem-solving skills; reduces conflicts
Effective Academic Instruction-providing instruction in the core courses to help students meet expected grade-level standards	Provide individualized instruction; creates opportunities for student success; allows students to acquire basic skills; provides increased practice opportunities
Parental Involvement-encourage parents to be active participants in the education of their child	Provide reinforcement of interventions; promotes open communication

Raywid, Morley, and the Oklahoma Technical Assistance Center all concluded that those alternative education programs that are the least successful lack specific fundamental components that are necessary for success. There is a focus on the importance of the perceptions and underlying philosophies of the varied programs associated with providing quality educational opportunities in an alternative setting. When essential program elements are deficient, the program is on target for a very short lifespan and ultimately failure.

### *Benefits of Alternative Education Programs*

Meyers (2001) identified the benefits of alternative education as having been successfully used to desegregate schools, reduce school violence, increasing parent and community involvement, and meeting the distinctive instructional needs of special populations of students. Reports from research indicate that alternative education can dramatically improve academics and behavior (Lange & Sletten, 2002; Morley, 1991; Oklahoma Technical Assistance Center, 1995; Raywid, 1989; Wehlage, 1983). The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (1997) cited the following among the numerous advantages alternative schools have for students:

- Reduction in dropout rates
- Reduction in student truancy
- Redirection of disruptive and inattentive students from mainstream institutions into more productive and successful learning environments
- Re-engagement with learning and the community that occurs when the students are placed in a more responsive and flexible environment

Alternative programs also have some success in providing for GED completion, remedial assistance, providing vocational training and/or employment opportunities, reducing student engagement in delinquent activities, and developing communication, coping and social skills

(Maine Department of Educational and Cultural Services, 1988; New York Department of Education, 1989; North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction, 1986; Raywid, 1989).

These benefits are perceived to make a positive impact on student outcomes and success.

Schools that are successful contain many of the program elements that assist the at-risk student in succeeding academically and behaviorally.

### *Georgia Alternative Education Program*

Georgia began its Alternative Education Program (AEP) in 1994. This program was known as the Cross Roads Alternative School Program. This program served those students who have been removed from the regular classroom setting due to disruptive behavior. The A+ Education Reform Act of 2000 eliminated grant money for this program and a new system was established for students in grades 6-12 (Georgia Department of Education, 2002). The new AEP in Georgia allows local school systems more flexibility in designing and implementing a program that meets the needs of their individual students.

All AEPs in Georgia must meet specific requirements as set forth by the State Board of Education Rule 160-4-8.12. The philosophy of Georgia's AEP centers on providing students who need a different educational structure and environment with the knowledge and skills needed for a successful life. The mission of AEP academically is for students to perform at their chronological grade level. Behaviorally, the mission is to help students develop character and learn to make appropriate choices in order to be successful in school and in the community. The AEP has two purposes. First, the AEP should be viewed as a means to provide disruptive and adjudicated individuals with a program of study outside of the regular class. Rather than suspending or expelling a student, reassignment of disruptive students to an alternative setting is deemed more appropriate by the state. The second purpose is to provide academic and support

services for students who would benefit best from a non-traditional setting although they are eligible to remain in the regular school setting. These are students who are characterized as having limited success even though numerous instructional and intervention strategies have already been used (Georgia Department of Education, 2003).

### AEP Requirements in Georgia

In order for AEPs in Georgia to adequately address their mission of helping students to perform at grade level, develop high moral character, and make appropriate choices in school and life, the Georgia Department of Education's Division of Curriculum and Instructional Services has set forth the requirements and guidelines to be followed. The following is a summary of the program requirements of all AEPs in Georgia.

- All alternative education programs are required to separate non-disruptive students from disruptive students assigned to the school. Programs should also separate younger children from older ones. The program must provide for both the educational and the behavioral needs of the student.
- The AEP must adhere to the objectives of the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS), while providing instruction that will enable a student to return to his or her home school in a timely manner.
- The focus of instruction must be on mathematics, science, social studies, language arts, and self-discipline.
- The staff must provide proper supervision and a counseling component to ensure student progress toward academic grade level coursework. In doing so, the staff should also provide individualized academic instruction and establish academic and behavioral exit requirements.

- The AEP must not exceed the established student-teacher ratio as established by the GADOE.
- Students attending an AEP must be provided with the same resources and instructional materials used in their regular home school.
- Students with an Individualized Education Program must be served and modifications addressed accordingly by the staff of the AEP (GADOE, 2003).

These requirements for an AEP can be coordinated on or off the campus of a regular school. Additionally, the services provided may be a joint effort between two or more independent school systems.

### Eligibility

Students are only eligible for the services of alternative education if they are enrolled in grades K-12. Students who are assigned to a program because of disciplinary infractions must be offered the benefit of due process. For the purpose of this study, only those students assigned by the school disciplinary tribunal were included. AEPs may address the needs of students who are eligible to remain in the regular classroom but have academic concerns that may be best addressed in non-traditional settings. Students assigned for non-disciplinary or academic reasons must be assessed and all other options exhausted prior to assignment to an alternative school. Students who exit the program to enroll in another school system may be required to complete the original placement period or the new school may opt to allow the student to attend regular school.

### Funding

The A+ funds are used to provide services to local alternative education programs. Funding is based on the full-time equivalent count; however, no state funding is earned for those

students in grades K-5. Local school systems are required to allocate the same pupil expenditure for students in AEP as would be allowed in the traditional school setting. Parity funds appropriated by the state legislature must be used for salaries and benefits of certified staff members and paraprofessionals.

### Personnel

AEP employees must be qualified for their position. Teachers who teach core classes must meet certain standards. These standards, as indicated by the *No Child Left Behind Act* (2002), state that they must be highly qualified to teach these content areas of study. Those already working will have until the end of the 2005-2006 school year to obtain highly qualified status.

