To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting a dissertation written by James Vince Witty entitled "Tennessee Practitioner Perceptions of the Construct, Content and Utility of *Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming* for Use as an Evaluation Instrument." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education, with a major in Learning and Leadership.

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Dr. Ted Miller, Chairperson

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:

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Tennessee Practitioner Perceptions of the Construct, Content and Utility of
Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming
for Use as an Evaluation Instrument

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Education Degree
The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

James Vince Witty
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DEDICATION

This culminating work is dedicated to my mother, Tracy Singel. *My success as a man is a testament to your success as a mother.* I love you so much, Mom.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Success is not an accident. In my life, all personal, professional and academic achievements can be shared with those individuals who helped, guided and pushed me along my path. At this crossroads, it is with great respect and gratitude that I honor those individuals.

First and foremost, to my mother, thank you for the many sacrifices you made on my behalf. All that I am and hope to be, I owe to you. *My success as a man is a testament to your success as a mother.*

To Blake Kniffin, my best friend, love and spouse in this so called life, thank you for being my compass and supporting all my personal and professional endeavors. You are definitely the better of two halves and I am so lucky to call you mine.

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to help them overcome obstacles that can seem overwhelming and you continue to

answer that call. It is my personal mission to continue advocating on your behalf, stirring

conversation, awareness and action among our public. Thank you for being a true

inspiration to me and your students. ***You are the heart and soul of the profession we

call alternative education!***

ABSTRACT

This dissertation explored Tennessee practitioner perceptions of the construct, content and utility of *Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming* (*Exemplary Practices*) for use as an evaluation instrument (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). The general purposes of this study were to (1) examine the legitimacy of the ten constructs (i.e., standards) and corresponding content (i.e., indicators of success) of best practice as presented in the *Exemplary Practices* and (2) investigate the utility of the *Exemplary Practices* when transformed into an evaluation instrument for alternative schools and programs. The study entailed a two-phased sequential, mixed-model research design (Cameron, 2009). Phase One involved a concurrent embedded strategy (Creswell, 2009) to obtain quantitative and qualitative data related to the constructs and content found in the *Exemplary Practices*. With the exception of four indicators, findings provide evidence of construct and content validity as perceived by Tennessee practitioners. Phase Two involved a sequential, explanatory research strategy (Creswell, 2009) aimed at collecting data related to the utility of the *Exemplary Practices* when transformed into an evaluation instrument. Findings indicate that the majority of constructs and content were *not* observable during utility testing. Additionally, findings point to the need for enhancements to the instrument. During utility testing, simple observations were not enough to fully ascertain whether or not the alternative school or program was implementing the *Exemplary Practices* with fidelity. Research participants overwhelming noted that the evaluation instrument should incorporate evidence categories for observations, interviews and artifacts. Following Phase One and Phase

Two of the study, the researcher developed an evaluation instrument for designing, delivering, evaluating and improving alternative education programming. The instrument was constructed from the *Exemplary Practices* but adapted based upon practitioner perceptions of construct and content validity, as well as overall utility. The culminating evaluation instrument is presented as a product of the research study.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Introduction

This dissertation explored Tennessee practitioner perceptions of the construct, content and utility of *Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming* (*Exemplary Practices*) for use as an evaluation instrument (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). The study was conducted through a two-phased sequential, mixed-model research design (Cameron, 2009). Phase One involved a concurrent embedded strategy (Creswell, 2009) to obtain quantitative and qualitative data relative to the construct and content of the *Exemplary Practices*. Phase Two involved a sequential, explanatory research strategy (Creswell, 2009) aimed at collecting data related to the utility of the *Exemplary Practices* when transformed into an evaluation instrument. As an outcome of Phase One and Phase Two of the study, the researcher developed a program evaluation instrument for designing, delivering, evaluating and improving alternative education programming.

In this dissertation, Chapter One provides an overview of the study. This includes an introduction and background to the problem, statement of the problem and purpose of the study, research questions, overview of the methodology and rationale and the significance of the study. Additionally, the researcher defines key terminology, notes the basic assumptions and includes the delimitations and limitations of the study. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the organization of the dissertation.

Background to the Problem

One of the more pressing issues facing the contemporary field of education is how to best educate students in nontraditional settings (Lehr & Lange, 2003). Alternative

education is a product of that dilemma and has emerged as an approach to serving

learners who are not successful in the traditional school setting (Lehr & Lange, 2003;

McKee & Conner, 2007; Sagor, 1999; White & Kochhar-Bryant, 2005). As an outcome

of that dilemma, there are an increasing number of alternative schools and programs

emerging in the United States (Kleiner, Porch, & Farris, 2002). White and Kochhar-

Bryant (2005) have defined alternative education by suggesting that:

> Alternative education refers to programs, schools, and districts that serve students
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> and school-age youth who are not succeeding in the regular public school
>
> environment. Alternative education offers to students and school-age youth who
>
> are under-performing academically, may have learning disabilities, emotional or
>
> behavioral problems, or may be direct or indirect objects of the behavioral
>
> problems of others, additional opportunities to achieve academically and develop
>
> socially in a different setting. (p. 2)

White and Kochhar-Bryant (2005) offer a definition that reflects a variety of

interpretations of alternative education originating from the discipline's evolving history.

The field of alternative education is not new. The first alternative schools and

programs date back to the 1960s and were referred to as alternatives (Kim & Taylor,

2007; Lange & Sletten, 2002; McKee & Conner, 2007; Raywid, 1999; Sagor 1999).

These alternatives appeared in urban and suburban areas, were products of the private

sector and eventually spread into the public sector (Raywid, 1999). Early alternatives

were aimed at helping those students who were not succeeding in the mainstream and

often honed in on minorities and less affluent students (Kim & Taylor, 2008). Other

early alternatives were highly innovative schools and programs that pursued new ways of

educating learners (Kim & Taylor, 2008; Raywid, 1999). These early alternatives thrived because they were designed to serve many purposes including an answer to juvenile crime, a means of preventing school violence, dropout prevention, desegregation and increasing overall school effectiveness (Raywid, 1999).

By the 1970s an alternatives movement emerged in the United States that focused on changing several aspects of the education landscape (Raywid, 1999). At that time, all were considered alternatives to the status quo. Raywid (1999) argues that an alternative education movement emerged in the 1970s based on what educators were trying to change and included the following emphases: change the student, change the school, or change the educational system. The first emphasis, change the student, was based on the concept that students would modify inappropriate behaviors, as well as remediate academic deficiencies in the alternative setting (Raywid, 1999). Once the student had done so, he or she would return to the school of origin. Second, the change the school emphasis was based on the idea that individual schools could change (Raywid, 1999). These schools were often highly innovative with novel curricular and instructional approaches and atypical positive school climates (Raywid, 1999). The last emphasis, change the educational system, aimed at changing entire learning systems (Raywid, 1999). School districts soon began adopting reforms on a larger scale. Examples, many of which remain today, include such initiatives as small schools and schools-within-schools (Raywid, 1999). But the diversity that alternative education represented in the 1960s and 1970s was short lived (Kim & Taylor, 2008).

In the 1980s, the role and focus of alternative education narrowed as the field began to center on at-risk students (McKee & Conner, 2007; Settles & Orwick, 2003).

Alternative schools and programs focused on remediating the student either for academic or behavioral purposes and sometimes both. During this period alternative education was geared toward teaching educational basics, as well as modifying behavior and de-emphasized the idea of providing innovative learning environments or adopting inventive reforms at the district level (Settles & Orwick, 2003).

Alternative education evidenced a period of growth in the 1990s serving expelled students with disciplinary problems. Such growth was a direct result of the Federal Gun Free Schools Act of 1994 and due to the enactment of zero tolerance policies by states (Silchenko, 2005). Alternative education was used as a punitive placement for students committing zero tolerance offenses or for students bringing a weapon to school (Silchenko, 2005). As time went by, many states modified laws to make use of alternative schools and programs for lesser disciplinary infractions. This resulted in an increased number of suspended and expelled students being placed in alternative settings and the rise of disciplinary-based alternative schools and programs (Silchenko, 2005).

When discussing contemporary alternative education, most experts acknowledge Raywid's (1994) three types of alternative schools or programs as describing the approaches in the field. Many modern alternatives directly reflect a return to alternative education's origins. For example, Raywid's (1994) Type I schools and programs aim to make the learning experience more challenging and fulfilling for students and reflect organizational and administrative departures from the traditional, as well as programmatic innovations. Type II settings focus on modifying behavior with little attention paid to modifying curriculum or pedagogy while Type III schools and programs focus on student remediation, as well as rehabilitation in programming (Raywid, 1994).

In practice, the three pure types are not always mutually exclusive. Some schools and programs have elements of two or more of the pure types making them a hybrid (Raywid, 1994).

As alternative education moves into a new era, there has been growing concern about student access to quality alternative schools and programs (Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury, 2005). This prompts the question of how to hold schools and programs accountable for alternative education programming. Many would argue that building accountability systems based solely on the passing rates on high-stakes tests does not take into account the full measure of the alternative's worth (MacLellan & Curran, 2001). While student achievement is one measure of an alternative school or program's performance, strong accountability systems rely on additional measures (MacLellan & Curran, 2001).

As a secondary means of measuring quality, a few states have identified best practices in the field and thereby adopted formal standards for the operation of schools and programs (Almeida, 2009). In fact, a few states routinely conduct program evaluations to ensure that schools and programs are integrating the adopted practices into their programming (Almeida, 2009). But despite this, the vast majority of states have been unclear, confusing and inconsistent in providing guidance on quality standards for the operation and management of alternative schools and programs (Almeida, 2009). Additionally, there has yet to be a consensus on best practices specific to the field of alternative education (Almeida, 2009; Martin & Brand, 2006).

Prompted by this dilemma, the National Alternative Education Association (NAEA) (2009) released *Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of*

Quality Programming. At the national level, this work represents one of the first collaborative attempts by a professional organization (made up of practitioners) to provide a set of best practices (i.e., standards with indicators of success) specific to alternative education. The *Exemplary Practices* are constructed from ten best practices which include the following broad programming areas: *Mission and Purpose*, *Leadership*, *Climate and Culture*, *Staffing and Professional Development*, *Curriculum and Instruction*, *Student Assessment*, *Transitional Planning and Support*, *Parent/Guardian Involvement*, *Collaboration* and *Program Evaluation* (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). These practices were identified and adopted by the NAEA after a review of the literature and discussion about effective alternative schools and programs. Each area represents a practice that was noted by the Association as exemplary (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). Coinciding with each of these best practices are quality indicators that signify the practice as being met. As presented in the *Exemplary Practices*, a copy of each standard and the corresponding indicators of success have been included as Appendix A.

While the NAEA has adopted and endorsed the *Exemplary Practices*, the best practices have yet to be examined in any formal manner. The *Exemplary Practices*, in their current form, have not been tested for validity. In fact, some of the standards and indicators are only assertions as to what constitutes best practice and have no research base. The basic construct or standards of practice have yet to be confirmed through direct research. Nor has the content or indicators of success for each construct been technically scrutinized. Thus the question emerges, "Do the ten constructs and corresponding content accurately frame all best practice in the field?" Perhaps as problematic is the fact

that the utility of the *Exemplary Practices,* when translated into an instrument for the evaluation of specific schools or programs, has yet to be tested.

With a nationally known organization like the NAEA implying that the *Exemplary Practices* should be used to design, deliver, evaluate and improve alternative schools and programs, the above questions must be addressed through research. Since states are increasingly realizing the importance of updating and upgrading policies, procedures and standards for alternative schools and programs (Almeida, 2009; MacLellan & Curran, 2001), it is important to address such concerns before the *Exemplary Practices* are universally adopted. That is, the accuracy of the *Exemplary Practices* should be determined before any state holds schools and programs accountable for the standards and indicators contained in the document. Ensuring accuracy will help strengthen the credibility of the *Exemplary Practices* and create a solid foundation for designing, delivering, evaluating and improving alternative education programming.

Statement of the Problem

Without properly validating each of the ten major constructs of best practice framed in the *Exemplary Practices,* as well as the content associated with each construct, practitioners cannot be certain of the document's accuracy (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). Even more uncertain is the utility of the *Exemplary Practices* when translated into an evaluation instrument. With an increasing number of alternative schools and programs emerging in the United States (Kleiner, Porch, & Farris, 2002), many states need guidance on quality standards and indicators as a means to hold schools and programs accountable. With the National Alternative Education Association (2009) recommending that the *Exemplary Practices* be universally adopted by states and

used to design, deliver, evaluate and improve programming, the standards and indicators must be examined for validity. In the absence of research, the *Exemplary Practices* are nothing more than a set of unconfirmed best practices that lack utility testing for evaluation. Proper research is, thus, essential to affirming or rejecting the ten constructs and corresponding content, as well as the utility of the *Exemplary Practices* when converted to an evaluation instrument.

Purpose of the Study

The researcher fully acknowledges that validating the best practices found in *Exemplary Practices* will be a long and extensive process but beginning the process is essential to establishing or rejecting the credibility of the work. This dissertation begins to augment the limited research on best practice and evaluation in alternative education. Thus, the general purposes of this study were to (1) examine the legitimacy of the ten constructs and corresponding content of best practice as presented in the *Exemplary Practices* and (2) test the utility of the *Exemplary Practices* when transformed into an evaluation instrument for alternative schools and programs.

Testing construct and content validity (Creswell, 2009) is essential to understanding if the *Exemplary Practices* adequately frame definitions and measures of variables for the constructs and content associated with best practice in alternative education. To determine if the *Exemplary Practices* are being implemented with fidelity at the school or program level, instrumentation design is also necessary, as well as initial utility testing. Utility testing is necessary to establish whether the *Exemplary Practices* (when used as an evaluation instrument) serve the informational needs of the end user (Fritpatrick, Sanders & Worthen, 2004). Hence, the overarching purpose of this study is

to examine practitioner perceptions of the construct, content and utility of the *Exemplary Practices* for evaluation purposes.

Research Questions

Using the data obtained through the research for this study, the following questions were addressed:

1. Do the ten constructs (i.e., standards) identified in the *Exemplary Practices* reflect best practice in alternative education?

2. Does the content (i.e., indicators of success) identified in the *Exemplary Practices* reflect best practice in alternative education?

3. Are revisions to the constructs and content of the *Exemplary Practices* necessary to accurately frame best practice in alternative education?

4. Are the *Exemplary Practices* useful when translated into an evaluation instrument?

5. Are revisions to the evaluation instrument necessary to enhance the utility of the tool?

These questions provided the general framework for the current study.

Overview of the Methodology

This study entailed a two-phased sequential, mixed-model research design (Cameron, 2009) to address the research questions. Phase One of the study involved a concurrent embedded research strategy (Creswell, 2009) to obtain quantitative and qualitative data relative to practitioner perceptions of the construct and content of the *Exemplary Practices.* To capture perceptions of the construct and content, the researcher administered a descriptive survey (Creswell, 2009; Fraenkel &Wallen, 2003). Practitioners were asked to quantify the validity of each construct and content found in

the *Exemplary Practices*. As a secondary means of data collection, open-ended questions (Creswell, 2009) on the survey allowed practitioners to suggest additional constructs and content not currently identified in the *Exemplary Practices*. Furthermore, practitioners were able to suggest any necessary edits to properly frame best practice. Results informed the design of a program evaluation instrument developed from the *Exemplary Practices*, but adapted based upon the results of Phase One.

Phase Two of the study involved the development of an evaluation tool and the initial validation of the instrument. A sequential explanatory research strategy (Creswell, 2009) was used to obtain quantitative data and qualitative semi-structured interview data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2009; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003) related to practitioner perceptions of the utility of the instrument. This process required the researcher to train five teams of two practitioners to use the instrument in evaluation. Each team completed a site visit of an alternative school or program and tested the utility of the instrument provided. Following the site visit, the researcher reviewed the instruments to determine which constructs and corresponding content were observable during the visit providing quantitative data relative to utility. Upon completion of that process, each team participated in a semi-structured interview (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2009; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003) with the researcher to obtain qualitative data as to the overall utility of the tool. As an outcome of Phase One and Phase Two of the study, the researcher developed an evaluation instrument. The final product was created from the *Exemplary Practices* but adapted based upon the findings associated with practitioner perceptions of the construct, content and utility of the *Exemplary Practices*.

This product is an instrument that alternative educators can use when assessing the degree of implementation relative to the *Exemplary Practices*.

Rationale for the Study

There is an increasing demand for guidance on best practices in alternative education to inform school and program design, delivery, evaluation and improvement (Almeida, 2009; Martin & Brand, 2006). Likewise, practitioners need a verified evaluation instrument to measure the implementation of best practice at the school and program level. This study provides valuable information regarding best practice in alternative education and an instrument to measure the implementation of those practices in the field.

Significance of the Study

This study provides two significant contributions. First, the researcher focused on examining the ten constructs and corresponding content of the *Exemplary Practices*. By doing so, alternative educators have access to an initially examined set of best practices for program development, delivery, evaluation and improvement of programming. Second, this study tested the utility of the *Exemplary Practices* through the development and initial validation of an accompanying evaluation instrument. To date, as far as is known, no other instrument with a similar purpose has emerged. Validating the construct, content and utility of the *Exemplary Practices*, as well as developing an accompanying instrument, will be of considerable value to practitioners in alternative education and should provide a catalyst for improving programming for students.

Definitions of Key Terminology

For purposes of the study, the following operational definitions applied:

1. Alternative Education: Programs, schools and districts that serve students and school-age youth who are not succeeding in the regular public school environment (White & Kochlar-Bryant, 2005).

2. Alternative Students: School-aged learners who are under-performing academically, may have learning disabilities, emotional or behavioral problems, or may be direct or indirect recipients of the behavioral problems of others, who require additional opportunities to achieve academically and develop socially in an alternative setting (White & Kochlar-Bryant, 2005).

3. Best Practice: A method or innovative practice that contributes to the improved performance of an organization, usually recognized as the best service option among peers or professional organizations (Siebel, 2004). Also referred to as an "exemplary practice" by the National Alternative Education Association (2009).

4. Construct: A complex idea, element or topic (i.e., standards) that is systematically built or assembled from a subsection of simpler ideas, elements or topics (Soukhanov, 2001).

5. Construct Validity: A form of validity aimed at establishing whether items appropriate identity and measure the intended hypothetical constructs or concepts (Creswell, 2009).

6. Content: A subsection of simpler ideas, elements or topics (i.e., indicators of success) that frames or makes up the construct (Soukhanov, 2001).

7. Content Validity: A form of validity aimed at establishing whether the items appropriate identify and measure the intended hypothetical content (Creswell, 2009).

8. Evaluation: The identification, clarification and application of defensible criteria to determine an evaluation object's value in relation to those criteria (Fritzpatrick, Sanders & Worthen, 2004).

9. *Exemplary Practices*: An abbreviated term that refers to the ten constructs (i.e., standards) of best practice adopted by the National Alternative Education Association (2009) and corresponding content (i.e., indicators of success) entitled *Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming*.

10. National Alternative Education Association or NAEA: A volunteer organization that provides information sharing, professional development, best practice, public policy and advocacy for alternative educators (National Alternative Education Association, 2009).

11. Perception: What a person believes or knows or can demonstrate (Soukhanov, 2001).

12. Practitioners: Teachers, school counselors, para-professionals, crisis workers, administrators, school resource officers, school social workers and other individuals who work directly with alternative students (National Alternative Education Association, 2009).

13. Utility: The extent to which the instrument serves the informational needs of the end user (Fritzpatrick, Sanders & Worthen, 2004).

Basic Assumptions

Several underlying assumptions were considered when gathering and analyzing data for this study. The findings were based on the following basic assumptions:

1. Practitioners in the field can appropriately identify the common constructs and content associated with best practice specific to alternative education.