### *Jones County Alternative School*

### Geographic Area

Jones County is a rural area located between two more populated counties. Bibb County (Macon) is located west and Baldwin County is located east of Jones County. There is a population of approximately 25,000 people (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000). Industry is very limited with approximately 625 full-time employees (Jones County/Gray Chamber of Commerce, 2003). Seventy percent of working citizens who live in Jones County work in a surrounding county. Students enrolled in the Jones County School System may need to have involvement with other agencies. These involvements are facilitated by the program coordinator with the superintendent of schools or his designee. These agencies may include the Jones County Health Department, Jones County Department of Family and Children's Services, Jones County Sheriff Department, Gray Police Department, Juvenile Court System, Middle Georgia

Regional Education Service Agency, Jones County Emergency Management, and the Jones County Extension Services.

### Background

The Jones County Alternative School was created in 1995. The Jones County Alternative School, a Crossroad Model Program, serves students in Jones County from grades 6-12 or students who are chronologically age appropriate for grades 6-12. Students are assigned to the alternative school from Jones County High School, Califf Middle School, and Clifton Ridge Middle School. The student population for the feeder schools combined totals approximately 2,600.

The Jones County Alternative School is housed in a separate building adjacent to the Jones County Jail Annex and the Jones County Pre-Kindergarten Program. The school is located off Highway 129 in a portion of the old Jones County High School. The school consists of two classrooms, gymnasium, restrooms, and office space. The facility is in fairly good repair for an old building. There are alarms on all doors to monitor entrances and exits. Periodically, metal detector checks are conducted (V. Appling, personal communication, April 2004).

This program was implemented after statistical data gathered from 1992-93 and 1993-94 school years indicated an increase in the number of students who were given short-term suspension, out-of-school suspension, in-school suspension, and the total days students served in in-school suspension had risen dramatically. These data alerted the Jones County Board of Education that there was a need for an alternative education program in the county. The program was designed for students who chronically interfere with their own learning and/or the education process of others and who require attention and structure beyond that provided through a traditional education program. Many of these students have been defined “at-risk” because of

failing grades, poor self-concept, disruptive behavior, and poor attendance. The initial goals of the program were to reduce both occurrences and total number of days in out-of-school suspension (OSS), reduce repeated days assigned to in-school suspension (ISS) and total days assigned, provide an academic placement for students who previously may have been subjected to long-term suspension or expulsion, improve school climate and staff morale at both the middle schools and the high school, and decrease the system dropout rate (B. Williams, personal communication, December 2004).

Since its inception, the facility has served an average of 22 high school students annually. Instruction is student-centered and students may work at his or her own pace. Certified teachers and a paraprofessional supplement instruction. Computer-aided instruction is also available for student use. All core subjects that the student was enrolled in the home school are continued while serving out placement in the Jones County Alternative School. A social skills class is also taught to address the behavioral needs of the student. Students may earn academic credit for classes taught while completing their program of study at the alternative school. High school students must meet the same attendance and grade requirements to receive a Carnegie unit as they would in a regular school.

Behavioral needs are addressed by a strict code of conduct and behavior modification techniques. When appropriate choices are made, students receive points for their behavior. Inappropriate behavior causes points to be lost. This point system is part of a behavioral checklist to help evaluate the program effectiveness of the alternative school. This component is also a part of the exit requirement for students to return to their regular school. Additionally, a counselor from each home school is available to assist the students with personal issues, schedule concerns, and special accommodations.



The counselor and program staff also addresses self-concept development. Connor, Poyrazil, Ferrer-Wreder, and Grahame (2004) noted that self-esteem and self-concept is considerably lower in nonmainstream students. These researchers concluded that academic competence and positive behaviors must be improved among nonmainstream students, specifically alternative school students, if self-concept is to develop in a positive manner.

According to the Jones County Schools Georgia Report Card, this program serves an average of less than 1% of the high school students enrolled in the county. Table 3 details the enrollment data for the alternative school for the past five school years. Table 4 details the demographics regarding gender, socioeconomic status, race, grade level and disposition.

Table 3  
Jones County Alternative School Program Enrollment

Program Year	Program Enrollment	Percentage of Student Population
2000-2001	28	0.4%
2001-2002	25	0.3%
2002-2003	21	0.7%
2003-2004	26	0.6%
2004-2005	24	0.5%

Table 4

## JCASP Demographic Data

Characteristic	2000-2001 n (%)	2001-2002 n (%)	2002-2003 n (%)	2003-2004 n (%)	2004-2005 n (%)
Gender					
Male	23(82.1%)	20(80%)	16(76.2%)	22(84.6%)	18(75%)
Female	5(17.9%)	5(20%)	5(23.8%)	4(15.4%)	6(25)
SES					
Free or					
Reduced	26(92.9%)	24(96%)	12(57.1%)	8(30.8%)	11(45.8%)
Paid	2(7.1%)	1(4%)	9(42.9%)	18(69.2%)	13(54.2%)
Race					
White	23(82.1%)	15(60%)	18(85.7%)	18(69.2%)	13(54.2%)
Black	5(17.9%)	10(40%)	3(14.3%)	7(26.9%)	10(41.7%)
Other	0	0	0	1(3.8%)	1(4.1%)
Grade					
9 <sup>th</sup>	13(46.4%)	13(52%)	11(52.4%)	18(69.2%)	13(54.2%)
10 <sup>th</sup>	6(21.4%)	6(24%)	8(38.1%)	5(19.2%)	8(33.3%)
11 <sup>th</sup>	8(28.6%)	5(20%)	0	3(11.5%)	3(12.5%)
12 <sup>th</sup>	1(3.6%)	1(4%)	2(9.5%)	0	1(4.1%)
Disposition					
Withdrawn	17(60.7%)	19(76%)	12(57.1%)	17(65.4%)	9(37.5%)
Transferred	0	1(4%)	1(4.8%)	2(7.7%)	1(4.1%)
Graduated	7(25.0%)	4(16%)	6(28.6%)	0	1(4.1%)
Juv. Justice	3(10.7%)	1(4%)	0	1(3.8%)	0
Cont Enroll	1(3.6%)	0	2(9.5%)	6(23.1%)	13(54.2%)

### *Chapter Summary*

Although alternative schools have a relatively short history in terms of the American educational system, they are a viable and integral part of aiding the at-risk youth. There are numerous issues to be explored and questions to be answered such as how alternative schools affect the overall school system, whose needs they meet, and how effective they are meeting those needs are just a few. Zweig (2003) contended that there is a need to assess how effective alternative schools and programs are in improving student outcomes.