2. Practitioners can appropriate describe the utility of a program evaluation instrument.

3. Practitioners were truthful with their responses.

Delimitations of the Study

Delimitations are those decisions that the researcher made to narrow the study (Creswell, 2005). The following delimitations applied to this study:

1. When examining the construct and content of the *Exemplary Practices*, surveyed participants were narrowed to practitioners in Tennessee. As a result, the findings of the construct and content analysis cannot be readily generalized beyond the state's parameters.

2. When examining the utility of the *Exemplary Practices*, the research was limited to Tennessee schools and programs and based upon utility testing by Tennessee practitioners. Consequently, the results of the utility analysis cannot be readily generalized beyond the state.

3. The inquiry into best practice was specific to alternative education; therefore, results cannot be readily generalized to the traditional school setting.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations are potential weakness or problems with the study (Creswell, 2005). The following limitations applied to this study:

1. One of the primary methods for data collection was survey research. A survey approach allows for the potential of participants to misinterpret survey items and there was no obvious way to determine if this occurred (Creswell, 2009).

2. Participants surveyed in this study remained anonymous; therefore, there was no way to verify the attitudes, opinions or perceptions of practitioners on the quantitative and qualitative portion of the survey.

3. While participants were allowed to write in additional constructs and content related to best practice, this study honed in on best practice as presented by the National Alternative Education Association.

4. Interviews were used as a means of data collection for those participants that tested the utility of the *Exemplary Practices*. Although clarifying questions were asked, interview responses may be subject to various interpretations.

5. A small sample was used in the utility testing of the instrument.

6. Time was limited during the utility testing of the instrument (practitioners were on site for a short period of time).

7. Although steps were taken to reduce bias, the analysis and interpretive findings of the study may be subject to the bias of the researcher.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter One introduces the research study. This includes an introduction and background to the problem, statement of the problem and purpose, research questions, overview of the methodology and rationale and significance of the study. Additionally, the researcher defines key terminology, notes the basic assumptions and includes the delimitations and limitations of the study. Chapter Two presents the review of literature. This includes a definition of alternative education, discussion of the various types of schools and programs, an examination of the history of the field, in addition to a discussion of the current status of

alternative education. The researcher concludes the review of literature by honing in on

best practices specific to alternative education. Chapter Three describes the methodology

and research design. This includes the identification of the research design, participants,

instrumentation, procedures used and analysis of data, as well as the role of the researcher

in limiting bias and procedures to protect human subjects. Chapter Four presents the

results of the study organized by each sequential phase and by each research question

posed. Finally, Chapter Five summarizes and discusses implications of the research

findings, as well as offers recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The literature review was conducted to gather an in-depth understanding of alternative education. The review includes a definition of alternative education, notes the variety of alternatives being offered across the United States and provides a history of the discipline. Additionally, the researcher discusses the current status of alternative education. The review concludes with an examination of best practices. At the outset, it should be noted that while the field of alternative education is not new and, in fact, dates back to the 1960s, the comprehensive review of literature uncovered a very limited quantity of research.

Alternative Education Defined

The term "alternative education" implies different things to different people. As a result, until recently, the field lacked a consistent, concise definition. In order to provide a foundation for alternative education, White and Kochhar-Bryant (2005) sought to develop a common definition of alternative education. This work represents the only known research-based study to provide a core definition of alternative education. In this work, the researchers conducted a content analysis of relevant published and unpublished summaries of alternative education authored by practitioners, commentaries on normative and descriptive theories of alternative education, journal articles, conference proceedings and personal communications (White & Kochhar-Bryant, 2005). The analysis revealed several findings.

White and Kochhar-Bryant (2005) found that a common definition of alternative education involves more "wordsmithing" than a change in understanding (p. x). The

researchers determined that alternative education has federal, private and public education roots (White & Kochhar-Bryant, 2005). Additionally, the term can be applied loosely to describe a wide variety of schools and programs (White Kochhar-Bryant, 2005). Furthermore, alternative education services can be found in the pre-K, K-12 and post secondary realms (White & Kochhar-Bryant, 2005). The researchers also identified that there is no Federal policy that defines alternative education specifically but Federal statutes were identified that support alternative education.

In conducting the content analysis to define alternative education, the researchers identified key terminology from the literature. The common words associated with defining alternative education included the following: alternative education, programs, schools and districts, students and school-aged youth, under-performing academically, emotional or behavioral problems, victims, additional opportunities to achieve academically and develop socially and different setting (White & Kochhar-Bryant, 2005). Based on the content analysis, key findings, commonalities in terminology and definitions, the researchers were able to provide the following holistic definition of alternative education:

> Alternative education refers to programs, schools, and districts that serve students and school-age youth who are not succeeding in the regular public school environment. Alternative education offers to students and school-age youth who are under-performing academically, may have learning disabilities, emotional or behavioral problems, or may be direct or indirect objects of the behavioral problems of others, additional opportunities to achieve academically and develop socially in a different setting. (White & Kochhar-Bryant, 2005, p. 2)

It is important to note that White and Kochhar-Bryant (2005) indicate that alternative education is not limited to alternative schools and programs but school districts as well. While not as prevalent, alternative school districts do exist in the United States in locations where the district has adopted programmatic innovations on a larger scale (White & Kochhar-Bryant, 2005). More commonly associated with the field is an alternative school located in a separate facility where students are removed from the regular schools (Carver, Lewis & Tice, 2010). Likewise, alternative programs are usually housed within regular schools (Carver, Lewis & Tice, 2010). Nevertheless, White and Kochhar-Bryant's (2005) definition of alternative education is all encompassing, thorough and noted as the first research-based definition. However, the commonly used terminology is alternative schools and programs but the researcher acknowledges that alternative school districts do exist and should, consequently, be included in any definition offered.

Types of Alternative Schools and Programs

While White and Kochhar-Bryant (2005) define alternative education holistically, they do not offer classifications for the various types of alternative schools and programs. Instead, White and Kochhar-Bryant (2005) and many other researchers, refer to Raywid's (1994) three pure types of alternative schools and programs. All three pure types represent and classify the various types of schools and programs that make up alternative education in the United States (Raywid, 1994). For a point of reference, it is important to take a closer look at Raywid's (1994) three types of schools and programs.

Type I schools and programs are described as "popular innovations" and are usually very well-liked (Raywid, 1994). Such alternative settings are noted for making

school more challenging and fulfilling for all involved (Raywid, 1994). Type I programs are recognized for their many innovations, a number of which are now widely recommended as improved measures for schools (Raywid, 1994). This type reflects organizational and administrative departures from the traditional, as well as programmatic innovations such as adopting a theme or emphasis school-wide or program-wide. Type I schools are also noted for student choice. Students choose to attend the school or program instead of being placed without option. A school for the arts that takes up an arts-integrated theme where students attend because of personal choice and preference is an example of a Type I school.

Type II schools and programs are described as "last chance schools" and usually represent an alternative to suspension and expulsion for students who are chronically disruptive (Raywid, 1994). In these alternatives, students are placed in the school or program for disciplinary reasons thus making the school punitive in nature (Raywid, 1994). Type II schools and programs focus on modifying objectionable behaviors with very little attention paid to modifying curriculum or pedagogy for learners (Raywid, 1994). In fact, some of these schools and programs simply require the student to complete work sent from the school of origin with staff primarily focusing on non-academic behavior (Raywid, 1994). Others simply focus on the basics, emphasizing the rote, skills and drill during the student's stay in the alternative setting (Raywid, 1994).

Type III schools and programs are noted for having a "remedial focus" whether it be academic remediation or social and emotional rehabilitation or both (Raywid, 1994). The idea is that after "successful" treatment the student will return to the school of origin (Raywid, 1994). These alternatives often focus on remedial work and stimulating social

and emotional growth by emphasizing the importance of social responsibility and community (Raywid, 1999).

In practice, the three pure types are seldom mutually exclusive. Some schools and programs reflect one or more of the pure types in their basic design making them a hybrid (Raywid, 1994). The three pure types, as well as variations noted as "hybrids," make up the many alternative schools and programs found in the United States (Raywid, 1994). While we have data indicating the number of alternative schools and programs in the United States, there is still uncertainty as to how many schools and programs fall into Raywid's (1994) classifications.

History of Alternative Education

Most researchers date the first alternative schools and programs to the 1960s (Kim & Taylor, 2007; Lange & Sletten, 2002; McKee & Conner, 2007; Raywid, 1999; Sagor 1999). These alternatives appeared in urban and suburban areas, were products of the private sector and eventually spread into the public sector (Raywid, 1999). The first alternatives aimed at helping students who were not succeeding in the mainstream (Kim & Taylor, 2008). For example, in many urban areas alternative schools and programs were developed to help populations, often minority and poor populations who were not succeeding in the traditional school structure (Raywid, 1999). Other early alternatives were highly innovative schools and programs (Kim & Taylor, 2008; Raywid, 1999). In many suburban areas, schools and programs emerged that were inventive and offered new ways of educating their learners (Raywid, 1999). Early alternatives thrived because they were designed to serve many purposes, including the following: an answer to

juvenile crime, a means of preventing school violence, dropout prevention, desegregation and increasing overall school effectiveness (Raywid, 1999).

By the 1970s an alternatives movement emerged in the United States that focused on changing several aspects of the education landscape. Raywid (1999) argues that systemic changes reflected in the 1970s defined the alternative education movement. Each was based on what educators were trying to change which included the following emphases: change the student, change the school or change the educational system (Raywid, 1999). The first emphasis, change the student, was based on the concept that students would modify inappropriate behaviors, as well as remediate academic deficiencies in the alternative setting (Raywid, 1999). Once the student had made such an adjustment, he or she would return to the school of origin. Second, change the school emphasis was based on the idea that individual schools could change (Raywid, 1999). These schools were often highly innovative with novel curricular and instructional approaches and atypical positive school climates (Raywid, 1999). The last emphasis, change the educational system, aimed at changing entire learning systems (Raywid, 1999). School districts began adopting reforms on a larger scale. Examples, many of which remain in effect today, include such initiatives as small schools and schools-within-schools (Raywid, 1999). But the diversity that alternative education represented in the 1960s and 1970s was short lived (Kim & Taylor, 2008).

In the 1980s, the role of alternative education focused around the needs of the at-risk learner (McKee & Conner, 2007; Settles & Orwick, 2003). Alternative schools and programs were designed to remediate students for academic or behavioral purposes and sometimes both. During this period the discipline was geared towards teaching

educational basics, as well as focusing on behavior. The idea of providing inventive

learning environments or adopting innovative reforms at the district level was all but lost

during this time period (Settles & Orwick, 2003).

Alternative education demonstrated a period of growth in the 1990s serving

expelled students with disciplinary problems. Such growth was a direct result of the

Federal Gun Free Schools Act of 1994 and due to the enactment of zero tolerance

policies by states (Silchenko, 2005). Alternative education was used as a punitive

placement for students violating zero tolerance policies or bringing a weapon to school

(Silchenko, 2005). As time went by, many states modified laws to make use of

alternative schools and programs for lesser disciplinary infractions. This resulted in an

increased number of suspended and expelled students being placed in alternative settings

and, thus, accounts for a rise in the number of disciplinary-based alternative schools and

programs (Silchenko, 2005).

When discussing contemporary alternative education, most experts acknowledge

Raywid's (1994) previously referenced categories as describing the current approaches in

the field. Type I schools and programs are described as "popular innovations" and aim to

make the learning experience more challenging and fulfilling for students and reflect

organizational and administrative departures from the traditional, as well as

programmatic innovations (Raywid, 1994). Type II settings are described as "last-

chance" schools and programs that focus on behavior modification with little attention

paid to modifying curriculum or pedagogy (Raywid, 1994). Type III schools and

programs have a "remedial focus," targeting student remediation and rehabilitation

(Raywid, 1994). In these settings students attend for academic or emotional reasons or

both (Raywid, 1994). In practice, the three pure types are not always mutually exclusive. Hence, variations exist in that some schools and programs are a hybrid of two or more pure types (Raywid, 1994). The three modern alternatives are direct reflections of the discipline's evolution.

<div align="center">**The Current Status of Alternative Education**</div>

The most recent data (2007-2008 school year) indicates that 64% of school districts have at least one alternative school or program for at-risk students (Carver, Lewis & Tice, 2010). This accounts for approximately 10,300 district-administered alternative schools and programs (Carver, Lewis & Tice, 2010). Of the school districts that have students attending an alternative school or program, 81% indicate that some or all services were administered by a public entity, 26% indicate that some or all services were contracted out to a private entity and 8% indicate that some or all services were offered in partnership with a postsecondary institution (Carver, Lewis & Tice, 2010). Roughly 646,500 students were enrolled in these schools and programs during the 2007-2008 school year (Carver, Lewis & Tice, 2010). Traditionally, schools and programs target ninth through twelfth graders, but some middle and elementary alternatives are available (Carver, Lewis & Tice, 2010). School districts report transferring students to the alternative setting for a variety of reasons including the following: physical attacks or fights, possession, distribution or use of alcohol or drugs, disruptive behavior, continual academic failure, chronic truancy and possession or use of a weapon or firearm.

<div align="center">**Best Practices in Alternative Education**</div>

Even with a general understanding of alternative education, a historical perspective of the discipline and data concerning the current status as a background, it is

equally important to examine our specific knowledge of current best practices in the field. In an attempt to identify successful practices among schools and programs, the researcher identified and reviewed journal articles, government reports and industry standards as identified by states and professional organizations. While the review of literature revealed a limited amount of research, ten themes associated with best practice emerged. To arrive at these themes, the researcher conducted a content analysis coding and sorting all best practices noted in the literature. The best practices that were identified included the following: Clear Mission and Purpose, Positive School Climate and Culture, High Quality Academic Instruction, Individualized Learning Plans, Small Class Sizes, Clear and Consistent Discipline Policies and Procedures, Transitional Planning, Student Support Services, Significant Parental Engagement and Evaluation Oriented. The following summary describes each identified theme and provides an explanation of the resulting best practice.

Theme One: Clear Purpose and Mission

Successful alternative schools and programs clearly identify their purpose and thereby adopt a formal mission that aligns with the purpose (DeBlois & Place, 2007; Farler, 2005; Gregg, 1999; Lehr & Lange, 2003; McCreight, 1999; Reimer & Cash, 2003). Raywid (1994) notes that alternative schools and programs are designed based on the needs of the end user and serve varying purposes. Because of this, several decisions need to be made from inception which includes determining the purpose and mission of the school or program (Reimer & Cash, 2003). DeBlois and Place (2007) contend that:

Before alternative schools begin serving students, they must ask and answer

questions regarding their mission. If schools are created in the right fashion—and

25

this is a big if—adults construct the program after thinking seriously about whom they will serve and how. Inevitably, they discuss how they will determine the success of their students and what information besides test scores they will use to measure achievement. Doing these things in an environment of district support can lead to the creation of a good school that has a specific mission and accomplishes what it sets out to do. (p. 39)

Furthermore, state officials note the importance of clearly identifying the purpose and the mission. For example, the Georgia Department of Education (2007) recommends that schools and programs have a unifying mission that is clearly stated, describes the purpose of the program and also indicates the population of students to be served. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2003) requires that alternative schools and programs develop a mission, goals and expected outcomes. Similarly, the Ohio Department of Education (2009) contends that alternative schools and programs should have a clear mission that describes the need and reason for the alternative to exist. The Tennessee State Board of Education (2008) recommends that schools and programs operate with a stated mission and purpose, as well as identify the students to be served. As indicated from the literature, determining the purpose and adopting a formal mission is commonly cited as a best practice.

Theme Two: Positive Climate and Culture

Flourishing alternative schools and programs establish and maintain a positive climate and culture (Aron, 2003; Castleberry & Enger 1998; Lange & Sletten, 2002; Leone & Drakeford, 1999; Owens & Lonkol, 2004; Quinn, Poirier, Faller, Gable & Tonelson, 2006; Loutzenheiser, 2002; Reimer & Cash, 2003; Romshek, 2007; Saunders

& Saunders, 2001; Wilkins, 2008). Climate and culture can be described as the beliefs,

attitudes and behaviors which characterize the school setting, as well as the safety of the

environment (Reimer & Cash, 2003; Romshek, 2007). This includes how teachers and

students feel, how they treat one another, as well as those rituals that show appreciation

and collegiality (Romshek, 2007). Atypical climates and cultures are especially

important in alternative settings since the majority of these students feel alienated from

the education system (Lange & Sletten, 2002). In fact, students and teachers often cite

authentic, caring relationships, in addition to a sense of safety, as paramount to the

success of the school or program (Castleberry & Enger, 1998; Lange & Sletten, 2002;

Leone & Drakeford, 1999; Loutzenheiser, 2002; Owens & Konkol, 2004; Quinn et al.,

2006; Reimer & Cash, 2003). States also recognize the importance of creating and

preserving a positive climate and culture.

For examples of this theme, the Georgia Department of Education (2009) and the

Tennessee State Board of Education (2008) both affirm that effective alternative schools

and programs provide safe, positive and nurturing learning environments. Similarly, the

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2003) cites the need to establish a sense

of community and family, as well as ensure that a safe, orderly and caring learning

environment exists. As evident from the research, providing for a positive climate and

culture is frequently recognized as a best practice.

Theme Three: High Quality Academic Instruction

The majority of thriving alternative schools and programs focus on providing high

quality academic instruction (Anastos, 2003; Aron, 2006; Cash, 2007; Kerka, 2003; Lehr

& Lange, 2003; Leone & Drakeford, 1999; McCreight, 1999; Reimer & Cash, 2003;

Romshek, 2007; Rutherford & Quinn, 1999; Ruzzi & Kraemer, 2006; Tobin & Sprague, 1999, 2000; Wagner, Wonacott & Jackson, 2005). Instruction is relevant, student-centered and frequently involves dynamic hands-on activities (Aron, 2006; McCreight, 1999; Neuenfeld, 2003; Ruzzi & Kraemer, 2006). Teachers are often creative, experiential and innovative when designing instruction for their students (McCreight, 1999; Reimer & Cash, 2003; Wagner, Wonacott & Jackson, 2005). Moreover, teachers accommodate for different learning styles and offer self-paced instruction when necessary (Wagner, Wonacott & Jackson, 2005). Similarly, states identify the need for high quality instruction that aligns with state standards.

For example, in Georgia, alternative schools and programs are expected to utilize the state standards and the core curriculum, as well as offer research-based instruction that fosters student learning and achievement (Georgia Department of Education, 2009). Similarly, North Carolina schools and programs are required to offer the state's standard course of study while implementing instructional strategies and methods that positively impact student growth and development (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2003). In Oklahoma, guidelines note that students should be actively engaged in learning with instruction modified based on students' differentiated needs (Oklahoma Technical Assistance Center, 2007). Additionally, instruction should meet the learning needs of each student and include opportunities for hands-on, project-oriented activities (Oklahoma Technical Assistance Center, 2007). The Tennessee State Board of Education (2008) notes that alternative schools and programs should incorporate the state's standards, include innovative teaching strategies, deliver research-based instructional techniques and provide the necessary resources to foster student

learning and achievement. As evident from the literature, high quality academic

instruction is distinguished as a best practice in alternative education.

Theme Four: Individualized Learning Plans

Another common practice among successful schools and programs is the use of

individualized learning plans (Aron, 2006; Figueroa-Peralta, 2004; McCreight, 1999;

Reimer & Cash, 2003; Ruzzi & Kraemer, 2006; Wagner, Wonacott & Jackson, 2005).

Frequently, schools and programs customize the student's instruction by developing a

learning plan (Aron, 2006; Figueroa-Peralta, 2004; McCreight, 1999; Reimer & Cash,

2003; Ruzzi & Kraemer, 2006; Wagner, Wonacott & Jackson, 2005).   Plans are

constructed based on the needs of the learner. Additionally, the plan often involves

personal and academic goal setting, as well as organizes a range of support services

ensuring that the learner successfully completes the plan (Aron, 2006; McCreight, 1999;

Ruzzi & Kraemer, 2006). States also acknowledge the importance of individualized

learning for students.