Specifically, the study focused on identifying possible effects of alternative schools on the high school student. This study will help to fill the research gap that exists on alternative school program effects. In doing so, the goal was to aid policymakers, administrators and all other stakeholders with a vested interest in alternative schools to identify the most effective policies and strategies for helping the students.

### CHAPTER III

#### METHODOLOGY

##### *Study Design*

This study was an evaluation of the Jones County Alternative School Program based on the stated goals of the program. The purpose of this program evaluation study was to identify the effectiveness of the program for high school students regarding academic performance, behavior, attendance, self-concept, and educational/career goals. The United States Department of Education (2002) spends over \$100 million in program evaluation and data collection annually. The department has identified four types of program evaluation with varying key audiences, questions to be answered and methodologies. Table 5 identifies the four types of evaluation.

Table 5

##### Evaluation Types and Audiences <sup>a</sup>

Type of Evaluation	Audience	Key Question
Continuous Improvement	Program Staff	How can the program be improved to meet goals?
Performance Data	Appropriators	Are some programs more effective than others?
Implementation Studies	Authorizers	How well are programs being implemented?
Field Trials	Practitioners	What specific interventions actually work?

<sup>a</sup> United States Department of Education, 2002

This study employed a combination of these methods of program evaluation to effectively ascertain the program effects of the alternative school studied.

### *Population/Sample*

The sample for this study consisted of those students enrolled on the alternative school in grades 9, 10, 11 and 12 due to tribunal action during the school terms 2000-2001 (n= 28), 2001-2002 (n= 25), 2002-2003 (n= 21), 2003-2004 (n= 26), and 2004-2005 (n= 24).

### *Null Hypotheses*

The goal statements for the Jones County Alternative School, as reported in Chapter 2, relate to academic achievement, self-concept, school attendance, discipline, and career/educational goals. From these goal statements and the research questions generated from them, five null hypotheses were formed.

### *Academic Achievement*

The Jones County Alternative School core curriculum courses correspond to the core curriculum courses of the home school. The same Georgia Performance Standards used by Jones County High School are used for high school students enrolled at the alternative school. Courses are taught through three basic modes: lectures, computers, and folders (independently guided). Each student receives three courses per day on the computer and three courses off the computer. Courses are 50 minutes long, except in cases where a core subject is blocked. Courses are considered blocked when a student receive 100 minutes of instruction daily in the same class. The school began using the PLATO Learning System developed by TRO Learning, Inc., a computer-based training and education company, in 2000-2001. All computerized classes are presented in conjunction with the textbooks for instruction. PLATO lessons are individualized and self-pacing. Each course is divided into several units or modules. Each module consists of a

series of lesson. A module refers to a set of learning activities designed to guide a student through a particular course objective. Every module has a tutorial, drill, application, review, problem solving activity, and mastery test. For high school students enrolled in the Jones County Alternative School the following PLATO courses are available: Essential Reading Skills, Applied Math, Pre-Algebra, Beginning, Intermediate and Advanced Algebra, Geometry, Applied Physical Science, Biology, Geography, Economics, United States History, World History, Life Skills, Job Skills, and Parenting Skills.

All high school students are on a nine weeks grading system. The Jones County Alternative School attempts to keep students in line with and/or advanced of coursework being taught at the home school. Alternative school teachers and regular home school teachers meet periodically to plan the course of study for those students attending the alternative school. Planning with the home schoolteachers fosters a more successful transition from alternative school to a traditional school setting.

The teacher-lead core courses that are offered at Jones County Alternative School for students in grades 9, 10, 11 and 12 are included in Table 6. The courses may be taught as College Preparatory or Technology/Career depending on the student's program of study. While efforts are made to prevent loss of credits by any student, there are courses that the alternative school will be unable to offer. Foreign languages, upper level sciences (i.e., Physics and Chemistry), upper level mathematics (i.e., Advanced Algebra & Trigonometry), and most vocational courses are not available at the alternative school. In addition to the core course offerings, all students enrolled in the program must take Social Skills and Personal Fitness. Students enrolled in the special education program at the home school are provided with direct instruction. All special

education classes are taught by a certified K-12 Interrelated teacher on site, and the student receives work based on their Individualized Education Program.

Students enrolled also participate in individual and group activities that emphasize acquiring study skills to improve academic achievement. Activities consist of developing strategies for improving reading, effective note taking, test taking, and time management. Program staff and a high school guidance counselor provide these services. Based on the current activities and the goal of improving student academic success, the following null hypothesis was developed: *There will be no statistically significant difference in academic achievement of students before and after enrollment in the JCASP as measured by GPA for a nine weeks grading period.*

### Self-Concept

By the time a child reaches school age, his self-concept is quite well formed and his reactions to learning, to school failure and success, and to the physical, social and emotional climate of the learning environment will be determined by the beliefs and attitudes he has about himself. It is evident that the self is learned and develops from the data that one accumulates about ones' self. At the Jones County Alternative School one of the many goals is to help students develop a positive self-concept. Students are given a variety of opportunities to find positive traits and characteristics in their daily lives.

Table 6

JCASP Course List

Course
Ninth Grade Literature and Composition
Tenth Grade Literature and Composition
American Literature and Composition
British Literature and Composition
World Geography
United States History
Economics
World History
Citizenship
Biology I
Physical Science
Pre-Algebra
Concepts of Problem Solving
Concepts of Algebra
Algebra I
Geometry
Math Money Management
Algebra II



In a series of classroom guidance activities and sessions, teachers and students acknowledge the following aspects about self-concept development:

1. It is possible to change self-concepts, and it's possible for teachers to effect these changes in either a positive or negative manner.
2. Changes in self-concept take place slowly over a period of time.
3. Efforts that aim at central beliefs have a greater impact even though they make take more time to be realized.
4. Peripheral experiences are helpful.
5. Relating successes or strengths to one another is important.

Based on these tenets the program staff seeks to provide an open and caring environment where positive self-concept can be developed. Activities that pertain to helping students identify their strengths and weaknesses, as well as, acceptance of the physical and emotional self are primary targets.

The following null hypothesis was developed based on self-concept activities presented to students enrolled in the Jones County Alternative School: *There will be no statistically significant difference in positive self-concept development of students during a nine weeks grading period before and after their enrollment in the JCASP as measured by the BASC.*

#### School Attendance

Regular school attendance is an important element of this program. Reducing student absenteeism and truancy is a goal of many schools. Parents and students sign a contract pledging to attend school regularly during the initial intake interview for entrance into the Jones County Alternative School. Students who do not have regular attendance and continuously violate the

attendance policy risk losing credit and referral to the Discipline Review Committee. At the recommendation of the committee, a student's enrollment in the program may be revoked.

The school guidance counselor, program staff, and school social worker provide parents and students with regular attendance updates. Letters are sent to parents informing them that credit for coursework is in danger of being lost because of not completing make up work after an excused absence or for receiving zeroes for unexcused absences. Parents are encouraged to contact school personnel when students are out for extended periods of time as some work may be sent home to the student. The following null hypothesis has been developed based on the attendance policies and procedures at JCASP: *There will be no statistically significant difference in the attendance rate of students in a nine weeks grading period before and after enrollment in JCASP.*

### Discipline

Students are referred to the Jones County Alternative School by various means. Placement in the program may be the option of the Jones County Board of Education, Disciplinary Tribunal, or the Disciplinary Review Committee. Additionally, a student returning from court adjudication or who is under felony indictment may apply to the program if granted special permission from the Jones County Board of Education and the Disciplinary Tribunal.

The alternative school has a 10-day, 45-day and 90-day program for enrollment and is based on a level system. Each student must pass through four levels with the exception of those enrolled in the 10-day program. The minimum time for placement in the program is based on the assigning body's recommendation, but passage through the various levels and staff recommendations are the determining factors for successfully exiting the program.

All students who enter the program begin on Level I: Entry Level. Level I responsibilities include arriving to school on time, completing 80% of assignments and following all program rules. At this level, lunch and restroom breaks are isolated and no talking is allowed. Parents and guardians are asked to impose the revocation of television and driving privileges and to impose an 8:30 p.m. curfew. The student moves to next level, Level II, once they accumulate 50 or 100 hundred points dependent on the program in which they enter.

Level II: Maintenance Level follows Level I completion. At this level students are granted more privileges. Students are allowed to talk and do some academic assignments in a group setting. Parents are requested to partially restore most privileges. Level II responsibilities include regular and prompt school attendance, completing 90% of all assignments, following all alternative school rules, and addressing individual goals. Level II goals include accepting responsibility for his/her actions and setting goals for improvement.

Level III: Rapid Achieving Level occurs once the student has accumulated 100-200 points and meets all the goals and objectives of Level II. At this level parents are asked to restore all privileges at home. Responsibilities at this level include completing 98% of assigned tasks, regular and on time attendance, and addressing all personal goals from Level II. Accumulating 150-300 points and meeting all goals at this level moves the student to the final level.

Level IV: Exit Level, is the last level prior to exiting the program. At this level a student is expected to maintain Level III goals and responsibilities. It is at this level that a student begins the transitioning process to return to the home school. A student must have a total of 50 points, 150 points, and 400 points respectively for the 10-day, 45-day and 90-day programs to exit the alternative school, have the recommendation of program staff, and meet other criteria such as

learning the creed and poem, writing an autobiography and six page research report, and participating in eight hours of community service.

Points can be earned by bringing supplies daily, having a problem free week, having a weekly average of 80 or above, learning the creed, completion of a written report, and turning in all homework. Credit is lost for talking out of order, not bringing homework or supplies, classroom problems, unexcused absences, inappropriate body language, or problems at home. Positive rewards of conforming to program regulation are the earning of free time, group interaction, and adding a level. Some negative consequences for infractions are: isolation from other students, parental contact, extended day hours, extended program days, dropping a level, referral to a law enforcement agency, and revocation of enrollment in the program.

In an effort to allow students to regain lost points, decrease suspensions from school, and maintain enrollment in the program, the alternative strategy of Physical Training (PT) has been implemented at the alternative school. PT time is the extended day program that involves students in training activities such as running and calisthenics. Students who complete a PT can earn 100 points. Table 7 summarizes the program level requirements.

Table 7

Program Level Requirements

Program Type	Level 2 Pts.	Level 3 Pts.	Level 4 Pts.	Research Report	Creed/Poem Autobiography	Community Service	Exit Pts.
10-Day	n/a	n/a	n/a	Yes	Creed Only	n/a	50
45-Day	50	100	150	Yes	Yes	8 hrs.	200
90-Day	100	200	300	Yes	Yes	8 hrs.	400

Behavior modification through effective discipline practices is also taught through the social skills class. All students who enroll in the program are required to take this class for the entire duration of their stay at the alternative school. The class is aimed specifically at teaching the students appropriate ways of reordering their behavior. Social skills classes are designed to teach effective coping skills thus enabling students to function successfully in school and life. Various units such as decision-making, conflict resolution, goal setting, anger management, and respect are taught in the class. Additionally, students sign behavior contracts and receive guidance and counseling services specifically geared toward behavior modification.

From these activities afforded to the students enrolled in the program, the following null hypothesis was developed: *There will be no statistically significant difference during a nine weeks grading period in negative behaviors of students before and after enrollment in the JCASP as measured by the number of office referrals.*

#### Career/Educational Goals

One of the main roles of a guidance counselor is to advise students on career and educational goals. An array of guidance activities has been utilized with students in the program to help them become more aware of their goals and career aspirations. Students have taken personality tests and career interest inventories to see what occupation they are best suited for. Additionally, students developed a portfolio containing a two-four year plan of goals for academic and career achievement. The guidance counselor meets with each student individually to discuss goal setting and career development. Group activities via the Internet and classroom guidance activities have been used to expose student to various career options.

Students have access to the Georgia Career Information System (GCIS), which is an internet based program that includes postsecondary education, job skills, goal setting, and

numerous other career development activities. The counselor also utilizes the state-approved Smart Choices curriculum to further enhance student awareness of career options, work-related skills, etc. The following null hypothesis regarding career and educational goals was developed:

*There will be no statistically significant difference in a nine weeks grading period in the proportion of the students who perceive receiving guidance or instruction on goal setting prior to being placed in JCASP and the students' perception of receiving guidance or instruction after placement.* Table 8 summarizes the research questions and hypotheses of this study.