This theme appears in many state guidelines. In Oklahoma, schools and programs

develop an individualized plan for instruction based on the student's needs which

accounts for varying learning styles (Oklahoma Technical Assistance Center, 2007). The

Tennessee State Board of Education (2008) recommends that schools and programs

develop a plan that individualizes the student's curriculum and instruction to engage and

challenge the student. Furthermore, plans are built around the student's differentiated

needs, involve a plan for monitoring progress, include a review of current credit

attainment, utilize data in decision making, incorporate goals for changing negative

behavior patterns (if present) and integrate the student's graduation plan (Tennessee State

Board of Education, 2008). Virginia alternative schools and programs are required to complete an individualized learning plan for every student enrolled (Virginia Department of Education, 2003). The plan includes an initial meeting with the student and parent, assessment of the student, measurable educational and career goals, a plan for evaluating progress and requirements for completion of the plan (Virginia Department of Education, 2003). Washington State requires a written learner plan that describes how student progress will be determined, monitored and evaluated (Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2006). While there are many ideas of what should be included in learning plans, it is indisputable that individualized learner plans are frequently noted as a best practice.

Theme Five: Small Class Sizes

Researchers agree that a distinguishing factor of successful alternative schools is a low student to teacher ratio (Aron, 2006; Castleberry & Enger, 1998; Farler, 2005; Figueroa-Peralta, 2004; James-Gross, 2006; Lange & Sletten, 2002; McCreight, 1999; Ossa, 2005; Raywid, 1994; Reimer & Cash, 2003; Romshek, 2007; Ruzzi & Kraemer, 2006; Tobin & Sprague, 1999). In practice, this allows for personalized instruction and more one on one help from the teacher (Ossa, 2005; Tobin & Sprague, 1999). Additionally, small class sizes foster positive personal relationships, as well as allow teachers to hone in on each student's learning needs, strengths and abilities, in addition to their unique life situations (Aron, 2006; Ossa, 2005; Ruzzi & Kraemer, 2006; Tobin & Sprague, 1999).

At least two states have acknowledged the importance of a low student to teacher ratio. In North Carolina the recommended ratio is 10 to one or smaller with no more than

30

15 to one (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2003). The recommended

class size in Tennessee is 12 to one (Tennessee State Board of Education, 2008). These

ratios are consistent with current standards which tend to be around 10 to one

(McCreight, 1999; Reimer & Cash, 2003). As noted, small class sizes are accepted as a

best practice with 10 to one being the optimal student to teacher ratio.

Theme Six: Clear and Consistent Discipline Policies and Procedures

Successful alternative schools and programs traditionally establish clear and

consistent discipline policies and procedures, as well as utilize positive behavior supports

(Acker, 2007; Aron, 2006; DeBlois & Place, 2007; Foley & Pang, 2006; Guerin & Denti,

1999; James-Gross, 2006; Jones, 1999; McCreight, 1999; Rutherford & Quinn, 1999;

Tobin & Sprague, 1999, 2000). Often this involves creating a written discipline code that

is consistently applied and reinforced by faculty and staff (Aron, 2006; James-Gross,

2006; Jones, 1999; McCreight, 1999; Tobin & Sprague, 1999, 2000). This also involves

standardizing those procedural actions that take place when discipline policies are broken

(Aron, 2006; James-Gross, 2006; Jones, 1999; McCreight, 1999; Tobin & Sprague, 1999,

2000). Students should be introduced to discipline policies and procedures upon entering

the setting, in addition to those behaviors that are appropriate and those that are not

(Aron, 2006; James-Gross, 2006; Jones, 1999; McCreight, 1999; Tobin & Sprague, 1999,

2000). As an example, level systems are frequently used to provide a predictable

discipline structure, as well as a mechanism for students to move to less restrictive

settings while also providing positive reinforcement for acceptable behaviors (Tobin &

Sprague, 1999, 2000). Several states also point out the importance of creating clear and

consistent discipline policies and procedures.

In North Carolina, alternative schools and programs are required to have effective and positive whole school systems for behavior management (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2003). Likewise, Tennessee recommends that schools and programs develop a written code of conduct that is clearly understandable, accepted and consistently applied to all students (Tennessee State Board of Education, 2008). The Tennessee State Board of Education (2008) also cites the use of a level system as an example of a behavior support mechanism. Georgia is unique in that schools and programs are required to have a code of conduct with rules governing behavior for students and staff (Georgia Department of Education, 2009). Establishing clear and consistent discipline policies and procedures is a notable "must" for alternative schools and programs and frequently mentioned in the literature as best practice.

Theme Seven: Transitional Planning

Transitional planning is also a prominent practice among successful alternative schools and programs (Figueroa-Peralta, 2004; James-Gross, 2006; Jones, 1999; Kerka, 2003; McCreight, 1999; Owens & Konkol, 2004; Reimer & Cash, 2003; Rutherford & Quinn, 1999). This procedure involves a structured entrance process that includes obtaining educational records, comprehensive testing of the student, orienting the learner and parents to the new educational setting and developing learning and sometimes behavioral plans (McCreight, 1999; Reimer & Cash, 2003; Rutherford & Quinn, 1999). Moreover, this process includes planning for the student's exit from the school or program. Exit procedures should be fair, clear and simple to understand, as well as include long-term follow-up services to ensure the success of the student post-exit from the alternative setting (James-Gross, 2006; Kerka, 2003; McCreight, 1999; Reimer &

Cash, 2003; Rutherford & Quinn, 1999). Several states cite transitional planning as a necessary component of alternative education services (Georgia Department of Education, 2009; North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2003; Ohio Department of Education, 2005; Oklahoma Technical Assistance Center, 2007; Tennessee State Board of Education, 2008). The Georgia Department of Education (2009) affirms that effective schools and programs provide appropriate transition services in a fair and equitable manner to assist the student pre-entry through post-exit. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2003) also acknowledges the need to develop services that facilitate successful transitions to and from the alternative setting. Additionally, the Oklahoma Technical Assistance Center (2007) requires alternative schools and programs to develop intake and screening processes. The Tennessee State Board of Education (2008) recommends that schools and programs implement formal transitional plans for students entering and exiting the setting to ensure the likelihood of student success. Finally, the Ohio Department of Education (2005) notes the importance of transitional planning arguing that successful transition of students in and out of the alternative setting is one of the most critical indicators of long-term success. Consequently, alternative educators should work closely with the school of origin to ensure successful transitions (Ohio Department of Education, 2005). As is readily apparent from the literature, transitional planning is universally identified as a best practice.

Theme Eight: Student Support Services

Student access to support services is often present in thriving alternative schools and programs (Acker, 2007; Aron, 2006; Atkins, Bullis & Todis, 2005; Cash & Edwards,

2007; Figueroa-Peralta, 2004; Foley & Pang, 2006; Griffith & Gill, 2006; James-Gross, 2006; Johnson et al., 2006; Kennedy & Morton, 1999; Kerka, 2003; McCreight, 1999; Reimer & Cash, 2003; Romshek, 2007; Rutherford & Quinn, 1999). By teaming up with other governmental and nonprofit agencies, as well as volunteer groups, schools and programs are able to provide complete wraparound services that address the social, emotional and physical health and well-being of students (Cash & Edwards, 2007; Foley & Pang, 2006; Kerka, 2003; Reimer & Cash, 2003; Romshek, 2007; Rutherford & Quinn, 1999). Examples of student supports include access to childcare, drug and alcohol counseling, health and human service systems, homelessness services, job training and placement, juvenile justice, mental health services, parenting groups, physical fitness and recreation, violence and pregnancy prevention, etc. (Acker, 2007; Atkins, Bullis & Todis, 2005; Griffith & Gill, 2006; Kerka, 2003; McCreight, 1999; Reimer & Cash, 2003; Rutherford & Quinn, 1999). In addition to the supports noted, student access to school counseling services is also regarded as an essential element to any comprehensive student assistance program (Cash & Edwards, 2007; Johnson et al., 2006; McCreight, 1999; Reimer & Cash, 2003). States also recognize the need for student access to support services in alternative programming.

The Georgia Department of Education (2009) recognizes the need to integrate a comprehensive system of student assistance that provides school counseling and related services to support optional student development. North Carolina recommends that schools and programs cultivate a collaborative and supportive relationship with other community agencies to provide a system of support for students (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2003). Similarly, the Oklahoma Technical Assistance

Center (2007) notes the need to incorporate on-going collaborative resources and services to meet the broad-range of student needs. Tennessee guidelines recommend that schools and programs develop a comprehensive student assistance program that includes referrals to community agencies as needed and provides counseling for all students (Tennessee State Board of Education, 2008). Clearly, student access to support services, as well as school counseling, is commonly accepted as best practice.

Theme Nine: Significant Parental Engagement

Another universal characteristic among successful alternative schools and programs is the presence of significant parental engagement (Aron, 2003; Carswell, Hanlon, Watts, Pothong & O'Grady, 2009; James-Gross, 2006; Jones, 1999; McCreight, 1999; Reimer & Cash, 2003; Rutherford & Quinn, 1999; Tobin & Sprague, 1999). This goes well beyond parent meetings with the teacher (McCreight, 1999). Successful schools and programs offer workshops and seminars on parenting topics such as appropriate child supervision, coping skills, communication, health and wellness, positive reinforcement and a variety of other topics geared towards improving the student's life (McCreight, 1999; Tobin & Sprague, 1999). Additionally, schools and programs frequently encourage, promote and even sometimes require parents to volunteer in some capacity (McCreight, 1999). Though not universal, a few states recognize the need for parental involvement as well. The Georgia Department of Education (2009), North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2003), Ohio Department of Education (2005) and Washington Office of the Superintendent (2006) all mention the need for parental engagement. The Ohio Department of Education (2005) notes that "positive parent/caretaker involvement is a core expectation and strategy of alternative education

programs" (p. 1). This includes involvement during transitional planning, as well as being informed regularly of the student's academic and behavioral progress. The Tennessee State Board of Education (2008) also cites the need to provide daily communication regarding the child's progress, as well as offer workshops on parenting skills to ensure that children achieve maximum learning and personal success. Additionally, the Tennessee State Board recommends that parents be included in the evaluation process by offering feedback and suggestions for the betterment of the school or program (Tennessee State Board of Education, 2008). As illustrated in the research, parental engagement is cited as a best practice in many states.

Theme Ten: Evaluation Oriented

Successful alternative schools and programs are often evaluation oriented (Lange & Sletten, 2002; Lehr & Lange, 2003; Reimer & Cash, 2003; Romshek, 2007). Evaluation is systematically embedded in the day to day operation of the school or program rather than simply being a focused event that happens annually (Reimer & Cash, 2003). The results of evaluations are utilized to assist staff in seeking better ways of developing and implementing strategies for meeting the needs of their students (Reimer & Cash, 2003). But before evaluations can take place, the school or program must determine what outcomes are consistent with their mission and purpose (Lehr & Lange, 2003). Only then can the school or program determine how those outcomes will be achieved and measured for evaluation purposes (Lehr & Lange, 2003).

Several states note the need for systematic evaluation of alternative education services (Georgia Department of Education, 2009; North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2003; Ohio Department of Education, 2005; Oklahoma Technical Assistance

36

Center, 2007; Tennessee State Board of Education, 2008; Washington Office of the Superintendent, 2006). Georgia and Tennessee recommend that schools and programs routinely evaluate services for continuous improvement (Georgia Department of Education, 2009; Tennessee State Board of Education, 2008). The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2003) recommends that schools and programs evaluate the effectiveness of service delivery based on the following criteria: mission and goals, school/program improvement plan, school/program safety plan, parent/staff/student surveys, needs assessment, assessment of student outcomes and assessment of school and program outcomes. Likewise, the Ohio Department of Education (2005) asserts that "Evaluation is a necessary pre-condition of program improvement. All programs must collect information about the effectiveness of their efforts and use that information in a continuous improvement process" (p. 2). The Oklahoma Technical Assistance Center (2007) and Washington Office of the Superintendent (2006) also state the need for continuous evaluation for school and program improvement purposes. Without question, regular evaluation of alternative services is identified as a best practice in alternative education.

<p style="text-align:center">Summary of the Review of Literature</p>

The review of literature began with discussion of a research-based definition of alternative education (White & Kochhar-Bryant, 2005) that is perhaps the most comprehensive available to the field. Additionally, the researcher presented the various categories that describe alternative schools and programs as noted by Raywid (1994). Finally, the researcher also examined the history of the discipline, discussed the current

landscape and documented ten universally accepted practices among successful

alternative schools and programs also paying special attention to current state standards.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

This chapter explains the research methods that were used to carry out the study. This includes the identification of the research design, participants, instrumentation, procedures used and analysis of data, as well as the role of the researcher in limiting bias and procedures to protect human subjects. The study entailed a two-phased sequential, mixed-model research design (Cameron, 2009). As a result, several sections of this chapter were organized around each sequential phase. It should be noted that all research activities took place after Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval at The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (see Appendix B) was obtained.

Research Design

The researcher utilized a two-phased sequential, mix-model design (Cameron, 2009) to address the research questions proposed in Chapter One. Sequential forms are constructed in a manner in which one phase of data collection provides a basis for collection of data during the next phase (Cameron, 2009). A sequential, mix-model design is noted for each phase making use of a different methodological approach in which both qualitative and quantitative research strategies are involved (Cameron, 2009). Cameron (2009) contends that "These are designed as complementary and inform several of the research questions, each having a different methodological approach" (p. 144).

Phase One of the study involved a concurrent embedded research strategy (Creswell, 2009) obtaining quantitative and qualitative survey data relative to practitioner perceptions of the construct and content of the *Exemplary Practices*. A concurrent embedded strategy frequently involves the collection of both quantitative and qualitative

data simultaneously with one method of data collection having a primary role (Creswell, 2009). In this phase, the quantitative data collection was the primary activity and the qualitative data collection was secondary. Phase Two involved a sequential explanatory research strategy (Creswell, 2009) obtaining quantitative survey data and qualitative semi-structured interview data related to practitioner perceptions of the utility of the *Exemplary Practices* when transformed into an evaluation instrument. A sequential explanatory strategy is characterized by the collection and analysis of quantitative data first, followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data which builds on the quantitative results (Creswell, 2009). A timeline of the two-phased, sequential mixed-model study has been included as Appendix C.

Phase One: Concurrent Embedded Strategy

Research Participants

During Phase One, the researcher surveyed alternative education practitioners to obtain data on their perceptions of the construct and content of the *Exemplary Practices*. This was done at an annual conference for alternative educators and can be described as a sample of convenience (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). Practitioners represented at the meeting included administrators, teachers, school counselors, para-professionals, crisis workers, school resource officers, school social workers and other individuals who work directly with alternative students. The conference was open to all 139 Tennessee school districts and represented the largest annual congregation of practitioners. Approximately 200 alternative educators attended the conference. Descriptive surveys (Creswell, 2009; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003) were given to all practitioners on the first day of the conference. A copy of the survey has been included as Appendix D. During the event,

40

the researcher spoke to practitioners regarding the study, invited them to participate and noted that participation was voluntary. In an effort to encourage a higher response rate and show appreciation, all practitioners at the conference were entered into a drawing for door prizes provided by the researcher. At the onset of the study, the researcher hoped to secure 100 completed and usable surveys. A copy of the letter the researcher used to request permission to survey conference attendees has been included as Appendix E. In addition, the consent form that was signed by the executive officer hosting the conference has been included as Appendix F.

Instrumentation

During Phase One, a descriptive survey (Creswell, 2009; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003) was administered to collect quantitative data on practitioner perceptions of the construct and content of the *Exemplary Practices*. As previously referenced, a copy of the survey has been included as Appendix D. Practitioners were asked to quantify the validity of each construct and content found in the *Exemplary Practices* by applying the following Likert scale rating system: 4 (Essential), 3 (Valuable), 2 (Useful), 1 (Non-essential). As a secondary means of data collection, open-ended questions (Creswell, 2009) on the survey allowed practitioners to suggest additional constructs and content not currently identified in the *Exemplary Practices*. Furthermore, practitioners were able to suggest any necessary edits to properly frame best practice.

Procedures Used

Phase One involved a concurrent embedded research strategy (Creswell, 2009) obtaining quantitative and qualitative data relative to practitioner perceptions of the construct and content of the *Exemplary Practices*. To capture perceptions of the

construct and content, the researcher developed a descriptive survey (Creswell, 2009; Fraenkel &Wallen, 2003). Practitioners were asked to quantify the validity of each construct and content found in the *Exemplary Practices*. As a secondary means of data collection, open-ended questions (Creswell, 2009) on the survey allowed practitioners to suggest additional constructs and content not currently identified in the *Exemplary Practices*. Furthermore, practitioners were able to suggest any necessary edits to properly frame best practice in the field. The goal of Phase One was to address the following research questions:

1. Do the ten constructs (i.e., standards) identified in the *Exemplary Practices* reflect best practice in alternative education?

2. Does the content (i.e., indicators of success) identified in the *Exemplary Practices* reflect best practice in alternative education?

3. Are revisions to the constructs and content of the *Exemplary Practices* necessary to accurately frame best practice in alternative education?

All quantitative and qualitative data was analyzed by the researcher. Results informed the design of an evaluation instrument (during Phase Two) developed from the *Exemplary Practices* but adapted based on all results, analysis and findings associated with Phase One.

Analysis of Data

As noted, Phase One involved obtaining data on practitioner perceptions of the construct and content of the *Exemplary Practices*. In order to analyze the data obtained, each construct and content was given a mean score rating based on practitioner responses. To determine the overall rating, the researcher summed all of the scores and then divided

the sum by the total number of scores. This process provided the researcher with an overall mean score rating and distribution of scores for the survey. Constructs and corresponding content that did not have an overall rating of three or greater (a "valuable" rating on the Likert scale) were not included on the evaluation instrument developed during Phase Two.

As a secondary means of data collection, open-ended questions (Creswell, 2009) on the survey allowed practitioners to suggest additional constructs and content not currently identified in the *Exemplary Practices*. Practitioners were also able to suggest any necessary edits to properly frame best practice in alternative education. This process provided the researcher with qualitative data to analyze. In analyzing the resulting qualitative data, responses to the open-ended questions were first coded and then sorted on the basis of emerging themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2009; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). In determining emergent themes, the researcher utilized Creswell's (2009) linear, hierarchical approach to qualitative data analysis. This process involved eight steps that engage the researcher in a systematic process of analyzing textual data (Creswell, 2009). Reoccurring qualitative themes emerging from the linear, hierarchical approach informed the development of the evaluation instrument during Phase Two.

Phase Two: Sequential Explanatory Strategy

Research Participants

During Phase Two, the researcher trained five teams of two practitioners to use an evaluation instrument to obtain perceptions as to the utility of the tool. The instrument was developed based upon the survey results in Phase One and a copy of the instrument has been included as Appendix G. During Phase Two, the researcher selected alternative

education practitioners to serve as evaluators. During this phase of the study, evaluators were instructed to test the utility of the instrument and *not* judge the alternative education setting. Each evaluator had a minimum of five years experience in alternative education, as well as practical experience in program evaluation. Moreover, all evaluators satisfied a training requirement before utility testing. A copy of the training schedule used for evaluators has been included as Appendix H. A register of possible evaluators was solicited at the annual conference. A copy of the register has been included as Appendix I. The group of evaluators can be described as a purposefully selected group (Creswell, 2009) because the researcher chose evaluators based upon the credentials described. A copy of the letter inviting practitioners to participate as an evaluator has been included as Appendix J. In addition, an agreement form for evaluators has been included as Appendix K. Each team conducted one site visit of an alternative school or program. During the visit, the team completed the utility testing using the instrument provided by the researcher.

Schools and programs were invited to participate by the researcher on the basis of being classified as an alternative school or program, being classified as rural, suburban, or urban, as well as based on their geographic region in the state (east, middle and west). Each can be described as a purposefully selected site (Creswell, 2009) as it was selected to best help the researcher understand the problem and research questions. This was done to ensure participation from a diverse mixture of schools and programs in rural, suburban and urban settings, as well as a diverse geographic representation from across the state of Tennessee. A register of participant schools and programs was solicited at the annual conference. A copy of the register has been included as Appendix L. In addition, a copy

of the letter inviting the school or program to participate has been included as Appendix M. A participant consent form for the school or program administrator has also been provided as Appendix N.