Table 8  
Summary of Research Questions and Hypotheses

	1	2	3	4	5
Q	Did enrollment at the alternative school increase student academic achievement?	Were there opportunities for positive self-concept development?	Was there an increase in the students' rate of attendance?	Were negative behaviors identified and strategies developed for change?	Were there opportunities provided for students to address goals?
Ho	There will be no statistically significant difference in academic achievement of students before and after enrollment in the JCASP as measured by GPA.	There will be no statistically significant difference in the self-concept of students before and after their enrollment in the JCASP as measured by the BASC.	There will be no statistically significant difference in the attendance rate of students before and after enrollment in the JCASP.	There will be no statistically significant difference in negative behaviors of students before and after enrollment in the JCASP as measured by the number of referrals.	There will be no statistically significant difference in the proportion of students receiving guidance or instruction prior to being placed in JCASP and students receiving guidance or instruction on goal setting after placement.

### *Data Collection*

Data for this report were collected from numerous sources. The student information system, SASI, was used to obtain data on student attendance, grade point average, and discipline. In addition, student permanent records were accessed to gather additional information on academics, discipline, and attendance. Records from the disciplinary review committee, Jones County Board of Education, Georgia Department of Education, and the alternative school were utilized to obtain additional information on current and past students enrolled in the program. Personal inventories, rating skills, surveys and questionnaires were used to gather data on student perceptions of self and to gather data with regard to career and educational goals. A student survey was also administered.

In order to identify other critical elements that determine program effectiveness of an alternative school, additional data of a qualitative nature was gathered. Qualitative data were gathered through document examination and onsite observations.

### *Instrumentation*

The measure of student self-concept has proven to be quite difficult. One of the main reasons for this problem is that the self-concept is very subjective. Self-concept is the individual as known to the individual. Most measures of self-concept use a self-rating format. This study utilized the Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC). The Self-Report of Personality (SRP) is one of the scales on the BASC used to assess personal adjustment with regards to interpersonal relationship, self-esteem and self-reliance. The SRP-A for adolescents was used for this age. The BASC is a multimethod, multidimensional approach to evaluating the self-perceptions of children. Developed in 1992 by Reynolds and Kamphaus, the BASC has been tested for reliability based on internal consistency and test-retest dynamics. Internal consistency

for SRP scales has been determined to be .70s and .80s with composites in the high .80s to mid .90s. Test-retest reliability on the SRP Scales was determined to be mostly in the .70s and .80s with composites in the .70s to mid .80s. Criterion validity was assessed and found to be acceptable. Item content came from teachers, parents, children, and psychologists. The structure of the scales and composites was based on factor analyses of items and the scales (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992).

Additional quantitative data were obtained from the survey of students before and after enrollment in the alternative school.

#### *Data Analysis*

Using SPSS, descriptive statistics were used to compare the means for attendance rate, grade point average (GPA) and disciplinary infractions of population sample before and after attendance at the Jones County Alternative School for a nine weeks grading period. The means were also compared using the matched-pairs t-test. This statistical test is used to compare data from the same subjects under different conditions. The degree of freedom was calculated by using  $n-1$  and  $\alpha$  was set at 0.10. An alpha level of .10 was chosen because of the small sample size of 12. A z score was also derived from a contingency table detailing the survey results of students before and after attendance at the JCASP.

Qualitative data gathered through use of surveys, document examination, and onsite observations were analyzed for themes. This method is most appropriate because it allows for reoccurring themes with regard to program success or failure to emerge. Analysis of data drawn from these surveys, observations and review of documents will greatly impact the understanding of interventions that support student success in an alternative setting.



## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

Chapter IV contains the statistical analysis of the data as it relates to the five research hypotheses. Data were obtained by examination of student permanent records, computer records, attendance registers and a student survey. The first section presents demographic information for students involved in the study. Subsequent sections present the results of the statistical analyses of the research hypotheses.

#### *Demographic Data*

Demographic information was obtained for all students who attended the alternative school during school year 2004-2005. The demographics for the sample used for statistical analysis is presented in Table 9.

#### *Research Question 1*

The first research question compared the grade point average (GPA) of students nine weeks before entering JCASP with their GPA nine weeks after returning to Jones County High School (JCHS). Of the 24 high school students enrolled at JCASP, 12 (50%) completed the program and returned to JCHS. A paired t-test was used to compare GPAs before and after enrollment at JCASP. The results of the t-test yielded a t-score of -2.02. The null hypothesis for question one was rejected. The analysis of data indicated that there was a statistically difference in student's academic achievement before and after attending the alternative school at the .10 level. Table 10 presents the data for this research question.

Table 9

## Demographic Data Paired t test Sample

Characteristic	n(%)
Gender	
Male	10(83.3%)
Female	2(16.7%)
SES	
Free or Reduced	9(75%)
Paid	3(25%)
Race	
White	5(41.7%)
Black	6(50%)
Other	1(8.3%)
Grade	
9 <sup>th</sup>	5(41.7%)
10 <sup>th</sup>	3(25%)
11 <sup>th</sup>	3(25%)
12 <sup>th</sup>	1(8.3%)

Table 10

## Paired Sample Statistics for GPA

Pair	Mean	SD	n	t	df	p
GPA before	76.00	7.75	12	-2.02	11	.067
GPA after	81.15	3.07	12			

### *Research Question 2*

The second research question compared the self-concept of students before and after enrollment in the JCASP as measured by the Behavior Assessment for Children (BASC). Students were given the BASC prior to enrollment at the JCASP as part of orientation and were given the same instrument again after nine week at JCHS. After analysis of the data, the null hypothesis was accepted. There is no statistically significance in student's self-concept before and after enrollment in the JCASP as measured by the BASC. Table 11 presents the data for research question two.

### *Research Question 3*

This question asked if there was a statistically significant difference in the attendance rate of students before and after enrollment in the JCASP. Analysis of the data using the paired t-test indicated there was a statistically significant difference in the students' attendance rate before and after enrollment in the JCASP. The null hypothesis was rejected. Table 12 presents the data for research question three.

Table 11

Paired Sample Statistics for Self Concept (BASC)

Pair	Mean	SD	n	t	df	p
BASC before	62.50	11.5	12	-0.35	11	.73
BASC after	64.33	12.79	12			

Table 12

## Paired Sample Statistics for Attendance Rate

Pair	Mean	SD	n	t	df	p
Attendance before	38.00	4.86	12	-2.74	11	.019*
Attendance after	42.25	2.00	12			

\*p<.05

*Research Question 4*

The fourth research question asked if there was a statistically significant difference in students' negative behaviors before and after their enrollment in the JCASP. The number of student discipline referrals the nine weeks before entering the JCASP was compared to the number of discipline referrals after returning to JCHS for a period of nine weeks. Analysis of the data indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in the number of negative behaviors as measured by discipline referrals before and after attending the JCASP. The null hypothesis was rejected. See Table 13 for the data.

Table 13

## Paired Sample Statistics Behavior Referrals

Pair	Mean	SD	n	t	df	p
# Referrals before	5.00	2.79	12	6.25	11	.00**
# Referrals after	1.416	1.02	12			

\*\*p<.01

#### *Research Question 5*

The final research question asked if students' perceived there were opportunities provided to address student goals. The null hypothesis stated there was no statistically significant difference in the proportion of students receiving guidance or instruction on goal setting prior to placement in JCASP and students receiving guidance or instruction on goal setting after placement. Student were given a student survey to assess whether or not they felt they had personally been given ay guidance or instruction on goal setting. The first survey (Survey I) was given to the students upon entrance into the JCASP and the second survey (Survey II) was given again after having returned to JCHS for one nine weeks grading period. A contingency table was developed to obtain a z score for before and after enrollment in the JCASP regarding goal-setting opportunities. To calculate z the following formula was used:  $z = (A-D)/\sqrt{(A+D)}$ . The results of the contingency table yielded a z score of .71 (see Table 14). The critical value of z at the .05 level is 1.96. The null hypothesis was accepted.

Table 14  
Survey Contingency Data

		Before	
		Yes	No
After	Yes	A n = 3	B n = 2
	No	C n = 2	D n = 5

### *Chapter Summary*

For two of the five research hypotheses, the null hypothesis was accepted. There was no statistically significant difference in the self-concept development towards academic achievement and the perceived opportunities for goal setting of students before and after enrollment at the JCASP. In the case of research questions one, three and four, the null hypotheses were rejected. There was a statistically significant difference in the academic achievement, attendance rate and negative behaviors of students before and after enrollment in the JCASP. Student's GPA, attendance and behavior improved after returning to the traditional school.

How can the data analyses be used to evaluate the current objectives of the JCASP? Chapter V of this study includes a summary of this research, discussion, recommendations and conclusions.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a restatement of the problem and a summary of the key findings of this study. Conclusions drawn from the findings are discussed. Based on the conclusions drawn from this study, recommendations are also presented. This chapter is organized into the following sections: restatement of the problem, summary of the procedures and findings, conclusions and recommendations.

#### *Restatement of the Problem*

This study was undertaken to determine the effectiveness of an alternative school program in terms of meeting the stated goals and objectives regarding student academic achievement, self-concept development, attendance, discipline and goal setting. School year 2004-2005 was used to test the five null hypotheses of this study. School year 2004-2005 was the only year available to evaluate all aspects of the program against its stated objectives. This cohort of students ( $n=12$ ) was the unit of analysis for the paired t-tests that were performed to test each of the null hypotheses.

1. A statistically significant difference occurred in the mean GPAs of students before and after enrollment in the JCASP. The null hypothesis was rejected.
2. A statistically significant difference occurred in the attendance rate of students before and after enrollment in the JCASP. The difference was significant at the .10 level. The null hypothesis was rejected.

3. A statistically significant difference occurred in the number student discipline referrals before and after enrollment in the JCASP. The difference was significant at the .10 level. The null hypothesis was rejected.
4. No statistically significant difference was found in the students' self-concept development before and after enrollment in the JCASP. The null hypothesis was accepted.
5. No statistically significant difference occurred in the proportion of students receiving guidance or instruction on goal setting before and after enrollment in the JCASP. The null hypothesis was accepted.

#### *Summary of Procedures and Findings*

The intent of this research study was to evaluate the effectiveness of an alternative high school program in terms of meeting its stated objectives. Five research questions were developed and five null hypotheses were generated to evaluate program effectiveness. Demographic data for each cohort of student groups was collected and analyzed. Data from school year 2004-2005 were analyzed using the paired t-test to determine whether a statistically significant difference occurred. The paired t-test was conducted on GPA, self-concept score from the BASC, attendance rate, and the number of discipline referrals. For each t-test the mean scores were paired one nine weeks before entering the alternative school against nine weeks after returning to the regular home school. A contingency table based on survey results was used to obtain a z score to measure opportunities for goal setting.

The null hypotheses for research questions two and five were accepted. The null hypotheses measuring self-concept development and perceived opportunities for goal setting showed no statistically significant difference. The null hypotheses for research questions one,



three and four were rejected. There was a statistically significant difference in the academic achievement, attendance, and behavior of students after enrollment in the JCASP.

### *Conclusions*

One of the often-cited needs of alternative school educators is an evaluation instrument to document the effectiveness of their program (Reimer & Cash, 2003). The research and evaluation of alternative education program is limited to some to degree. Because of accountability issues brought on by state and federal legislation, many states have developed an evaluation instrument to measure program effectiveness. The Georgia Department of Education (2001) has developed an instrument called the *Alternative Education Program Standards and Indicators*. This instrument is to be used as a tool to measure the success of individual alternative schools.

The Jones County Alternative School Program was initially designed to reduce the number of days of suspensions, provide placement for students who faced long-term suspension or expulsion and to decrease the system drop out rate. The program has been successful in providing an educational setting for those students who otherwise would not be in school. In terms of meeting current program goals and objectives, there is a need for changes in the current format for instructional services and helping the students develop a more positive self-concept and to establish career and life goals. While behavior and attendance may improve for students after they return to their regular home school, they do not show any significant gain in academic achievement. The number of students who have withdrawn from the JCASP or fail to complete high school all together is some what indicative that there is a need to change policies dictating the delivery of services for student who have been enrolled in the JCASP.