Instrumentation

Phase Two involved the development of a program evaluation instrument (based on the results of Phase One) and the utility testing of the new tool. The instrument was developed to collect data on whether each construct and corresponding content was observable or unobservable during the site visit (i.e., observation checklist). As noted, the instrument has been included as Appendix G. Phase Two also entailed semi-structured interviews (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2009; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003) with the teams to obtain qualitative data as to the overall utility of the instrument. The researcher applied a basic interview protocol (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2009; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003) when questioning participants. A copy of the interview questions has been included as Appendix O. All participants were asked the same questions; however, the researcher reserved the right to ask clarifying and follow-up questions as needed during those sessions.

Procedures Used

As previously noted, Phase Two involved the development of a program evaluation instrument and the utility testing of the new tool. A sequential explanatory research strategy (Creswell, 2009) was used to obtain quantitative data and qualitative semi-structured interview data related to practitioner perceptions of the utility of the instrument. This process entailed the researcher training five teams of two practitioners to use the instrument in evaluation. Each team completed a site visit of an alternative

school or program and evaluated the utility of the instrument provided. Following the site visit, the researcher collected the instruments to determine which constructs and corresponding content were observable during the visit providing quantitative data relative to utility. Each construct and corresponding content was sorted as either being observable or unobservable. Upon completion of that process, each team participated in a semi-structured interview (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2009; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003) with the researcher to obtain qualitative data as to the overall utility of the instrument.   During the interviews, the researcher transcribed the responses from participants. Responses were coded and sorted on the basis of emerging themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2009; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). The goal of Phase Two was to examine the following research questions:

 4. Are the *Exemplary Practices* useful when translated into an evaluation instrument?

 5. Are revisions to the evaluation instrument necessary to enhance the utility of the
     tool?

All quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed by the researcher. Results informed additional revisions to the instrument aimed at enhancing the overall utility of the tool. To limit researcher bias, all data, analysis and findings were confirmed with the teams that participated in Phase Two by means of member checking (Creswell, 2009; Fraenkel &Wallen, 2003).

Analysis of Data

Phase Two, based upon the summary of the collected data, entailed the development of an evaluation instrument and the utility testing of the tool. The instrument was developed to collect data on whether each construct and corresponding

content was observable or unobservable. Based on the data collected, all constructs and content were categorized as being either observable or unobservable by the team and informed the culminating design of the evaluation instrument.

Upon completion of the data collection and analysis, each team participated in a semi-structured interview (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2009; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003) with the researcher to obtain qualitative data as to the overall utility of the instrument. During the interviews, the researcher transcribed the responses from participants. This provided the researcher with a large amount of qualitative data to analyze. Responses to the open-ended questions were coded and sorted on the basis of emerging themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2009; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). To arrive at emergent themes, the researcher utilized Creswell's (2009) linear, hierarchical approach to qualitative data analysis. All reoccurring themes informed the development of the final instrument. To limit researcher bias, all results, analysis and findings were confirmed with the teams that participated in Phase Two by means of member checking (Creswell, 2009; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). Creswell (2009) notes that member checking is used to determine the correctness of the findings through taking the final report, specific descriptions and/or themes back to participants and determining whether the participants feel that they are, in fact, accurate accounts.

Role of Researcher in Limiting Bias

When carrying out this study, the researcher was aware of the potential for bias to influence the research. Due to the fact that the researcher was a part of the collection, analysis and interpretation of all data, bias must be accounted for during the study (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2004). Creswell (2009) contends that the researcher must

clarify the bias that he or she might bring to the study. Therefore, it is important to

understand the researcher's connection to the field.

Currently, the researcher is a male practitioner working in the field of alternative

education. For the past five years the researcher has served as a liaison between

alternative educators and the Tennessee Department of Education. The researcher is also

Vice President of the National Alternative Education Association and the primary author

of the *Exemplary Practices*. The researcher has a strong commitment to the field of

alternative education and the promotion of quality alternatives for all students. Due to

the researcher's work in the field, the researcher has developed some perceptions as to

what constitutes best practice. However, the researcher took steps to reduce the potential

for bias such as using member checking, assuring the anonymity of respondents, use of

impartial evaluators, etc. during the study.

Procedures to Protect Human Subjects

All participants in this study were protected as outlined by The University of

Tennessee at Chattanooga's IRB Policy (2007). IRB approval and informed consent was

obtained prior to data collection by the researcher (Creswell, 2009). The anonymity of all

practitioners and participating institutions (i.e., alternative schools and programs) were

kept confidential with the use of aliases and pseudonyms when describing practitioners

and institutions (Creswell, 2009).   All data and other documents revealing the identity of

participants were kept and will remain under lock and key by the researcher (Creswell,

2009).

Summary of Research Methods

This chapter explained the two-phased, sequential mixed-model design (Cameron, 2009) that was used to examine the construct, content and utility of the *Exemplary Practices*. This included the identification of the research design, participants, instrumentation, procedures used and analysis of data, as well as the role of the researcher in limiting bias and procedures to protect human subjects. As an outcome of Phase One and Phase Two of the study, the researcher developed a program evaluation instrument. The final product was created from the *Exemplary Practices* but adapted based upon the findings associated with practitioner perceptions of the construct, content and utility of the *Exemplary Practices*. This product is an instrument that alternative educators can use when designing, delivering, evaluating and improving alternative education programming. The next chapter presents the results obtained with those methods.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to capture practitioner perceptions of the construct, content and utility of *Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming* for use as an evaluation instrument (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). Chapter Four presents the research results from the data collected. This includes revisiting the research questions posed and discussing how the data were collected, prepared and coded, how statistical procedures were carried out and the results of the analysis relative to each of the research questions. It is also important to remember that the study entailed a two-phased sequential, mixed-model research design (Cameron, 2009); therefore, Chapter Four was organized around each sequential phase.

Research Questions

Phase One involved a concurrent embedded research strategy (Creswell, 2009) obtaining quantitative and qualitative survey data relative to practitioner perceptions of the construct and content of the *Exemplary Practices.* Phase One addressed the following research questions:

1. Do the ten constructs (i.e., standards) identified in the *Exemplary Practices* reflect best practice in alternative education*?*

2. Does the content (i.e., indicators of success) identified in the *Exemplary Practices* reflect best practice in alternative education?

3. Are revisions to the constructs and content of the *Exemplary Practices* necessary to accurately frame best practice in alternative education?

Phase Two involved a sequential explanatory research strategy (Creswell, 2009) obtaining quantitative survey data and qualitative semi-structured interview data related to practitioner perceptions of the utility of the *Exemplary Practices* when transformed into an evaluation instrument. This phase of research aimed to address the following questions:

4. Are the *Exemplary Practices* useful when translated into an evaluation instrument?

5. Are revisions to the evaluation instrument necessary to enhance the utility of the tool?

<div align="center">

Phase One: Concurrent Embedded Strategy

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Survey Distribution and Return Rates

Phase One was conducted between June 2010 and December 2010. During this phase, the researcher administered a traditional pencil and paper survey (see Appendix D) to practitioners in order to obtain data on perceptions of the construct and content of the *Exemplary Practices*. The descriptive survey was distributed at an annual conference for alternative educators. Exactly 179 practitioners attended the conference and received a survey. One hundred and one surveys were returned to the researcher.

Coding the Data

As surveys were returned by participants, each was given a unique identification number. To ensure anonymity, information obtained was only associated with the unique number. This, thereby, protected the identity of all practitioners as individuals could not be linked to the survey. All surveys were kept by the researcher and will remain under lock and key.

Prior to entering the data into a statistical software program, all surveys were carefully examined and errors and/or omissions were identified. Of the 101 returned surveys, 98 were fully completed and had no identifiable errors and/or omissions. After the described screening process, the number of usable surveys was 98. This left a working return rate of 54.74%. Thus, the study sample for Phase One was established at 98 ($N = 98$).

To input responses into the statistical software program, codes were assigned to the following survey items: gender (1 = male, 2 = female), race/ethnicity (1 through 4), and current work position in alternative education (1 through 8). Practitioner responses for age, work experience in alternative education and work experience in general education were directly entered into the software program since already in numerical form. All qualitative data collected via the survey were transcribed using Microsoft Word (2007). Later, the qualitative data were transferred into Microsoft Excel (2007) for ease in terms of analysis. Once transferred into Excel, responses were coded, sorted and organized based upon emergent themes.

Demographics

Demographic information was obtained from practitioners in the first section of the descriptive survey (see Appendix D). This included the participant's gender, age, ethnicity, current job position and work experience in both alternative and general education. While the goal of Phase One was to capture the perceptions of best practice as presented in the *Exemplary Practices*, demographic information provided a portrait of the sample.

More females completed the survey than males. Of the 98 usable surveys, 64 (65.3%) participants indicated being female while only 34 (34.7%) participants indicated being male. See Table 1 for the frequency and percentage based upon gender, as well as the ranking or scores organized from the highest to lowest (Hinkle, Wiersma & Jurs, 2003).

Table 1: Frequency of Gender – Phase One Data

Gender	Frequency	%	Rank
Male	34	34.7	2
Female	64	65.3	1
Total	98	100	N/A

Table 2 presents the age ranges of those practitioners who completed the survey. Participants ranged from 26 to 65 years of age, with the age range 55 through 59 having the highest recorded frequency ($n = 22$). The mean age of the sample was ($M = 46.0$).

Table 2: Frequency of Age Range – Phase One Data

Age Range	Frequency	%	Rank
0-24	0	0.0	10
25-29	4	4.1	8
30-34	12	12.2	4
35-39	9	9.2	6
40-44	17	17.3	2
45-49	14	14.3	3
50-54	11	11.2	5
55-59	22	22.4	1
60-64	8	8.2	7
65-Above	1	1.0	9
Total	98	100	N/A

Practitioners were asked to self report ethnicity, with four categories emerging based upon responses. Participants were predominantly Caucasian as illustrated by the highest recorded frequency ($n = 90$). Also evident from Table 3, a smaller number of participants identified themselves as African American, Hispanic and Native American.

Table 3: Frequency of Ethnicity – Phase One Data

Ethnicity	Frequency	%	Rank
Caucasian	90	91.8	1
African American	6	6.1	2
Hispanic	1	1.0	3
Native American	1	1.0	3
Total	98	100	N/A

Practitioners were also asked to describe their current work position in the alternative setting. Table 4 presents how participants described their employment. The majority identified themselves as a teacher ($n = 51$) while the second highest recorded frequency was administrator ($n = 29$). Fewer individuals described their position as that of a crisis worker, school counselor, social worker or para-professional (see Table 4). Only one participant identified their position utilizing the descriptor "other" ($n = 1$). While several school resource officers participated in the conference and were provided a survey, none chose to participate.

Table 4: Frequency of Job Description – Phase One Data

Job Description	Frequency	%	Rank
Teacher	51	52.0	1
Administrator	29	29.6	2
Crisis Worker	2	2.0	6
School Counselor	5	5.1	4
Social Worker	3	3.1	5

Table 4 (continued)

Job Description	Frequency	%	Rank
Para-Professional	7	7.1	3
School Resource Officer	0	0.0	8
Other	1	1.0	7
Total	98	100	N/A

Table 5 presents measures of central tendency representing the years of experience in the field of alternative education. The mean number of years was ($M = 6.4$). The median was ($Mdn = 4.0$) and the mode was ($Mo = 2.0$). This indicates that a high percentage of practitioners were new to the field of alternative education and, in fact, approximately 55% of participants indicated having between (0.0 - 4.0) years of experience.

Table 5: Measures of Central Tendency for Years of Experience in Alternative Education – Phase One Data

Factor	N	M	Mdn	Mo
Years of Experience in Alt Ed	98	6.4	4.0	2.0

In Table 6, the measures of central tendency are presented for the number of years experience in general education.   Results indicate that while the majority of practitioners were new to alternative education (on average), participants had substantially more experience in general education. Note the mean years of experience in general education ($M = 15.58$) compared to the mean years of experience in alternative education ($M = 6.4$). The median (for general education) was ($Mdn = 15.0$) and the mode was ($Mo = 15.0$).

Table 6: Measures of Central Tendency for Years of Experience in General Education –
Phase One Data

Factor	N	M	Mdn	Mo
Years of Experience in Gen Ed	98	15.58	15.0	15.0

Research Question One: Quantitative Results

Research Question One sought to identify whether the ten constructs (i.e.,

standards) presented in the *Exemplary Practices* reflected best practice in alternative

education. To understand this question, practitioners were asked on the descriptive

survey (see Appendix D) to quantify the validity of each construct by applying the

following Likert scale rating system: 4 (Essential), 3 (Valuable), 2 (Useful), 1 (Non-

essential). The mean scores and standard deviations for each of the ten constructs are

displayed in Table 7. As outlined in Chapter Three, validity for each construct was

determined by a mean score rating of three or greater (see Chapter Three). When validity

was established, the construct was integrated into the evaluation instrument developed

and tested for utility during Phase Two.

Table 7: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for the Ten Constructs – Phase One Data

Standard	Descriptor	M	SD
1.0	Mission & Purpose	3.76	.49
2.0	Leadership	3.85	.38
3.0	Climate & Culture	3.70	.52
4.0	Staffing & Professional Development	3.57	.59
5.0	Curriculum & Instruction	3.69	.46
6.0	Student Assessment	3.41	.67
7.0	Transitional Planning & Support	3.59	.60
8.0	Parent/Guardian Involvement	3.45	.64
9.0	Collaboration	3.38	.71

Table 7 (continued)

Standard	Descriptor	M	SD
10.0	Program Evaluation	3.33	.72

As indicated, all ten constructs had a mean score of three or greater (a "valuable" rating on the Likert scale). *Leadership* (*M* = 3.85) was the highest rated construct indicating high-level perceptions of validity. Moreover, practitioners indicated their perception of validity relative to *Mission and Purpose* (*M* = 3.76) and *Climate and Culture* (*M* = 3.70). Note that *Program Evaluation* (*SD* = .72) and *Collaboration* (*SD* = .71) had the largest standard deviations indicating there was a more-varied response among practitioners on those constructs. Since all ten constructs had a mean score of three or greater, all were included in the instrument developed during Phase Two.

Table 8 presents the mean scores for each construct when stratified by gender. Males and females maintain the validity of *Leadership* (male, *M* = 3.74, female, *M* = 3.91) with this construct rating highest for both subgroups. *Curriculum and Instruction* (*M* = 3.65) had the second highest mean score among males, whereas females noted the importance of *Mission and Purpose* (*M* = 3.86). Both males and females denoted the significance of *Climate and Culture* (male, *M* = 3.62, female, *M* = 3.75). *Collaboration* (*M* = 3.26) had the lowest mean score for males and *Program Evaluation* (*M* = 3.31) had the lowest mean score for females.

Table 8: Means for the Ten Constructs Ranked by Gender – Phase One Data

		Male		Female	
Standard	Descriptor	M	Rank	M	Rank
1.0	Mission & Purpose	3.56	4	3.86	2

Table 8 (continued)

Standard	Descriptor	Male		Female	
		M	Rank	*M*	Rank
2.0	Leadership	3.74	1	3.91	1
3.0	Climate & Culture	3.62	3	3.75	3
4.0	Staffing &Professional Development	3.56	4	3.58	6
5.0	Curriculum & Instruction	3.65	2	3.72	4
6.0	Student Assessment	3.35	7	3.44	8
7.0	Transitional Planning & Support	3.50	6	3.64	5
8.0	Parent/Guardian Involvement	3.35	7	3.50	7
9.0	Collaboration	3.26	10	3.44	8
10.0	Program Evaluation	3.35	7	3.31	10

Research Question Two: Quantitative Results

Research Question Two aimed to identify whether the content (i.e., indicators of success) associated with each construct (i.e., standard) identified in the *Exemplary Practices* reflect best practice in alternative education. To address this question, practitioners were asked on the descriptive survey (see Appendix D) to quantify the validity of the content (i.e., indicators of success) by applying the following Likert scale rating system: 4 (Essential), 3 (Valuable), 2 (Useful), 1 (Non-essential). The mean scores for the entire content are presented in Tables 9 through 18 and organized by each construct. As outlined in Chapter Three, validity was determined for all content by a mean score rating of three or greater. When validity was established, the content was integrated into the evaluation instrument developed and tested for utility during Phase Two.

Mission and Purpose. The first construct (i.e., standard) identified in the

Exemplary Practices is *Mission and Purpose*. When examining Research Question One,

the validity of *Mission and Purpose* was determined by a mean score rating of ($M =$

3.76). A mean score greater than three established the need to ascertain the validly of the

content (i.e., indicators of success) associated with *Mission and Purpose*.

Table 9 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for the 13 indicators of

success. Indicator 1.8 rated highest ($M = 3.81$) which calls for establishing a mission and

purpose that promotes safety, security and emotional and physical well being (National

Alternative Education Association, 2009). Indicator 1.7 ($M = 3.77$) also rated high which

notes the importance of establishing a mission and purpose where student success is a

central theme (National Alternative Education Association, 2009).

Table 9: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for 13 Indicators of Success in Standard
1.0 (Mission and Purpose) – Phase One Data

Indicator	Descriptor	*M*	*SD*
1.1	Purpose, Goals & Expectations Outlined	3.68	.52
1.2	Documented, Published & Visible	3.51	.57
1.3	Stakeholders Involved in Development	3.38	.66
1.4	Student Population Identified	3.35	.73
1.5	Aligned with District Goals & State Standards	3.43	.67
1.6	Unifying Theme	3.66	.55
1.7	Student Success a Central Theme	3.77	.45
1.8	Safety, Emotional & Physical Well Being Promoted	3.81	.42
1.9	Communicated Through Symbols, Ceremonies & Stories	2.84	.85
1.10	Identified Resources Sought Out	3.48	.59
1.11	Barriers Identified, Clarified & Addressed	3.57	.57
1.12	Shape Educational Plans & Activities	3.54	.61
1.13	Regularly Monitored, Evaluated & Revised	3.64	.54

As presented in Table 9, Indicator 1.9 had the lowest mean score ($M = 2.84$) which calls for communicating the mission and purpose through the use of symbols, ceremonies and stories (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). This indicator also had the highest deviation in scoring for this construct ($SD = .85$). Since Indicator 1.9 had such a low mean score, validity could not be established. Validity, however, was established for all other indicators (see Table 9).

Leadership. The second construct (i.e., standard) noted in the *Exemplary Practices* is *Leadership*. When examining Research Question One, the validity of this construct was determined by a mean score rating of ($M = 3.85$). A mean score greater than three also established the need to confirm the validly of the content (i.e., indicators of success) associated with *Leadership*.

Table 10 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for the 13 indicators of success. Indicator 2.2 rated highest ($M = 3.81$) which cites the need for adequate financial resources and support for the school or program (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). The importance of leadership in recruiting, hiring and training qualified staff (see Indicator 2.8) also had a high mean score ($M = 3.76$) (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). Indicator 2.12 noting the need for transportation, food and health services had the largest variation in this construct ($SD = .77$), while also representing the lowest mean score ($M = 3.11$) (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). Based upon the mean score ratings presented, the validity of all 13 indicators was established (see Table 10).