## *Recommendations*

The following recommendations are based on the literature, data analysis and the resulting conclusions:

1. There are many types of delivery models that alternative school may utilize depending on the type of students they serve. The JCASP relies heavily on the punitive model, which uses punishment to deter or eliminate misbehavior. Program administrators should consider using a model such as the CrossRoads Alternative Education Program. This model provides intensive, individually focused academic and social skills programs that enable students to succeed in the traditional school setting. The focus is not on punishment, but on academic intervention, school transition and behavior therapy. This approach aids students in preparing to return to their regular home school and in developing effective problem-solving skills. Academically, interventions should be made to reach each student by utilizing varied methods of instruction to meet the needs of the at-risk youth.
2. The alternative school and the regular high school must do a better job of tracking and evaluating the progress students who have been enrolled in an alternative setting. Recent legislative acts, namely *No Child Left Behind*, will make it imperative that accountability efforts be common not at the traditional high school, but in alternative settings as well.
3. Program administrators at the alternative school and the traditional school must communicate effectively if the student is to be successful. A transitional program or bridge is recommended to aid in helping administrators become aware of the needs and adjustments that must be made for those students returning to a more traditional setting.

4. A counseling and career awareness program should be developed at the alternative school. It is recommended that each child upon entering the JCASP be individually assessed in terms of grade level, emotional maturity, level of self-concept and career awareness. The alternative school could benefit from a full-time counselor to address the various needs of the students enrolled.
5. It is recommended that the academic course offering be increased to include classes beyond the basic subjects of math, English and science. At present only a limited number of vocational classes are available to the students enrolled at JCASP.
6. It is further recommended that teachers, who are currently employed at the JCASP, receive program specific professional development to help prepare them to effectively teach at-risk students.

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## Appendix A: Student Survey (A)

**Create an ID number using 2 digits from your mother's birth month & the first 4 letters of her maiden name.**  
**Student ID (\_\_\_\_\_)**

**Ethnicity:** American Indian or Alaska Native      Asian      Black or African American  
Hispanic or Latino      Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander      White

**Gender:** Male                      Female

**Grade:** 9<sup>th</sup>                      10<sup>th</sup>                      11<sup>th</sup>                      12<sup>th</sup>

**Do you have a learning disability?:**      Yes      No

**Do you have a language disability?**      Yes      No

**What was your self-esteem before enrolling in Alternative School?:**

Low Medium High Very High

**What was your self-esteem after enrolling in Alternative School?:**

Low Medium High Very High

**Did you have any issues with the law when attending regular school?**

Yes      No

**Have you have any issues with the law since enrolling in the Alternative school?**

Yes      No

**How many hours do you watch TV in a day?**      2-3 hr      4-5 hr      more than 5 hr

**Do you have any TV program restrictions?**      Yes      No

**How late do you stay up?** 9 pm    10 pm    11 pm    Any time

**How strict are your parents?** Not strict      Moderately strict      Very strict

How often to you participate in community activities (Church, Sports, Family gatherings) **At least once a month**  
**2-3 times a month**      **4 or more times a month**

<b>Highest education of your father:</b>	Some high school	High school graduate
	Some college	College graduate

Highest education of your mother:	Some high school	Some college	High school graduate	College graduate
1. How much do you know about the world?	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
2. How much do you know about the people of other countries?	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
3. How much do you know about the people of this country?	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
4. How much do you know about the people of your own state?	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
5. How much do you know about the people of your own city?	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
6. How much do you know about the people of your own neighborhood?	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
7. How much do you know about the people of your own family?	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
8. How much do you know about the people of your own school?	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
9. How much do you know about the people of your own church?	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
10. How much do you know about the people of your own community?	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
11. How much do you know about the people of your own country?	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
12. How much do you know about the people of your own world?	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00

**Did you every ever receive career counseling in the regular school?**    Yes                      No

**If the answer is yes, how many times?** 1      2      3      4      5 or more

**Did you every ever receive career counseling in the alternative school?**

Yes                      No

**If the answer is yes, how many times?** 1    2    3    4    5 or more



## Appendix B: Student Survey (R)

**Create an ID number using 2 digits for your mother's birth month and the first 4 letter of her maiden name. Student ID ( \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ )**

**Ethnicity:** American Indian or Alaska Native      Asian    Black or African American  
Hispanic or Latino      Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander    White

**Gender:**      Male      Female

**Grade:** 9<sup>th</sup>      10<sup>th</sup>      11<sup>th</sup>      12<sup>th</sup>

**Do you have a learning disability?** Yes      No

**Do you have a language disability?** Yes      No

**Do you consider your self-esteem to be:** Low      Medium      High      Very High

**Have you had any issues with the law in the last 6 months?**      Yes      No

**How many hours do you watch TV in a day?**    2-3 hr    4-5 hr      more than 5 hr

**Do you have any TV program restrictions?**      Yes      No

**How late do you stay up?** 9 pm      10 pm      11 pm      Any time

**How strict are your parents?** Not strict      Moderately strict      Very strict

**How often to you participate in community activities (Church, Sports, Family gatherings) At least once a month    2-3 times a month    4 or more times a month**

**Highest education of your father:** Some high school      High school graduate  
Some college      College graduate

**Highest education of your mother:** Some high school      High school graduate  
Some college      College graduate

**Have you ever received career counseling in the last 12 months?** Yes      No  
**If the answer is yes, how many times?** 1    2    3    4    5 or more

**Have you ever been retained?**      Yes      No

Appendix C: Informed Assent Form for Evaluation of Jones County Alternative School

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Student,

You are invited to participate in my research study titled, "Evaluation of Jones County Alternative School". Through this project I will learn about how effective alternative school programs are in helping students to improve grades, self-concept, behavior, school attendance and goal-setting.

I will work with you each Thursday for about 2 hours for 4 weeks. In these sessions we will discuss careers, self-esteem, study skills, behavior modification techniques and educational and career awareness. These activities are **a part** of the regular curriculum at the Jones County Alternative School.