Table 10: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for 13 Indicators of Success in Standard 2.0 (Leadership) – Phase One Data

Indicator	Descriptor	*M*	*SD*
2.1	District Oversight while Protecting Autonomy	3.50	.56
2.2	Financial Resources & Support	3.81	.39
2.3	Administrators are Experienced & Competent	3.70	.50
2.4	Vision Communicated by Leadership	3.55	.59
2.5	Leadership Engages Stakeholders	3.23	.71
2.6	Decisions Align with State & Local Policies	3.62	.60
2.7	Operate Under a Current Policies & Procedures Manual	3.48	.64
2.8	Recruit, Hire & Train Qualified Staff	3.76	.45
2.9	Student to Teacher Ratio Never Exceeds 12 to 1	3.60	.57
2.10	Leadership Promotes Collaboration	3.43	.62
2.11	Ensure Data & Performance Measures Guide Instruction	3.35	.64
2.12	Transportation, Food & Health Services Offered	3.11	.77
2.13	Consistent & Constructive Staff Evaluations Conducted	3.31	.69

Climate and Culture. The third construct (i.e., standard) identified in the *Exemplary Practices* is *Climate and Culture*. When examining Research Question One, the validity of *Climate and Culture* was determined by a mean score rating of ($M = 3.70$). This mean score established a need to verify the validly of the content (i.e., indicators of success) associated with this construct.

Table 11 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for the ten indicators of success. Indicator 3.3 ($M = 3.88$) rated highest which calls for rules and behavioral expectations to be clearly written, understood and accepted by staff, students and parents/guardians (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). In addition, high expectations for teacher performance (see Indicator 3.6) had a high mean score ($M = 3.65$) (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). Indicator 3.5 noting the need

for student engagement and student voice in designing the program had the greatest

dispersion in scoring for this construct ($SD = .70$) (National Alternative Education

Association, 2009). Outlined in Table 11, validity was confirmed for all ten indicators by

a mean score rating of three or greater.

Table 11: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for 10 Indicators of Success in Standard 3.0 (Climate and Culture) – Phase One Data

Indicator	Descriptor	*M*	*SD*
3.1	Services are Efficiently Organized into Delivery Systems	3.40	.65
3.2	Housed in a Safe, Well Maintained Environment	3.46	.64
3.3	Rules & Behavioral Expectations are Clear and Written	3.88	.35
3.4	Team of Stakeholders Monitor Climate & Culture	3.31	.66
3.5	Engagement & Student Voice Included in Program Design	3.26	.70
3.6	High Expectations for Teacher Performance	3.65	.52
3.7	Student & Staff Feedback Guides Programming	3.23	.60
3.8	Sensitivity to the Needs of Students & Parents	3.51	.61
3.9	Overall Goals Address Needs of Students & Parents	3.42	.62
3.10	Goals for Achievement, Behavior & Social Development	3.40	.68

Staffing and Professional Development. The fourth construct (i.e., standard)

noted in the *Exemplary Practices* is *Staffing and Professional Development*. When

examining Research Question One, the validity of *Staffing and Professional Development*

was determined by a mean score rating of ($M = 3.57$). This mean score established the

need to confirm the validly of the content (i.e., indicators of success) associated with

Staffing and Professional Development.

Table 12 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for the 12 indicators of

success. Indicator 4.1 rated highest ($M = 3.67$) which mentions the need to employ

enthusiastic, energetic and innovative teachers who demonstrate the ability to utilize

multiple teaching styles (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). Similarly,

the need for a sufficient number of teaching and non-teaching staff (see Indicator 4.4) had

a high mean score ($M = 3.55$) (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). The

lowest ratings were isolated to Indicator 4.5 ($M = 3.04$) which calls for staff to create and

implement a professional development plan and Indicator 4.3 ($M = 3.02$) which notes that

the diversity of the staff should mirror that of the student population (National

Alternative Education Association, 2009). Indicator 4.3 also had the largest dispersion of

scores associated with this construct ($SD = .81$). With all ratings greater than three,

validity was established for all 12 indicators (see Table 12).

Table 12: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for 12 Indicators of Success in Standard 4.0 (Staffing and Professional Development) – Phase One Data

Indicator	Descriptor	*M*	*SD*
4.1	Employs Enthusiastic, Energetic & Innovative Teachers	3.67	.53
4.2	Understands & Practices Facilitative Learning	3.44	.61
4.3	Diversity of Staff Mirrors that of Student Body	3.02	.81
4.4	Sufficient Number of Teaching & Non-Teaching Staff	3.55	.64
4.5	Staff Create & Implement Professional Development Plans	3.04	.73
4.6	Professional Development Reflects Good Use of Resources	3.14	.68
4.7	Professional Development Promotes Student Outcomes	3.43	.62
4.8	Training Aims to Improve Instruction & Achievement	3.36	.57
4.9	Staff Trained to Access Support Services	3.32	.61
4.10	Training, Modeling & Research Builds Staff Capacity	3.24	.67
4.11	Sufficient Resources for Professional Development	3.33	.71
4.12	Ongoing, Professional Development for the Adult Learner	3.31	.68

Curriculum and Instruction. The fifth construct (i.e., standard) identified in the

Exemplary Practices is *Curriculum and Instruction*. When examining Research Question

One, the validity of *Curriculum and Instruction* was established with a mean score rating

of ($M = 3.69$). With a mean score greater than three, this created a need to determine the

validly of the content (i.e., indicators of success) associated with this construct.

Table 13 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for the 17 indicators of

success. Indicator 5.1 rated highest ($M = 3.74$) which notes the importance of students

having access to the academic core curriculum (National Alternative Education

Association, 2009). The need to operate in full compliance with laws governing special

education students (see Indicator 5.4) also rated high ($M = 3.66$) (National Alternative

Education Association, 2009). Teaching across the curricula ($M = 3.09$) and utilizing

group delivery systems ($M = 3.07$) had the lowest mean scores (see Indicators 5.6 and

5.14) (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). Indicator 5.10 involving

student access to non-core activities had the largest deviation in scoring for this construct

($SD = .86$) (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). All 17 indicators had a

mean score rating of three or greater and validity, therefore, was established (see Table

13).

Table 13: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for 17 Indicators of Success in Standard
5.0 (Curriculum and Instruction) – Phase One Data

Indicator	Descriptor	M	SD
5.1	Student Accessibility to Core Curriculum	3.74	.46
5.2	Teachers are Highly Qualified	3.47	.61
5.3	Teachers are Competent in Research Based Techniques	3.50	.59
5.4	Operate in Compliance with Special Education Legislation	3.66	.55
5.5	Curricular Options Reflective of Traditional School	3.30	.73
5.6	Teaching across Curricula Employed	3.09	.83
5.7	Utilization of Individualized Student Learner Plan (ISLP)	3.43	.65
5.8	Instruction Designed to Close Gaps in Learning	3.49	.59
5.9	Variety of Strategies used for Individual Learning Styles	3.57	.59

Table 13 (continued)

Indicator	Descriptor	*M*	*SD*
5.10	Opportunities to Participate in Non-Core Content Areas	3.17	.86
5.11	Promote Community Involvement	3.14	.77
5.12	Instruction Integrates Life Skills	3.51	.59
5.13	Opportunities for Career Exploration	3.13	.72
5.14	Group Delivery Systems Promote Social Relationships	3.07	.76
5.15	Research Based Dropout Prevention Strategies Utilized	3.34	.74
5.16	Technology & Distance Learning Embedded in Instruction	3.29	.64
5.17	Curriculum Supported by Updated Instructional Materials	3.42	.70

Student Assessment. The sixth construct (i.e., standard) noted in the *Exemplary Practices* is *Student Assessment*. When examining Research Question One, the validity of *Student Assessment* was determined with a mean score rating of (*M* = 3.41). This score established the need to confirm the validly of the content (i.e., indicators of success) associated with *Student Assessment*.

Table 14 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for the eight indicators of success. Indicator 6.8 had the highest mean score (*M* = 3.33) calling for the results of student assessments to inform learner progress, guide curriculum and instruction and monitor the individualized student learner plan (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). Rating lowest but with a mean score greater than three (*M* = 3.09), Indicator 6.3 points to the need for data collection procedures to be clearly outlined to ensure valid and reliable assessment results (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). The greatest variation in scoring was isolated to Indicator 6.2 (*SD* = .76) which details that the purpose of assessments be clearly defined and Indicator 6.4 (*SD* = .76) which notes that both formative and summative assessments be utilized (National

Alternative Education Association, 2009). The validity of all eight indicators was established with each having a mean score rating of three or greater (see Table 14).

Table 14: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Eight Indicators of Success in Standard 6.0 (Student Assessment) – Phase One Data

Indicator	Descriptor	M	SD
6.1	Data-Driven Accountability	3.29	.65
6.2	Purpose of Assessments Defined	3.30	.76
6.3	Data Collection Procedures Outlined	3.09	.74
6.4	Formative & Summative Assessment Tools Used	3.22	.76
6.5	Multiple Assessments Guide Individual Programming	3.24	.71
6.6	Quantitative & Qualitative Procedures Identify Progress	3.15	.70
6.7	Assessments Linked to Curriculum & Instruction	3.21	.64
6.8	Assessments Inform Learner Progress	3.33	.63

Transitional Planning and Support. The seventh construct (i.e., standard) identified in the *Exemplary Practices* is *Transitional Planning and Support*. When examining Research Question One, the validity of *Transitional Planning and Support* was determined by a mean score rating of ($M = 3.59$). This mean score established a need to further confirm the validly of the content (i.e., indicators of success) associated with *Transitional Planning and Support*.

Table 15 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for the nine indicators of success. The indicator with the highest mean score ($M = 3.51$) was 7.9 which calls for information sharing (within the bounds of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) between the school of origin, the alternative school or program and other social service type organizations (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). The indicator with the largest dispersion in scoring was Indicator 7.6 ($SD = .74$). This

indicator prescribes that students (when appropriate) be afforded opportunities to maintain supportive links at the school of origin (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). Since all nine indicators had a mean score rating of three or greater, validity was established for all (see Table 15).

Table 15: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Nine Indicators of Success in Standard 7.0 (Transitional Planning and Support) – Phase One Data

Indicator	Descriptor	*M*	*SD*
7.1	Appropriate Placement Ensured by Screening Committee	3.37	.73
7.2	Formal Transition Process (Pre-Entry through Post-Exit)	3.49	.64
7.3	Planning Maintains Student Progress towards Graduation	3.34	.62
7.4	Student Support Team (SST) Facilitates Transition	3.14	.71
7.5	Transition Includes Access to Support Services	3.30	.64
7.6	Opportunities to Maintain Links to School of Origin	3.16	.74
7.7	Needs Addressed Before, During & After Transition	3.48	.67
7.8	SST Coordinates Transition with All Appropriate Entities	3.31	.70
7.9	Information Sharing Takes Place	3.51	.61

Parent/Guardian Involvement. The eighth construct (i.e., standard) identified in the *Exemplary Practices* is *Parent/Guardian Involvement*. When examining Research Question One, the validity of *Parent/Guardian Involvement* was determined by a mean score rating of ($M = 3.45$). This score established the need to determine the validly of the content (i.e., indicators of success) associated with this construct.

Table 16 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for each of the eight indicators of success. Note that all indicators had a mean score of three or greater; therefore, validity was established for all indicators in *Parent/Guardian Involvement* (see Table 16). Indicator 8.2 rated highest with a mean score of ($M = 3.51$) which states the need for effective communication between parents/guardians and school staff to include

being notified of student progress (National Alternative Education Association, 2009).

The strongest deviation in scoring was narrowed to Indicator 8.6 (*SD* = .80) calling for

access to parent education programs sponsored by the alternative school or program, in

addition to Indicator 8.7 (*SD* = .80) which notes the need for privacy, as well as engaging

parents as partners in programming (National Alternative Education Association, 2009).

Table 16: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Eight Indicators of Success in
Standard 8.0 (Parent/Guardian Involvement) – Phase One Data

Indicator	Descriptor	*M*	*SD*
8.1	Parent/ Guardian Involvement Welcomed & Recruited	3.36	.67
8.2	Effective Communication with Parents/Guardians	3.51	.61
8.3	Parents/Guardians Included in Decision-Making Process	3.27	.76
8.4	Parents/Guardians Partake in Problem-Solving for Student	3.22	.78
8.5	Strategies to Support Learning & Success Shared	3.23	.68
8.6	Access to Parent Education Programs	3.07	.80
8.7	Privacy Afforded to Parents/Guardians	3.38	.80
8.8	Procedures to Address Parent/Guardian Grievances	3.26	.69

Collaboration. The ninth construct (i.e., standard) identified in the *Exemplary*

Practices is *Collaboration*. When examining Research Question One, the validity of

Collaboration was determined by a mean score rating of (*M* = 3.38). This score

established the need to confirmed the validly of the content (i.e., indicators of success)

associated with *Collaboration*.

Table 17 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for the twelve

indicators. Indicator 9.7 had the highest mean score (*M* = 3.65) which calls for a strong

relationship with law enforcement, the juvenile justice system and juvenile treatment

centers (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). Three indicators did *not*

meet or exceed a mean score of three or greater and, consequently, validity could *not* be

established (see Table 17). Indicator 9.4 (*M* = 2.97) requires a comprehensive

community relations program be established (National Alternative Education

Association, 2009). Indicator 9.10 (*M* = 2.96) prescribes that community representatives

be called upon and accessed during the planning phase of the individualized student

learner plan (ISLP) to secure community based resources (National Alternative Education

Association, 2009). Indicator 9.12 had the lowest mean score at (*M* = 2.92) which details

community representatives serve on the school or program's advisory board (National

Alternative Education Association, 2009). This particular indicator also had the largest

deviation in scoring (*SD* = .90). Other than the three indicators described, validity could

be established for all remaining indicators (see Table 17).

Table 17: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for 12 Indicators of Success in Standard
9.0 (Collaboration) – Phase One Data

Indicator	Descriptor	*M*	*SD*
9.1	Authentic Partnerships with Community Resources	3.18	.75
9.2	Collaboration for Education, Advocacy & Volunteerism	3.06	.73
9.3	Partnerships Based on Trust, Communication & Goals	3.20	.78
9.4	Comprehensive Community Relations Program	2.97	.83
9.5	Service, Cultural, Faith-Based & Business Partnerships	3.06	.78
9.6	Partnerships Support Physical & Mental Health	3.24	.73
9.7	Collaboration with Law Enforcement & Juvenile Justice	3.65	.55
9.8	Partnerships for Comprehensive Student Assistance	3.23	.74
9.9	Where Necessary Partnerships are Formalized with MOU	3.27	.71
9.10	Community Integrated into the Development of the ISLP	2.96	.77
9.11	Service Learning, Life Skills & Career Exploration	3.09	.81
9.12	Community Representatives Serve on Advisory Board	2.92	.90

Program Evaluation. The tenth and final construct (i.e., standard) identified in

the *Exemplary Practices* is *Program Evaluation*. When examining Research Question

One, the validity of *Program Evaluation* was established by a mean score rating of ($M =$

3.33). This mean score established the need to ascertain the validly of the content (i.e.,

indicators of success) associated with *Program Evaluation*.

Table 18 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for the eight indicators.

Indicator 10.7 relating to the use of evaluation results for continuous program

improvement had the highest mean score ($M =$ 3.40). The indicator with the highest

dispersion in scoring was 10.4 ($SD =$ .80) which notes that students, parents/guardians

and the community be included in the evaluation process via psychometric surveys. As

presented in Table 18, all indicators had a mean score rating of three or greater and

validity, therefore, was established.

Table 18: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Eight Indicators of Success in
Standard 10.0 (Program Evaluation) – Phase One Data

Indicator	Descriptor	*M*	*SD*
10.1	Routine Program Evaluations for Continuous Improvement	3.37	.66
10.2	Ratings on *Exemplary Practices* & State Standards	3.26	.72
10.3	Student Outcome Data Used to Evaluate Services	3.33	.72
10.4	Student, Parent/Guardian & Community Surveyed	3.07	.80
10.5	Staff Surveyed for Input	3.11	.78
10.6	Transition Services Routinely Evaluated	3.32	.69
10.7	Evaluation Results Inform Plan for Improvement	3.40	.62
10.8	External Evaluator to Assess Program Effectiveness	3.00	.74

Research Question Three: Qualitative Results

The goal of Research Question Three was to determine whether revisions to the

Exemplary Practices were necessary to accurately frame best practice in alternative

education. To understand this question, practitioners were asked on the descriptive

survey (see Appendix D) if edits to the constructs or content in the *Exemplary Practices*

were needed, as well as if any constructs or content were needed. Moreover,

practitioners were able to write in comments, suggestions and any other feedback. Such

qualitative responses provided the researcher with additional data to analyze associated

with the analysis of best practice.

While there were 98 usable surveys, very few participants exercised the

opportunity to make edits or suggest additional constructs or content. Nineteen

participants submitted comments via the survey. All responses to the open-ended

questions were coded and sorted on the basis of emerging themes (Creswell, 2009;

Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). To arrive at these themes, the

researcher utilized Creswell's (2009) linear, hierarchical approach to qualitative data

analysis. After completing this procedure, comments from participants could be sorted

into three broad themes.

Theme One: Mandated and Monitored. The least prevalent theme to emerge

relates to the idea that the *Exemplary Practices* should be mandated and monitored. For

instance, Participant 87 argued that "The *Exemplary Practices* should be mandated as

state standards." Participant 97 wrote "The *Exemplary Practices* should be mandated and

monitored."

Theme Two: Practitioner Agreement with the *Exemplary Practices*. The next

theme to emerge from the qualitative data related to practitioner agreement with the

Exemplary Practices. For instance, Participant 15 stated that the *Exemplary Practices*

were "well written." Participant 16 noted that "The content and standards established

here meet or exceed my beliefs and understandings of alternative education." Participant 52 affirmed that "no changes were needed" and Participant 79 wrote "I think the standards presented for alternative education are great and I have no suggestions for improvement at this time." Participant 73 argued that "The National Alternative Education Association has done a wonderful job developing these standards and indicators."

  Theme Three: Adequacy of Funding and Resources. The most prominent theme to emerge from the qualitative data related to adequacy of funding and allocation of resources. For example, Participant 25 argued that "It would be ideal if there was more funding for alternative education in our country" and Participant 27 stated "There does not seem to be enough resources (dollars, people and commitment) from the national, state and local levels for alternative education." Other practitioners noted the need for funding to implement the constructs and content presented in the *Exemplary Practices*. For instance, Participant 63 affirmed "It is difficult to get the financial resources to implement these standards" and Participant 66 stated "Programs and schools need access to more monies and resources to implement the standards and indicators." A few practitioners cited specific human capital needs such as "A sufficient number of teaching and non-teaching staff assigned to the alternative setting" (cited by Participant 36) and "Alternative schools and programs need full-time special education teachers" (cited by Participant 85).

Phase Two: Sequential Explanatory Strategy

Coding the Data

Phase Two was conducted between January 2011 and April 2011. During this phase, the researcher trained five teams of two practitioners to test the utility of an evaluation instrument (see Appendix G) built from the *Exemplary Practices* but modified based upon practitioner perceptions of the construct and content analysis during Phase One. This entailed each team completing an observation of either an alternative school or program using the instrument provided by the researcher.

As evaluations were returned, each instrument was given a unique identification number which correlated with the team conducting the evaluation. To ensure anonymity, information obtained was only associated with the unique identifier (i.e., Team One, Team Two, etc.). This procedure protected the identity of individual team members. All schools and programs were also given a unique identification letter (i.e., School A, Program A, etc.), thus protecting the identity of participant schools and programs. All documentation relative to the school or program visit, as well as evaluation team information was kept by the researcher and will remain under lock and key.

Prior to reporting the data, all evaluation instruments were carefully examined for errors or omissions. Of the five evaluations conducted by the teams, all five were returned. All instruments were completed appropriately and had no identifiable errors and/or omissions and, thus, were retained for analysis.

In order to begin the analysis, all data collected were first transcribed using Microsoft Word (2007) and put into chart form. For those constructs and content that were observable, this distinction was noted by the letter "Y" which stands for "yes." This

indicated that the item was observable by the team. Where the item was not observable

"N" was utilized which stands for "no" and indicated that the construct or content was

unobservable. Upon entering all data into chart form, an overall distinction of being

either observable or unobservable was noted by the researcher. For example, if three of

the five evaluation teams noted a construct as observable, then the consensus was that the

construct was, in fact, observable by the majority. The researcher used this basic process

to separate constructs and content as being either observable or unobservable. This

helped the researcher develop specific questions for the interview that were based upon

the results of utility testing.

Phase Two also entailed semi-structured interviews (Corbin & Strauss, 2008;

Creswell, 2009; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003) to determine what revisions would be needed

to fully capture alternative programming via the evaluation instrument and, hence,

enhance overall utility (see Appendix O for the semi-structured interview questions). All

qualitative data collected via the interviews were transcribed using Microsoft Word

(2007). Later, the data were transferred into Microsoft Excel (2007) for ease in terms of

analysis. Once transferred into Excel, responses were coded, sorted and organized based

upon emergent themes.

Evaluation Team Demographics

Five teams of two evaluators were selected based upon the credentials outline in

Chapter Three. Evaluators were required to have a minimum of five years experience in

alternative education, as well as practical experience in program evaluation. Team One

consisted of an evaluator with six years experience in alternative education and five years

in evaluation paired with an evaluator with 13 years in alternative education and 11 years

in evaluation. Team Two was composed of an evaluator with eight years in alternative education and six years in evaluation matched with an evaluator that had 10 years in the field and nine years in evaluation. Team Three was made up of an evaluator with nine years in alternative education and 13 in evaluation coupled with an evaluator working six years in alternative education and five in evaluation. Team Four consisted of an evaluator with 12 years in alternative education and 12 years in evaluation paired with an evaluator who had six years in alternative education and five years in evaluation. Finally, Team Five was composed of an evaluator with seven years in alternative education and five years in evaluation and an evaluator with nine years in alternative education and four years in evaluation. As may be seen, all teams had the credentials set forth in Chapter Three of the dissertation.

School and Program Demographics

As outlined in Chapter Three, the researcher worked to ensure that both schools and programs participated with a variety from either a rural, suburban or urban setting, as well as representing a diversity of geographic regions in Tennessee (east, middle or west). School and program demographics provide a portrait of those alternative schools and programs that participated in the study and show the diversity of those participants. School A serves suspended and expelled youth located in an urban setting in west Tennessee. School B serves students that have dropped out of school and who are reentering the educational system to finish their high school career. This school was in an urban environment located in middle Tennessee. Program A serves suspended and expelled learners in a rural setting in west Tennessee. Program B is a hybrid program that serves suspended and expelled youth, as well as students at high risk of dropping out

of school. Program B operates in east Tennessee and serves students in a rural setting.

Finally, Program C serves suspended and expelled youth in a suburban environment and

is located in middle Tennessee. Because the purpose of Phase Two was to test utility, the

researcher exercised care to ensure that a variety of alternatives representing the current

landscape were visited and evaluated during this phase. Table 19 presents the various

demographics for the participant alternative schools and programs.

Table 19: Alternative School and Program Demographics – Phase Two Data

Descriptor	School/Program Type	Setting	Geographic Location
School A	Suspended/Expelled	Urban	West
School B	Dropout Intervention/Recovery	Urban	Middle
Program A	Suspended/Expelled	Rural	West
Program B	Hybrid	Rural	East
Program C	Suspended/Expelled	Suburban	Middle

Research Question Four: Quantitative Results

Research Question Four aimed to determine whether the *Exemplary Practices*

were useful when translated into an evaluation instrument. To understand this question,

practitioners tested the utility of an evaluation instrument (see Appendix O) in either an

alternative school or program. As outlined in Chapter Three, constructs and content were

quantified and categorized as being either observable or unobservable via an observation

checklist (see Appendix O). These findings informed the semi-structured interview

questions associated with the sequential explanatory research strategy.

Ten Constructs (i.e., Standards). One of the main questions posed was the

overall utility of the ten constructs identified in the *Exemplary Practices* when translated

into an evaluation instrument. Table 20 presents the results of the study based upon the

utility testing of the instrument. Results indicate that the vast majority of the constructs

(i.e., standards) were not observable. Those constructs represent the following domains

of best practice as presented in the *Exemplary Practices*: *Climate and Culture*, *Staffing*

and Professional Development, *Student Assessment*, *Transitional Planning and Support*,

Parent/Guardian Involvement, *Collaboration* and *Program Evaluation*. In addition to

examining the utility of the constructs, the researcher further investigated the utility of the

content associated with each construct.

Table 20: Utility of the Ten Constructs (i.e., Standards) – Phase Two Data

	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3	Team 4	Team 5	Overall
1.0	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
2.0	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
3.0	N	N	Y	Y	N	N
4.0	N	N	N	Y	Y	N
5.0	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
6.0	N	N	N	Y	N	N
7.0	N	N	N	Y	N	N
8.0	N	N	N	Y	N	N
9.0	N	N	N	Y	N	N
10.0	N	N	N	Y	N	N

Y = Yes, Observable

N = No, Unobservable

Mission and Purpose. When testing the utility of the instrument, teams were

unable to observe some of the content associated with *Mission and Purpose*. For

instance, the majority of teams were unable to determine whether all stakeholders were

involved in developing the mission, purpose, goals and expected outcomes as outlined in

Indicator 1.3 (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). Likewise, teams could

not easily establish if the mission and purpose of the alternative school or program was

consistent with the district's goals while aligning to specific state standards (see Indicator

1.6) (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). Moreover, teams could not

determine if barriers to achieving the mission and purpose were identified, clarified and

addressed, as well as whether the mission and purpose were regularly monitored,

evaluated and revised (see Indicators 1.11 and 1.13) (National Alternative Education

Association, 2009). That being the case, all other content associated with *Mission and*

Purpose was observable and presented in Table 21.

Table 21: Utility of the 12 Indicators of Success in Standard 1.0 (Mission and Purpose)
when Translated to an Evaluation Instrument (Observation Checklist) – Phase Two Data

	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3	Team 4	Team 5	Overall
1.1	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
1.2	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
1.3	N	N	N	N	Y	N
1.4	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
1.5	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
1.6	N	Y	N	N	Y	N
1.7	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
1.8	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
1.10	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
1.11	Y	N	N	N	Y	N
1.12	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
1.13	N	N	N	Y	N	N

Y = Yes, Observable

N = No, Unobservable

Leadership. The second construct, *Leadership* demonstrated a few items that

were unobservable. Table 22 presents the observable and unobservable content for this

construct. Most teams were unable to observe school or program leadership engaging

stakeholders in collaborative decision making (Indicator 2.5) or leadership operating

under a current policies and procedures manual (Indicator 2.7) (National Alternative

Education Association, 2009). Other unobservable content included ensuring that

reliable data and student performance measures guide instructional practices (Indicator

2.11), students were offered transportation, food and health services (Indicator 2.12) and

the use of timely performance evaluations for school and program staff (Indicator 2.13)

(National Alternative Education Association, 2009). All other content was observable by

the majority of teams.

Table 22: Utility of the Indicators of Success in Standard 2.0 (Leadership) when
Translated to an Evaluation Instrument (Observation Checklist) – Phase Two Data

	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3	Team 4	Team 5	Overall
2.1	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
2.2	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
2.3	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
2.4	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
2.5	N	Y	Y	N	N	N
2.6	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
2.7	N	N	N	Y	N	N
2.8	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
2.9	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
2.10	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
2.11	N	Y	Y	N	N	N
2.12	Y	N	N	Y	N	N
2.13	N	N	N	Y	N	N

Y = Yes, Observable

N = No, Unobservable

Climate and Culture. Half of the content associated with *Climate and Culture* was observable. For instance, Indicator 3.4 notes that a designated team of representatives plans, monitors and implements prevention and intervention strategies that reflect the culture and climate of the program (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). The majority of teams could not observe this programming feature. Other content not readily observable included the following: communication of high expectations for teacher performance (Indicator 3.6), student and staff evaluation data and feedback presented at staff meetings to make programmatic changes (Indicator 3.7), short and long-term goals address the needs of students, staff and parents/guardians (Indicator 3.9) and program objectives are measurable and built upon academic achievement, student behavior and social improvement which establish program accountability, evaluation and improvement (Indicator 3.10) (National Alternative Education Association). The bulk of teams were able to observe the remaining content associated with *Climate and Culture* during utility testing with those findings presented in Table 23.

Table 23: Utility of the 10 Indicators of Success in Standard 3.0 (Climate and Culture) when Translated to an Evaluation Instrument (Observation Checklist) – Phase Two Data

	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3	Team 4	Team 5	Overall
3.1	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
3.2	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
3.3	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
3.4	N	N	N	N	Y	N
3.5	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y
3.6	Y	N	N	Y	N	N
3.7	N	N	N	Y	N	N
3.8	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3	Team 4	Team 5	Overall
3.9	N	N	N	Y	Y	N
3.10	N	Y	N	Y	N	N

Y = Yes, Observable

N = No, Unobservable

Staffing and Professional Development. Much of the content associated with *Staffing and Professional Development* was unobservable. Table 24 presents the observable and unobservable content for the fourth construct with the majority of unobservable indicators pinpointed to those dealing with professional development. For instance, Indicator 4.5 cites the need for a written professional development plan with the majority of evaluators unable to observe that programming feature (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). Similarly, Indicators 4.6 through 4.12 pertain to professional development and were not observable. The content of each relate to professional development and relatives to the following subtopics: internal and external resources, student outcomes, variety of approaches, collaboration with community support services, staff capacity, sufficient resources, adult and lifelong learning (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). The remaining content was deemed observable and is noted in Table 24.

Table 24: Utility of the 12 Indicators of Success in Standard 4.0 (Staffing and Professional Development) when Translated to an Evaluation Instrument (Observation Checklist) – Phase Two Data

	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3	Team 4	Team 5	Overall
4.1	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
4.2	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
4.3	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Table 24 (continued)

	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3	Team 4	Team 5	Overall
4.4	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
4.5	N	N	N	Y	N	N
4.6	N	N	N	Y	Y	N
4.7	N	N	N	Y	N	N
4.8	N	Y	N	Y	N	N
4.9	Y	N	N	Y	N	N
4.10	N	N	N	Y	Y	N
4.11	N	N	N	Y	N	N
4.12	N	N	N	Y	Y	N

Y = Yes, Observable

N = No, Unobservable

Curriculum and Instruction. The fifth construct, *Curriculum and Instruction* had various indicators that were not observable by the majority of evaluation teams. For example, Indicator 5.2 states that teachers are highly qualified in the content area based on individual state standards (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). Overall, evaluators were unable to determine if that was, in fact, correct. Likewise, Indicator 5.7 notes that the school or program individualizes the student's curriculum and instruction via an individualized student learner plan (ISLP) (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). The majority were unable to observe this programming feature. Indicators 5.11, 5.12 and 5.13 relate to additional instructional features in service learning, life skills and career exploration, all of which were not observable by the majority of evaluation teams (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). Other than those noted all other content was observable with Table 25 representing those findings for *Curriculum and Instruction*.

Table 25: Utility of the 17 Indicators of Success in Standard 5.0 (Curriculum and Instruction) when Translated to an Evaluation Instrument (Observation Checklist) – Phase Two Data

	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3	Team 4	Team 5	Overall
5.1	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
5.2	N	N	N	Y	N	N
5.3	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
5.4	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
5.5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
5.6	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
5.7	Y	N	N	Y	N	N
5.8	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
5.9	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
5.10	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y
5.11	Y	N	N	Y	N	N
5.12	Y	N	N	Y	N	N
5.13	Y	N	N	N	Y	N
5.14	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
5.15	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
5.16	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
5.17	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Y = Yes, Observable

N = No, Unobservable

Student Assessment. Similar to *Staffing and Professional Development,* the majority of the content associated with *Student Assessment* was not observable. In fact, five of the eight indicators were unobservable during utility tests. Table 26 notes those indicators that were observable. Indicator 6.1 relates to data-driven accountability to measure achievement and establish needs, which evaluators frequently did not observe during site visits. Indicator 6.2 and 6.3 were unobservable and require that the purpose

of assessments and data collection protocols be defined, outlined and communicated to students, staff and parents/guardians (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). Indicator 6.6 calls for student progress to be monitored with frequent, reliable and rigorous measures and Indicator 6.8 cites the need for assessments to inform learner progress, guide curriculum and instruction and monitor the individualized student learner plan (ISLP) (National Alternative Education Association). Both Indicator 6.1 and 6.2 were also distinguished as unobservable based upon the results of utility testing.

Table 26: Utility of the Eight Indicators of Success in Standard 6.0 (Student Assessment) when Translated to an Evaluation Instrument (Observation Checklist) – Phase Two Data

	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3	Team 4	Team 5	Overall
6.1	N	N	N	Y	Y	N
6.2	N	N	N	Y	N	N
6.3	N	N	N	Y	N	N
6.4	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y
6.5	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y
6.6	Y	N	N	Y	N	N
6.7	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
6.8	N	N	N	Y	Y	N

Y = Yes, Observable

N = No, Unobservable

Transitional Planning and Support. As noted in Table 27, the seventh construct or *Transitional Planning and Support* had content not readily observable during utility tests. For example, the majority of teams were unable to determine if schools or programs had a Screening Committee or Student Support Team to ensure that the alternative placement was the most appropriate placement for the learner and, if so, that appropriate transitional services were offered (see Indicators 7.1 and 7.3) (National

Alternative Education Association). Teams could not establish or observe if transitional

planning afford the opportunity to maintain and/or accelerate their progress toward

graduation (see Indicator 7.3), if supportive links to the home school were present (see

Indicator 7.6) and whether student needs were address before, during and after transition

(see Indicator 7.7), as well as if transition services were coordinated pre-entry through

post-exit (see Indicator 7.8) (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). The

majority of evaluation teams were unable to distinguish whether information sharing was

taking place between the school of origin, the alternative school or program and other

social service organizations (see Indicator 7.9). Other than the content noted above, all

other content was observed by the majority of teams.

Table 27: Utility of the Indicators of Success in Standard 7.0 (Transitional Planning and Support) when Translated to an Evaluation Instrument (Observation Checklist) – Phase Two Data

	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3	Team 4	Team 5	Overall
7.1	N	N	N	Y	N	N
7.2	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
7.3	N	Y	N	Y	N	N
7.4	N	N	N	Y	Y	N
7.5	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
7.6	N	N	N	Y	N	N
7.7	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
7.8	N	N	N	Y	N	N
7.9	N	N	N	Y	N	Y

Y = Yes, Observable

N = No, Unobservable

Parent/Guardian Involvement. The majority of content associated with

Parent/Guardian Involvement was not observable by evaluation teams conducting the site

visits. Table 28 outlines the content not observable. Teams noted that the following

program features were unobservable: communication and interaction between the school

and parents (Indicator 8.2), engaging parents as equal partners in the decision-making

process (Indicator 8.3), involving parents in solution-focused problem solving (Indicator

8.4) and consultation with parents regarding successful strategies that support student

learning (Indicator 8.5) (National Alternative Education Association, 2009).

Additionally, the majority of teams were unable to observe or determine if parents had

access to parent education programs (Indicators 8.6) and if the school or program had a

formal grievance policy (Indicator 8.8) (National Alternative Education Association,

2009). Clearly, much of the content associated with *Parent/Guardian Involvement* was

not easily observable.

Table 28: Utility of the Eight Indicators of Success in Standard 8.0 (Parent/Guardian Involvement) when Translated to an Evaluation Instrument (Observation Checklist) – Phase Two Data

	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3	Team 4	Team 5	Overall
8.1	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
8.2	N	N	N	Y	N	N
8.3	N	N	N	Y	N	N
8.4	N	N	N	Y	N	N
8.5	N	N	N	Y	N	N
8.6	N	N	N	Y	Y	N
8.7	N	N	N	Y	N	Y
8.8	N	N	N	Y	Y	N

Y = Yes, Observable

Table 29 (continued)

	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3	Team 4	Team 5	Overall
N = No, Unobservable						

Collaboration. Many teams had difficulty observing programming features associated with *Collaboration*. For examples, various types of collaborations with community service organizations, law enforcement, juvenile justice and juvenile treatment centers were not easily observable (see Indicators 9.2, 9.5 and 9.7) (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). Moreover, teams had difficulty determining if collaborations were utilized as a resource for education, advocacy and volunteerism, to provide a comprehensive student assistance program and enrichment of academic instruction relative to service learning, life skills and career exploration (see Indicators 9.8 and 9.11) (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). Other content not observable during utility testing relate to formalized community partnerships. For instance, Indicator 9.3 requires that collaborations be based on trust, open communication, clearly defined goals and shared responsibility (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). Indicator 9.9 notes the need to formally develop a memorandum of understanding outlining roles and responsibilities with collaborative partners (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). Both indicators were not observable. For a full list of other content not observable for this construct please visit Table 29.

Table 30: Utility of the Nine Indicators of Success in Standard 9.0 (Collaboration) when Translated to an Evaluation Instrument (Observation Checklist) – Phase Two Data

	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3	Team 4	Team 5	Overall
9.1	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
9.2	N	N	N	Y	Y	N

Table 29 (continued)

	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3	Team 4	Team 5	Overall
9.3	N	N	N	Y	N	N
9.5	N	N	N	Y	Y	N
9.6	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
9.7	N	N	N	Y	N	N
9.8	N	N	N	Y	N	N
9.9	N	N	N	Y	N	N
9.11	N	N	N	Y	Y	N

Y = Yes, Observable

N = No, Unobservable

Program Evaluation. Table 30 presents the unobservable content associated with *Program Evaluation*. As may be seen, all of the content associated with this construct was not observable. Indicators 10.1 through 10.8 all relate to conducting systematic evaluations for continuous program improvement which requires program implementation assessments/ratings, student outcome data, student, parent and staff perception data, review of transitional services and the use of an external evaluator (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). All of the noted programming activities were not readily observable during the site visits and, therefore, were overwhelmingly mark unobservable by the teams.

Table 31: Utility of the Eight Indicators of Success in Standard 10.0 (Program Evaluation) when Translated to an Evaluation Instrument (Observation Checklist) – Phase Two Data

	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3	Team 4	Team 5	Overall
10.1	N	N	N	Y	Y	N
10.2	N	N	N	Y	N	N
10.3	N	N	N	Y	Y	N

Table 30 (continued)

	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3	Team 4	Team 5	Overall
10.4	N	N	N	N	N	N
10.5	N	N	N	Y	N	N
10.6	N	N	N	Y	N	N
10.7	N	N	N	Y	N	N
10.8	N	N	N	Y	N	N

Y = Yes, Observable

N = No, Unobservable

Research Question Five: Qualitative Results

The goal of Research Question Five was to determine if revisions to the evaluation instrument were necessary to enhance the utility of the tool. Semi-structured interviews (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2009; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003) were conducted with the evaluation teams to ascertain what, if any, revisions to the evaluation instrument were necessary. The ultimate goal of the semi-structured interviews was to examine overall utility and finalize the evaluation instrument as a product of the dissertation and research. Such qualitative responses provided the researcher with additional data to analyze associated with the analysis of utility.

All responses to the semi-structured interviews (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2009; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003) were coded and sorted on the basis of emerging themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2009; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). In order to identify these themes, the researcher utilized Creswell's (2009) linear, hierarchical approach to qualitative data analysis. After doing so, comments from participants could be sorted into two broad themes.

Theme One: Stakeholder Interviews. One theme to emerge from the semi-structured interviews was the need for stakeholder interviews when conducting the school or program evaluations and that such a theme should be integrated into the final instrument design (cited by all teams). Team Three noted "Many of the indicators were not easily observable. Allowing for stakeholder interviews would provide a richer portrait of programming activities and provide evaluators with the information needed to complete the instrument." The team went on to recommend that interviews be conducted with the following stakeholders: principal or program director, counselor, teacher, certified staff, non-certified staff, students, parents and central office personal. Team One had very similar sentiments but also suggested "conducting interviews with members of the broader community." This perception was echoed by Team Five contending that "It is essential to conduct onsite interviews to determine if the standards and indicators found in the *Exemplary Practices* are being met and to better inform the overall evaluation."