If you choose to participate in the research study, the data collected will include the results of the Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC) to measure self-concept, attendance, grade point average and discipline records. Additional observational data will be collected in the group described above concerning your preferences and interests in various occupations and careers. If you choose not to participate in the research study your grades will not be affected.

Any information I gather about you will be confidential. This project can help you successfully complete the program and have a successful transition back to the regular high school. All students in the counseling groups may benefit from participation in the sessions, but there is no direct benefit of participation for those who choose to take part in the research study. Should you decide to stop participating in the study, you may do so at any time with no penalty. You can choose not to answer any questions I may ask you.

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact me or my teacher, Dr. C. Thomas Holmes, Educational Leadership Department, University of Georgia, 706-542-0913.

Sincerely,

Deondray Farlar  
University of Georgia  
Educational Leadership  
478-742-1291  
[dfarlar@msn.com](mailto:dfarlar@msn.com)

---

I understand the study described above. My questions have been answered and I agree to participate in the study. I have received a copy of this form.

---

Signature of Participant /Date

**Please sign and date both copies and return one copy to the researcher.**

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, GA 30602-7411; Telephone 706-542-3199; /Email Address [IRB@uga.edu](mailto:IRB@uga.edu)

## Appendix D: Informed Assent Form

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Student,

You are invited to participate in my research study titled, "Evaluation of Jones County's Alternative School Program". Through this project I will learn about how effective alternative school programs are in helping students to improve grades, self-concept, behavior, school attendance and goal-setting.

If you choose to participate in the research study, the data collected will include the results of the Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC) to measure self-concept, attendance, grade point average and discipline records. If you choose not to participate in the research study your grades will not be affected.

Any information I gather about you will be confidential. Should you decide to stop participating in the study, you may do so at any time without penalty. You may not benefit directly from participating in this research study, but I hope you will consider becoming a part of this study.

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact me or my teacher, Dr. C. Thomas Holmes, Educational Leadership Department, University of Georgia, 706-542-0913.

Sincerely,

Deondray Farlar  
University of Georgia  
Educational Leadership  
478-742-1291  
[dfarlar@msn.com](mailto:dfarlar@msn.com)

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I understand the study described above. My questions have been answered and I agree to participate in the study. I have received a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant /Date

**Please sign and date both copies and return one copy to the researcher.**

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, GA 30602-7411; Telephone 706-542-3199; /Email Address IRB@uga.edu

## Appendix E: Parental Permission Form

I agree to allow my child, \_\_\_\_\_, to take part in a research study titled, “Evaluation of Jones County’s Alternative School Program”, which is being conducted by Ms. Deondray Farlar, from the Educational Leadership Department at the University of Georgia (478-742-1291) under the direction of Dr. C. Thomas Holmes, Educational Leadership (706-542-0913). I do not have to allow my child to be in this study if I do not want to. My child can stop taking part **or** choose not to take part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have the information related to my child returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

- The purpose of this study is to determine the program effectiveness of the alternative school as it relates to academics, attendance, behavior, self-concept and goal-setting.
- Those who participate in the program may see an improvement in their academics, attendance, self-concept and behavior. Students might also be able to better identify future educational and career goals. All students in the counseling groups may experience the benefits described, but there will be no direct benefits of participation to those who choose to take part in the research study.
- Those who elect to participate will be given a survey, the Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC) to measure self-concept, and will also participate in individual and group sessions geared toward careers and educational awareness. Additionally, students will receive instruction on behavior modification and developing a positive self-concept. These activities are all a part of the regular curriculum at the Jones County Alternative School that all students participate in. These activities will occur during weekly scheduled visits to the alternative school. These activities will occur once weekly for a 4 weeks duration for approximately 2 hours.
- Data will be collected from those who elect to participate in the research study. This data will consist of the BASC results, attendance, grade point average and discipline records. Observational data will be collected regarding student behaviors and their preferences and interests in various occupations and careers.
- The research is not expected to cause any harm or discomfort. No risks are expected. My child may quit at any time. My child’s grades will not be affected if my child decided not to participate in the study.
- Any information collected about my child will be held confidential unless otherwise required by law. All data will be kept in a secured location.
- The researcher will answer any questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at: 478-742-1291. I may also contact the professor supervising the research, Dr. C. Thomas Holmes, Educational Leadership Department, at 706-542-0913.
- I understand the study procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to allow my child to take part in this study. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

If I do not want my child to take part in this research study, then h/she will only take part in the regular curriculum offerings and no data will be collected.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Researcher  
478-742-1291

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

[dfarlar@msn.com](mailto:dfarlar@msn.com)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Parent/Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

Additional questions or problems regarding your child's rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, GA 30602-7411; Telephone 706-542-3199; E-mail address [IRB@uga.edu](mailto:IRB@uga.edu).

## Appendix F: Parental Permission Form

I agree to allow my child, \_\_\_\_\_, to take part in a research study titled, “Evaluation of Jones County’s Alternative School Program”, which is being conducted by Ms. Deondray Farlar, from the Educational Leadership Department at the University of Georgia (478-742-1291) under the direction of Dr. C. Thomas Holmes, Educational Leadership (706-542-0913). I do not have to allow my child to be in this study if I do not want to. My child can stop taking part or choose not to take part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have the information related to my child returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

- The purpose of this study is to determine the program effectiveness of the alternative school as it relates to academics, attendance, behavior, self-concept and goal-setting.
- Data will be collected from those who elect to participate in the research study. This data will consist of the Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC) to measure self-concept, attendance, grade point average and discipline records.
- The research is not expected to cause any harm or discomfort. No risks are expected. My child may quit at any time. My child’s grades will not be affected if my child decided not to participate in the study.
- Any information collected about my child will be held confidential unless otherwise required by law. All data will be kept in a secured location.
- The researcher will answer any questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at: 478-742-1291. I may also contact the professor supervising the research, Dr. C. Thomas Holmes, Educational Leadership Department, at 706-542-0913.
- I understand the study procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to allow my child to take part in this study. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Researcher  
478-742-1291  
[dfarlar@msn.com](mailto:dfarlar@msn.com)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Parent/Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

Additional questions or problems regarding your child’s rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, GA 30602-7411; Telephone 706-542-3199; E-mail address [IRB@uga.edu](mailto:IRB@uga.edu).