Theme Two: Artifacts. The second emergent theme from the semi-structured interviews was the need to collect artifacts to further show implementation of the *Exemplary Practice* (cited by Team One, Team Three, Team Four and Team Five). Evaluation teams recommended that the final instrument integrate the collection of appropriate artifacts as supporting evidence for those unobservable items noted in Research Question Four. For instance, Team Four contended that "In addition to classroom and school-wide observations, evaluators should collect and review documentation that proves integration of the *Exemplary Practices*." Team One mentioned that several items found in the *Exemplary Practices* would have an artifact if

being implemented with fidelity. Team One stated "The *Exemplary Practices*

recommends that the school or program creates an individualized student learner plan

(ISLP) for every child and there would obviously be evidence showing implementation."

Team Five argued that "Documents could be collected to support the implementation of

the constructs and content. For example, the *Program Evaluation* component requires

the administration of staff survey to assess attitudes and opinions of the staff and there

would obviously be documentation if that was actually taking place." Team Five went on

to suggest that "You [the researcher] should review the *Exemplary Practices* for those

documents that could provide supporting evidence and include those in the final

instrument design."

Summary of Research Results

Research Question One sought to determine if the ten constructs (i.e., standards)

presented in the *Exemplary Practices* reflected best practice in alternative education. In

examining this question, practitioners were asked on the descriptive survey (see

Appendix D) to quantify the validity of each construct by applying the following Likert

scale rating system: 4 (Essential), 3 (Valuable), 2 (Useful), 1 (Non-essential). The

researcher predetermined that constructs with a mean score rating of three or greater

would be used to develop an evaluation instrument during Phase Two (see Chapter

Three). Based upon this process, all ten constructs were concluded as valid through this

process. These results, determined the need to validate all content (i.e., indicators of

success) associated with each construct.

Research Question Two aimed to identify whether or not the content (i.e.,

indicators of success) associated with each construct (i.e., standard) reflected best

practice in alternative education. Four indicators were omitted during instrument development associated with Phase Two as validity could *not* be established. The first omission, Indicator 1.9, calls for communicating the mission and purpose through the use of symbols, ceremonies and stories (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). The second omission, Indicator 9.4, requires a comprehensive community relations program be established (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). The third omission, Indicator 9.10, affirms that community representatives be called upon to access resources during the planning phase of the individualized student learner plan (ISLP) (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). The fourth and final omission, Indicator 9.12, requires that community representatives serve on the school or program's advisory board (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). Table 31 presents those indicators that did *not* have a mean score rating of three or greater where validity could not be established.

Table 32: Indicators with Mean Scores Less Than Three and Omitted from Instrument Development during Phase Two- Phase One Data

Indicator	Descriptor	*M*	*SD*
1.9	Communicated Through Symbols, Ceremonies, & Stories	2.84	.85
9.4	Comprehensive Community Relations Program	2.97	.83
9.10	Community Integrated into the Development of the ISLP	2.96	.77
9.12	Community Representatives Serve on Advisory Board	2.92	.90

The goal of Research Question Three was to determine whether revisions to the *Exemplary Practices* were necessary to accurately frame best practice in alternative education. Three themes emerged which included the following: a desire to mandate and monitor the *Exemplary Practices*, general practitioner agreement with the *Exemplary Practices*, as well as the need for adequacy relative to funding and resources. None of

the emergent themes required modifications to the *Exemplary Practices* for Phase Two of the study.

Research Question Four entailed testing the utility of the *Exemplary Practices* when translated to an instrument for evaluation purposes. Results indicate that the majority of the constructs (i.e., standards) were not observable. Those constructs included the following: *Climate and Culture*, *Staffing and Professional Development*, *Student Assessment*, *Transitional Planning and Support*, *Parent/Guardian Involvement*, *Collaboration* and *Program Evaluation*. In addition to examining the utility of the constructs, the researcher further investigated the utility of the content associated with each construct. Of the 106 indicators studied, 58 *were not* observable and 48 *were* observable during utility testing. Appendix P presents the unobservable content.

Research Question Five aimed to determine if revisions to the instrument were necessary to enhance utility. Two specific themes emerged which call for the inclusion of artifacts and interviews, in addition to direct observation. Results from the study informed the design of an instrument developed from the *Exemplary Practices* but adapted based upon practitioner perceptions of the construct, content and utility for use as an evaluation instrument. The final instrument based upon the results and findings of this study appears in Appendix Q.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF PROMINENT FINDINGS, DISCUSSION AND

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Introduction

This chapter summarizes the prominent findings of the study and discusses the

implications of those findings. This includes revisiting the initial statement of the

problem and summarizing and discussing the research findings organized by each

research question. The researcher also discusses the findings as it relates to prior

research, as well as theoretical and practical implications. To conclude the study, the

researcher offers recommendations for future research.

Statement of the Problem

Without properly validating each of the ten major constructs of best practice

framed in the *Exemplary Practices,* as well as the content associated with each construct,

practitioners cannot be certain of the document's accuracy. Additionally, construct and

content validity must be addressed before such items can be translated into an evaluation

instrument. With an increasing number of alternative schools and programs emerging in

the United States (Kleiner, Porch, & Farris, 2002) there is need for a common core of

best practices to design, deliver, evaluate and improve programming. In the absence of

research, the *Exemplary Practices* are a hypothetical list of best practices that lack

evidence of construct and content validity, as well proven utility for evaluation purposes.

The researcher sought to examine the validity of the ten constructs and corresponding

content, as well explore the utility of the *Exemplary Practices* when translated into an

evaluation instrument.

Concurrence of *Exemplary Practices* with the Literature

The review of literature substantiates, to limited degree, construct and content

validity for some of the items noted in the *Exemplary Practices*. That is, many of the

Exemplary Practices are also identified as best practice in the research and via state

standards, including the following: the importance of a clear mission and purpose (i.e.,

Mission and Purpose), positive climate and culture (i.e., *Climate and Culture*), high

quality academic instruction (i.e., *Curriculum and Instruction*), individualized learning

plans, (i.e., Individualized Student Learner Plan), transitional planning (i.e., *Transitional*

Planning and Support), student support services (i.e., *Collaboration*), significant parent

engagement (i.e., *Parent/Guardian Involvement*) and evaluation oriented (*Program*

Evaluation) (National Alternative Education Association, 2009).

But other parallels also exist. For instance, small class sizes and clear and

consistent discipline policies and procedures can be identified in the research literature

and in the *Exemplary Practices*. The importance of selecting caring and nurturing staff is

also noted in the literature review and in the *Exemplary Practices* (National Alternative

Education Association, 2009). Likewise, the review of literature validates claims found

in the *Exemplary Practices* that cite the importance of recruiting, hiring and training

qualified staff (Indicator 2.8) who are enthusiastic, energetic and innovate (Indicator 4.1)

that work to create a positive and nurturing school climate (Standard 3.0) (National

Alternative Education Association, 2009). The concurrence of these themes in the

literature and the *Exemplary Practices* provides addition evidence of construct and

content validity for those mentioned items.

When linking the constructs and content identified in the review of literature with extremely high mean score ratings presented in this study, certain areas of practice have the greatest claim to overall validity. For example, *Transitional Planning and Support* is found in the *Exemplary Practices*, noted in the literature review and has a mean score rating of ($M = 3.59$). With three varying sources, *Transitional Planning and Support* has considerable claims of legitimacy and overall construct validity. Where the review of literature, the *Exemplary Practices* and high mean score ratings align, readers can feel secure that evidence of construct and content validity is present. This occurs most completely for the following constructs: *Mission and Purpose, Climate and Culture*, *Curriculum and Instruction*, *Transitional Planning and Support*, *Collaboration*, *Parent/Guardian Involvement* and *Program Evaluation*. Likewise, this occurs most completely for the following content: individualized student learner plan (ISLP), small class sizes and clear and consistent discipline policies and procedures.

While some parallels can be made between the literature review, the current research study and the *Exemplary Practices*, many of the *Exemplary Practices* provide a level of specificity that cannot be found or supported in the literature. This established the need to verify construct and content validity. Based upon the findings of this study, all constructs and the majority of the content, were perceived as accurate by participants. While this research study is only an initial examination of construct and content validity, such findings do begin to establish validity.

Discussion of Research Findings

Research Question One: Quantitative Findings

Research Question One aimed to identify whether the ten constructs (i.e., standards) presented in the *Exemplary Practices* represented best practice in alternative education. Research participants overwhelming indicated that the *Exemplary Practices* reflected best practice. In fact, all **ten** constructs had a mean score rating of three or greater with the following ratings calculated for the sample: *Mission and Purpose* (*M* = 3.76), *Leadership* (*M* = 3.85), *Climate and Culture* (*M* = 3.70), *Staffing and Professional Development* (*M* = 3.57), *Curriculum and Instruction* (*M* = 3.69), *Student Assessment* (*M* = 3.41), *Transitional Planning and Support* (*M* = 3.59), *Parent and Guardian Involvement* (*M* = 3.45), *Collaboration* (*M* = 3.38) and *Program Evaluation* (*M* = 3.33). These findings indicate that study participants acknowledged the correctness of those constructs as evident by high mean score ratings. Such findings indicate that the constructs in the *Exemplary Practices* are useful, accurate and valid based upon the perceptions of the sample.

Research Question Two: Quantitative Findings

Findings associated with Research Question One established the need to verify all the content associated with each of the ten constructs (i.e., standards). Research Question Two aimed to determine if the content (i.e., indicators of success) identified in the *Exemplary Practices* reflected best practice in alternative education. Results confirm that participants, for the most part, agreed with the content presented in the *Exemplary Practices*. In fact, only four of the 110 indicators of success had a mean score rating less than three.

The first eliminated indicator was 1.9 which calls for communicating the mission and purpose through the use of symbols, ceremonies and stories (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). The mean score rating was ($M = 2.84$) which would indicate practitioners questioned the need for this programming activity. The researcher acknowledges that it is difficult to require alternative schools and programs to use symbols, ceremonies and stories to communicate the mission and purpose. Such a requirement could put an unnecessary burden on the alternative school or program and practitioner sentiments seem to agree with this rationale.

The second omission, Indicator 9.4, requires a comprehensive community relations program be established (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). The mean score rating for this indicator was ($M = 2.97$). It is not surprising that practitioners rejected this particular programming feature. While establishing and maintaining a good rapport with the community is essential to offering a comprehensive student assistance program, the researcher questions the need to establish a formal community relations program. With the tremendous amount of work required of educators, a workload is compounded in the alternative setting, so it is not surprising that practitioners questioned the need for a community relations program and whether there was time to complete such an activity. The rating for this indicator most likely represents the fact that this activity is simply not practical for most alternative schools or programs. Practitioner perceptions seem to align with this notion.

The third omission, Indicator 9.10, cites that community representatives be called upon during the planning phase of the individualized student learner plan (ISLP) (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). The mean score rating for this

indicator was ($M = 2.96$). The basic idea or concept of integrating the community into

programming is well supported by the sample (refer to the results for Standard 9.0).

Therefore, the low rating on this particular indicator may be reflective of semantics and

not necessary practitioner disagreement. Some practitioners may have perceived this

indicator to require community representatives to serve on the Student Support Team. As

the primary author of the *Exemplary Practices*, the researcher is aware that the indicator

was meant to suggest that educators access community services based upon the needs of

the learner and integrate such plans into the ISLP. However, if practitioners perceived

this indicator to suggest actual participation by community representatives in the creation

of the ISLP, it is not surprising that such a notion was rejected. With the need for student

privacy, an activity such as this would not be feasible. None the less, since this

explanation cannot be confirmed, the researcher omitted this indicator based upon the

predetermined thresholds established at the onset of the study.

The fourth omission, Indicator 9.12, requires that community representatives

serve on the alternative school or program's advisory board (National Alternative

Education Association, 2009). The mean score rating for this indicator was ($M = 2.92$).

Clearly, practitioners questioned the usefulness of this programming feature. Such a low

rating might indicate some hesitancy in allowing outside community members into the

school and allowing participation in the decision-making process. While the researcher

sees the value of stakeholder input, it is undeniable that practitioners did not desire input

to this extent. This may stem from the time commitment required to formalize such a

process, uncertainty of how or who to select as a community representative or even a

desire to protect student identities in those alternatives for suspended and expelled youth. Regardless of why, the researcher omitted Indicator 9.12.

Other than the four omissions noted above, findings indicate general agreement with the legitimacy of the content. The ultimate goal of this research question was to determine if the *Exemplary Practices* measured the appropriate content associated with best practice in alternative education. Findings indicate that participants generally acknowledged the accuracy of the content as evident by high mean score ratings presented in the previous chapter. Such findings indicate that the vast majority of the content presented was, in fact, deemed useful, valid and should not be rejected on the basis of this study.

As outlined in Chapter Three, those indicators with a mean score rating less than three were *not* included in Phase Two of the study (the four omissions noted above). Based upon this screening process, 106 indicators of success remained. Those indicators were integrated into instrument design during Phase Two of the study. While the indicators did not meet the thresholds set forth at the onset of the study, the omission of these items is somewhat arbitrary and additional research is needed before drawing any final conclusions.

Research Question Three: Qualitative Findings

Research Question Three aimed to examine whether revisions or additions to the constructs and the content in the *Exemplary Practices* were necessary to correctly frame best practice in alternative education. In order to address this question, practitioners were asked on the descriptive survey (see Appendix D) if edits to the constructs or content were needed, as well as if constructs or content needed to be added. Moreover,

practitioners were able to write in any comments, suggestions, and/or feedback. Nineteen of 98 research participants choose to make edits or suggestions to the *Exemplary Practices* with most responses representing current issues, challenges and general sentiments which did not require modifications to the *Exemplary Practices*. The noted findings do have interesting implications.

The least prevalent theme to emerge relates to the idea that the *Exemplary Practices* should be mandated and monitored. For instance, Participant 87 argued that "The *Exemplary Practices* should be mandated as state standards." Participant 97 wrote "The *Exemplary Practices* should be mandated and monitored." This supports the fact that practitioners were in general agreement with the *Exemplary Practices* as evident from the above statements and mean scores ratings found in Chapter Four. This theme did not require additions or edits to the constructs or content identified in the *Exemplary Practices*. Such findings were unanticipated and suggest a desire for professional standards that are mandated and monitored. This finding may imply a desire for quality control procedures relative to alternative programming.

The second finding to emerge from the qualitative data related to practitioner agreement with the *Exemplary Practices*. For example, Participant 15 stated that the *Exemplary Practices* were "well written." Participant 16 noted that "The content and standards established here meet or exceed my beliefs and understandings of alternative education." Participant 52 affirmed that "no changes were needed" and Participant 79 wrote "I think the standards presented for alternative education are great and I have no suggestions for improvement at this time." Participant 73 argued that "The National Alternative Education Association has done a wonderful job developing these standards

and indicators." Such responses, in combination with the high mean score ratings for the constructs and the majority of content reinforce the fact that most participants perceived the *Exemplary Practices* to be, in fact, accurate and valid. Such findings indicate a general sentiment of the sample and did not warrant changes to the *Exemplary Practices*.

The most prominent finding was that practitioners felt alternative schools and programs lack adequacy of funding and resources. This is not at all surprising as Indicator 2.2 rated highest ($M = 3.81$) under *Leadership* noting the importance of adequate financial resources and support for the alternative school or program. The mean score rating aligns with the identified theme. Participant 25 argued that "It would be ideal if there was more funding for alternative education in our country" and Participant 27 stated "There does not seem to be enough resources (dollars, people and commitment) from the national, state and local levels for alternative education." Other practitioners noted the need for funding to implement the constructs and content presented in the *Exemplary Practices*. For instance, Participant 63 affirmed "It is difficult to get the financial resources to implement these standards" and Participant 66 stated "Programs and schools need access to more monies and resources to implement the standards and indicators." A few practitioners cited specific human capital needs such as "A sufficient number of teaching and non-teaching staff assigned to the alternative setting" (cited by Participant 36) and "Alternative schools and programs need full-time special education teachers" (cited by Participant 85). Such comments shed light on current issues and challenges in the field. Traditionally, alternative education has been underfunded and lacked the needed resources for high quality programming (Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury, 2005). Thus, the comments are not surprising.

For purposes of instrument development, it is important to determine if the

identified theme is already contained within the *Exemplary Practices* or if the theme must

be integrated into the final instrument. Upon review, the researcher found that adequacy

of funding and resources already resides in the *Exemplary Practices* and that no additions

or edits were warranted. Indicator 2.2 notes that the district should provide "adequate

financial support" and "other needed resources" (i.e., teaching and non-teaching staff,

equipment, technology, supplies, curriculum, etc.) for implementation of quality

alternative education services (National Alternative Education Association, 2009, p. 7).

Indicator 4.4 prescribes that "A sufficient number of teaching and non-teaching staff are

working in or assigned to the alternative education program" (National Alternative

Education Association, 2009, p. 10). As noted above, one participant specified the need

for special education teachers. This is also identified in the *Exemplary Practices* (see

Indicator 5.4) where the NAEA contends "The program operates in full compliance with

laws governing students with special needs" (National Alternative Education Association,

2009, p. 11). While the finding represents current issues and challenges in the field, the

Exemplary Practices already addresses this concern. Consequently, the researcher did

conclude there was not a need to change or modify the *Exemplary Practices*.

Research Question Four: Quantitative Findings

Research Question Four entailed testing the utility of the remaining constructs and

content found in the *Exemplary Practices* when converted into an evaluation instrument

(i.e., observation checklist) and used within representative alternative education settings.

Findings indicate that the majority of the constructs (i.e., standards) were not observable.

Those constructs included the following: *Climate and Culture*, *Staffing and Professional*

Development, *Student Assessment*, *Transitional Planning and Support*, *Parent/Guardian Involvement*, *Collaboration* and *Program Evaluation*. Per the researcher's instructions, evaluation teams were to observe school or program activities, as well as classroom activities. At no time were teams to ask questions or solicit any information from the principal or program director, staff, students or parents. The goal was strictly to determine what was observable and what was not, and it is not surprising that the majority of constructs were not observable. Upon inspection of the *Exemplary Practices*, many of the constructs require additional information gathering to determine if the programming features were taking place.

In addition to examining the utility of the constructs, the researcher further investigated the utility of the content associated with each construct. Of the 106 indicators studied, 58 *were not* observable and 48 *were* observable during utility testing. Appendix P presents all the content deemed not observable during utility testing. It is also not surprising that the majority of the content, like the constructs, were not observable. Alternative information gathering procedures are likely essential to determining if the *Exemplary Practices* were being implemented.

Overall, these findings indicate the need for additional supporting evidence to fully evaluate the implementation of the *Exemplary Practices* in the alternative setting. Consequently, any evaluation instrument constructed for evaluating the extent that the *Exemplary Practices* is implemented must allow for the collection of additional supporting evidence to capture all programming. The described process allowed the researcher to hone in on the constructs and content that were not observable and examine what information sources would be needed to determine implementation. This was the

topic of Research Question Five and findings from Research Question Four informed the semi-structured interviews associated with Research Question Five. More specifically, the researcher worked closely with the evaluation teams to determine what evidence was necessary to capture programming and, thereby, enhance the utility of the evaluation instrument presented as a culminating product of this study.

Research Question Five: Qualitative Findings

Research Question Five aimed to determine if revisions to the evaluation instrument (i.e., observation checklist) were necessary to enhance utility. The first theme to surface was the need for stakeholder interviews to determine if the *Exemplary Practices* were being implemented with fidelity (cited by all teams). For instance, Team Three noted "Many of the indicators were not easily observable. Allowing for stakeholder interviews would provide a richer portrait of programming activities and provide evaluators with the information needed to complete the instrument." The team went on to recommend that interviews be conducted with the following constituents: principal or program director, counselor, teacher, certified staff, non-certified staff, students, parents and central office personal. Team One had very similar sentiments but also suggested "conducting interviews with members of the broader community." This perception was echoed by Team Five contending that "It is essential to conduct onsite interviews to determine if the standards and indicators found in the *Exemplary Practices* are being met and to better inform the overall evaluation." Based upon findings of the semi-structured interviews, the researcher determined that the culminating evaluation instrument should integrate stakeholder interviews. Such a finding is not surprising, as the level of specificity found in the *Exemplary Practices* would require more than a

simple observation. Hence, the necessity to integrate stakeholder interviews into the

design of the instrument

The second and final theme to emerge was the need to collect and review

artifacts, during the evaluation, to determine the level of implementation (cited by Team

One, Team Three, Team Four and Team Five). For instance, Team Four contended that

"In addition to classroom and school-wide observations, evaluators should collect and

review documentation that proves integration of the *Exemplary Practices*." Team Five

argued that "Documents could be collected to support the implementation of the

constructs and content. For example, the *Program Evaluation* component requires the

administration of a staff survey to assess attitudes and opinions and there would

obviously be documentation if that was actually taking place." Team Five went on to

suggest that "You [the researcher] should review the *Exemplary Practices* for those

documents that could provide supporting evidence and include those in the final

instrument design." Based upon these findings, the researcher found it necessary to

include the collection of supporting artifacts as a means to further demonstrate

implementation of the programming features found in the *Exemplary Practices*.

Identifying and collecting documentation only enhances the utility of the instrument and

provides for a more rigorous evaluation. As a result, the researcher included artifacts in

the final evaluation instrument.

Both findings indicate that the evaluation instrument should include evidence

categories for observations, interviews and artifacts. Based upon the recommendations of

the evaluation teams, the researcher included the above "evidence categories" during

final instrument design. Additionally, the researcher utilized many of the recommended

artifacts (by the evaluation teams) when developing the instrument. (Refer to Appendix Q for the culminating evaluation instrument that was constructed from practitioner perceptions of the *Exemplary Practices*.)

Theoretical and Practical Implications

This study only begins to examine the constructs, content and utility of the *Exemplary Practices* when translated into an evaluation instrument. The researcher would caution that this study, in totality, does not completely validate the legitimacy of the *Exemplary Practices*. However, it should be recognized that participants overwhelming agreed with the constructs and content of programming noted in the *Exemplary Practices* as evidenced by high mean score ratings. Therefore, the theoretical domains of practice found within the constructs and content in the *Exemplary Practices* are a good point to begin discussions of best practice as it pertains to alternative education.

There are also practical implications from this study that can be used immediately. From a practitioner standpoint, until such time that a study disproves the usefulness of the *Exemplary Practices* or the constructs and content of practice, the researcher believes that utilizing the *Exemplary Practices* when designing, implementing, evaluating and improving services would, in fact, align with the literature and are supported by the results and findings of this study. However, the researcher notes the need for additional research to further establish construct and content validity relative to the *Exemplary Practices*. To date, the *Exemplary Practices* are only one of a few sets of principles specific to alternative education. The practices provide practitioners with a common language and a common set of practices to implement. Until the legitimacy of

the *Exemplary Practices* is rejected, the researcher believes that this foundational document could serve practitioners well in alternative education programming. For those schools or programs that desire to integrate the *Exemplary Practices*, the researcher offers an evaluation instrument (see Appendix Q) as the culminating product of this research study.

Implications for Future Research

As a result of this study, the following recommendations are suggested for future research:

1. When examining the construct, content and utility of the *Exemplary Practices*, participants were narrowed to practitioners in Tennessee. In order to generalize the results beyond Tennessee, it would be necessary to replicate the study across the United States and internationally. Until such time, the findings cannot be readily generalized beyond the state's parameters. Therefore, future studies should replicate the research study outside of Tennessee.

2. Practitioner perceptions of the constructs and content of the *Exemplary Practices* were used to determine validity. However, the field of alternative education emerged based upon the needs of the learner and their families, not just the needs of educators. Therefore, future studies should explore student and parent perceptions of the constructs and content presented in the *Exemplary Practices*.

3. While perception data has value in beginning to identify those "best" and "exemplary" practices specific to alternative education, it is also important to take a closer look at the correlation between the implementation of best practice and positive student outcomes. Without such a determination, the true usefulness of

the *Exemplary Practices* cannot be established. In fact, Creswell (2009) notes that recent studies of construct and content validity have also entailed determining whether constructs and content, when put into practice, serve a useful purpose and have positive consequences. Therefore, future studies are needed to determine if the implementation of the *Exemplary Practices* have an impact on positive student outcomes such as student achievement, behavior and other stated outcomes of programming.

4. As an outcome of examining the construct, content and utility of the *Exemplary Practices*, the researcher developed an evaluation instrument to determine if the *Exemplary Practice*s are being implemented with fidelity at the school or program level. In testing the utility of the instrument, only a small number of utility tests were conducted.   Future studies should be conducted to further examine the utility of the final instrument with a much larger sample and paying special attention to student demographics and school and program types.

5. Finally, the goal of this dissertation was to address practitioner perceptions of the construct, content and utility of the *Exemplary Practices* when translated into an evaluation instrument. The researcher presents the culmination of this work in Appendix Q. It is important to note that the research provides the following categories on the instrument: exemplary, commendable, adequate, limited and none. However, the researcher did not provide the criteria for meeting each one of those categories as that was not the focus of this dissertation. As a result, future research should address what thresholds are appropriate for meeting each of the categories listed on the final evaluation instrument (see Appendix Q).

Summary of Dissertation and Conclusion

This dissertation explored Tennessee practitioner perceptions of the construct, content and utility of *Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming* (*Exemplary Practices*) for use as an evaluation instrument (National Alternative Education Association, 2009). The general purposes of this study were to (1) determine the legitimacy of the ten constructs and corresponding content as presented in the *Exemplary Practices* and (2) test the utility of the *Exemplary Practices* when transformed into an evaluation instrument. Findings indicate that the constructs and content have evidence of construct and content validity based upon Tennessee practitioner perceptions. Utility testing indicated that enhancements to the evaluation instrument were necessary to fully capture the programming presenting in the *Exemplary Practices* and to determine the degree of implementation at the alternative school and program level.   Refer to Appendix Q for the culminating evaluation instrument constructed from practitioner perceptions of the construct, content and utility of the *Exemplary Practices*.

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Appendix A: Standards and Indicators of Success as Presented in the *Exemplary Practices*

EXEMPLARY PRACTICE 1.0: MISSION AND PURPOSE

An exemplary alternative education program develops a guiding mission and purpose that drives the overall operation of the program.   All stakeholders (i.e., administrators, community representatives, parents/guardians, staff, and students) share in developing, implementing, directing and maintaining the program's mission and purpose.   The mission and purpose of the program include the identification of the target student population and promote the success of all students. Additionally, the mission and purpose embody high expectations for academic achievement, along with the nurturing of positive social interactions between staff and students.

Indicators of Quality Programming:

1.1 The program mission clearly articulates the purpose, goals, and expectations of the program to students, parents/guardians, program staff, and the community at large.

1.2 The mission and purpose are documented, published and visible to students, parents/guardians, program staff, and the community.

1.3 All stakeholders are involved in developing the mission, purpose, goals, and expected outcomes for the program.

1.4 The program mission includes the identification of the student population for whom the alternative education program is designed to serve.

1.5 The mission and purpose of the program have a unifying theme that evokes high levels of student and other stakeholder support.

1.6 The driving mission and purpose of the alternative program is consistent with the district's goals while aligning with specific state standard(s).

1.7 Student success is central to the mission and purpose of the program, which includes learning across academic areas, behavioral management, life skills, and the vocational domains.

1.8 The mission and purpose of the program promotes the personal safety, security, and emotional and physical well being of all students in the program.

1.9 The mission and purpose is communicated through the use of symbols, ceremonies, stories, and similar activities.

1.10 Needed resources are sought and obtained to support the implementation of the mission and purpose.

1.11 Barriers to achieving the mission and purpose of the program are identified, clarified, and addressed.

1.12 The mission and purpose shape the educational plans and activities undertaken by the alternative program.

1.13 The mission and purpose are regularly monitored, evaluated, and revised as needed.

EXEMPLARY PRACTICE 2.0: LEADERSHIP

An exemplary alternative education program employs passionate, innovative, competent, and experienced leadership that has administrative and bureaucratic autonomy, as well as operational flexibility. The administrators, teachers, and staff must be committed to full implementation of the program's mission and core values. On-site leadership utilizes and engages in a collaborative approach that ensures shared decision-making, high expectations for the program, and continuous monitoring of program quality. The superintendent or designated district administrator sustains the independence of the program and allocates sufficient resources (i.e., financial or other necessary resources) to protect the integrity of the program while supporting overall program quality.

Indicators of Quality Programming:

2.1 The district provides sufficient oversight to ensure quality programming while protecting the autonomy of the alternative education program's operation.

2.2 The district provides adequate financial support and other needed resources for implementation of quality alternative education services (e.g., teaching and non-teaching staff, equipment, technology, supplies, curriculum, etc.).

2.3 Program administrators are experienced and competent, enabling them to be engaged in all aspects of the program's operation and management.

2.4 The shared vision of the alternative education program is communicated by the leadership through the program's mission and purpose.

2.5 Where appropriate, leadership engages stakeholders in a collaborative process when making program decisions (i.e., Advisory Board and other opportunities that promote stakeholder participation in the decision-making process).

2.6 Program leadership ensures that decisions regarding program operation align with state legislation and local policies and procedures.

2.7 Program leadership develops and operates under a current policies and procedures manual that is consistent with the mission and purpose of the program, approved by the local board of education, and articulated to all stakeholders in the form of standard operating procedures (SOPs). Elements of the manual should address the following:

- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for all teaching and non-teaching staff are written and fully explained to program staff.
- Referral, screening, and intake procedures are outlined and promote timely, user-friendly access to program services for students.
- Procedures to collect, share, and store individual student records are developed for participants that ensure student confidentiality.
- Processes are established that coordinate effective placements, assess student needs to match appropriate program services and interventions, and formalize the transition of students from one learning environment to the next.
- Reliable assessments are identified and inform procedures for developing an individualized student learner plan (ISLP) that addresses the academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination,

transitional and vocational needs of the participant.

- Programs have established a thorough written code of conduct and a comprehensive student discipline action plan that outlines rules and behavioral expectations, appropriate interventions, consequences of misbehavior, and celebrates proper student behavior (i.e., level system or similar behavior support mechanisms).
- Program policies encourage the active engagement of parents/guardians as equal partners in the planning, implementation, and development of the alternative education program.
- Policies for developing collaborative partnerships with public and private agencies are established and formalized by program leadership (i.e., memoranda of understanding or MOUs) and outline the roles and responsibilities of partnered social service organizations (i.e., mental health organizations, the juvenile justice system, public health departments, local and state advocacy agencies, child welfare agencies, family support groups, judicial/legal agencies, youth service agencies, and research/evaluation institutions).
- A formal crisis plan is developed and managed by program leadership to include strategies that sustain a safe, well-maintained, caring, and orderly program environment that is in compliance with state and local policies, standards, procedures, and legislation.
- Process and outcome evaluation monitors are in place that determine student and program progress. This includes the identification of areas of weakness while ensuring that a plan of action exists when and where remedy is necessary.
- Procedures to collect, store, and share program data ensure that students, parents/guardians, and staff are protected and identities are preserved.

2.8 Program leadership recruits, hires and trains qualified teachers and non-teaching staff.

2.9 Program administrators ensure low student to teacher ratios exist, that ratios reflect the needs of the student population, and that the student to teacher ratio never exceeds 12 to 1.

2.10 Leadership promotes collaboration among the school of origin, community, and home, thereby fostering an effective learning environment for the student.

2.11 Administration ensures that reliable data and student performance measures guide the instructional practices of the program.

2.12 Program leaders work to offer transportation, food services, and appropriate health services to students.

2.13 Consistent and constructive performance evaluations of administrative, teaching, and non-teaching staff are conducted by leadership in a timely manner.

EXEMPLARY PRACTICE 3.0: CLIMATE AND CULTURE

An exemplary alternative education program maintains a safe, caring, and orderly climate and culture that promotes collegial relationships among students, parents/guardians, and program staff. The program culture and climate are characterized by a positive rather than punitive atmosphere for behavioral management and student discipline. Program staff establishes clear expectations for learning and student conduct. The staff actively models and rewards appropriate student behavior. The program uses proven practices such as positive behavior support to organize student support systems. The alternative program actively promotes connections among students and between program staff that is positive and encourages academic, behavioral, and social success.

Indicators of Quality Programming:

3.1 Alternative education services are efficiently organized into effective delivery systems whether the entity is an alternative school, program, or classroom.

3.2 The program is housed in a safe, well maintained, aesthetically pleasing, and physically accessible environment that supports optimal student learning.

3.3 Rules and behavioral expectations are clearly written (i.e., code of conduct and comprehensive student discipline action plan), understood and accepted by staff, students, and parents/guardians. Both mechanisms ensure that students are actively taught, rewarded, recognized and monitored which guide and manage student behavior, evaluate progress, and direct the learner's experience in the alternative education program.

3.4 The program has a designated team of representatives (i.e., administrative, teaching and non-teaching staff, parents/guardians, and, if possible, student representatives) that strategically plan, monitor, and implement prevention and intervention strategies that reflect the culture and climate of the alternative education program.

3.5 The program actively promotes student engagement and affords students with the opportunity to have a role in shaping the learning environment to facilitate feelings of connectedness.

3.6 The alternative education program communicates high expectations for teacher performance, which in turn results in improved student academics and behavior with opportunities to celebrate individual successes on a regular basis.

3.7 Student and staff evaluation data and feedback regarding the program are presented at staff meetings and used to make appropriate programming changes.

3.8 The program demonstrates an understanding and sensitivity to academic, behavioral, cultural, developmental, gender, and societal needs of students, parents/guardians and the community.

3.9 Short and long-term program goals address the needs of the students, staff, parents/guardians, and the program.

3.10 Program objectives are measurable and built upon student academic achievement, student behavior, and social improvement and are the basis of program accountability, evaluation, and improvement.

EXEMPLARY PRACTICE 4.0: STAFFING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

An exemplary alternative education program is staffed with effective, innovative, and qualified individuals trained in current research based teaching methods that facilitate active learning. Written professional development plans exist that identify staff training needs, match needs to relevant training, emphasize quality implementation of research based and best practices, and establish performance evaluations aimed at improving program and student outcomes and overall program quality.

Indicators of Quality Programming:

4.1 The program employs enthusiastic, energetic, and innovative teachers who demonstrate multiple teaching styles.

4.2 The staff understands and practices the concept of facilitative learning.

4.3 The diversity of the staff mirrors the diversity of the student body and the experience of the alternative education faculty mirrors the faculty experience of the school district.

4.4 A sufficient number of teaching and non-teaching staff are working in or assigned to the alternative education program.

4.5 Staff members create written professional development plans that facilitate personal and professional growth, identify the professional development needs of the individual, establish short and long term goals, and align professional development training to address the individual's overall plan.

4.6 Professional development reflects a good use of internal and external resources by the program.

4.7 The focus of professional development relates to positive student outcomes across academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational domains and increases the likelihood of student success in present and future settings.

4.8 The program uses a variety of professional development approaches, including technology, to accomplish the goals of improving instruction and increasing student achievement.

4.9 Professional development opportunities include information related to effectively collaborating with community support services and how to connect with students and families.

4.10 The program strategically increases staff capacity through training, modeling and ensuring the use of research based strategies that align with the needs of the program population.

4.11 Sufficient resources, such as time, substitutes, and incentives allow all staff to participate in workshops, conferences, and seminars.

4.12 Administration ensures that ongoing professional development is geared towards the adult learner, promotes lifelong learning, helps build the staff's capacity through the use of research based strategies and best practices, and ensures that learned techniques are implemented.

EXEMPLARY PRACTICE 5.0: CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

An exemplary alternative education program maintains high academic expectations for students across academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational domains. Furthermore, the program integrates a creative and engaging curricula and instructional methods that are relevant to the individual student's needs. Additionally, the program uses an integrated, well-organized framework of research based curricula and teaching practices designed to address the "whole" student while continuing to meet or exceed federal and state standards.

Indicators of Quality Programming:

5.1   The alternative education program ensures that all students have access to the academic core curriculum.

5.2   Teachers are highly qualified in the content area based on individual state standards.

5.3   Teachers are competent in research based teaching techniques and behavior management strategies appropriate for the target student population.

5.4   The program operates in full compliance with laws governing students with special needs.

5.5   Curricular options reflect, but are not limited to, those offered in the traditional educational setting.

5.6   Teaching across all curricula is employed by program staff.

5.7   The alternative education program individualizes the student's curriculum and instruction utilizing an individualized student learner plan (ISLP). The plan engages and challenges the student while also addressing the academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational needs of the participant. The learner plan and processes include the following:

- A Student Support Team (SST) is established and involved in forming and monitoring the student's progress on the learner plan while further providing the reinforcement necessary for achievement.
- Parents/guardians are on the SST and involved in drafting, developing, and implementing the student's ISLP to include processes for communicating the learner's progress to the parents/guardians.
- Plans are developed based on the student's differentiated (remedial or accelerated) needs.
- Processes for the learner plan include reviewing current credit attainment and ensuring that the student is making adequate progress toward graduation.
- Four areas are embedded into the learner plan that engages the student in planning for the following: community participation, employment, independent living and post-secondary education.
- Teachers utilize individual student data in making instructional decisions and developing the learner plan.
- Plans incorporate goals for changing negative behavior patterns which may have impeded the student's progress and success (e.g., absences,

suspension and/or expulsion, tardiness, etc.).

- The learner plan addresses required services to meet the educational needs of students with disabilities.
- Formal and informal assessments document students' progress toward completion of the ISLP and are used to determine programming changes for the student.
- The plan allows the student to monitor his or her own learning and progress while promoting lifelong learning.

5.8 Teachers identify and provide appropriate instruction designed to close gaps in student learning.

5.9 A variety of instructional strategies are employed to accommodate for students with different backgrounds, individual learning styles (e.g. visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners), and multiple intelligences.

5.10 Students have opportunities to learn and/or participate in non-core content areas to include, but not limited to, the following: adventure learning, art, character education, health, music, physical activities/education, recreation, and vocational education.

5.11 Programs promote community involvement using service learning as a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction, teaches civic responsibility, and aims to strengthen the learner's role in his or her community. Furthermore, the community involvement component includes student reflection as a part of the learner's experience.

5.12 Instruction integrates life skills (e.g., career preparation, citizenship, conflict resolution, decision making skills, problem solving, public speaking, self-management, social skills, teamwork, time management, work-based learning, etc.) into the curricula and affords the student with opportunities to put the acquired skills into action.

5.13 Secondary programs provide opportunities for career exploration (e.g., job shadowing and training, mentorships, work-based learning, career fairs, etc.) related to the student's career interests and postsecondary goals.

5.14 Group delivery systems are used to build social relationships by supporting collaboration and teamwork.

5.15 The alternative education program uses researched based dropout prevention strategies for those learners at risk of dropping out of school.

5.16 Technology is embedded in the curricular delivery process and distance learning is utilized when appropriate.

5.17 The curriculum is supported by access to a balance of up-to-date, well-maintained collection of textbooks, library media, technology, software, and other instructional supplies and materials.

EXEMPLARY PRACTICE 6.0: STUDENT ASSESSMENT

An exemplary alternative education program includes screening, progress monitoring, diagnostic and outcome-based measurements and procedures to improve short and long term results at the student level. Student assessments are used to measure achievement and indentify specific learner needs. The program exercises a research based framework that values use of reliable measures to monitor student progress and adjust program services accordingly.

Indicators of Quality Programming:

6.1   Program administrators enforce data-driven accountability to measure achievement and identify individual learner needs.

6.2   The purpose of assessments is clearly defined and communicated to students, staff and parents/guardians.

6.3   Data collection procedures are clearly outlined to ensure reliable and valid student assessment results.

6.4   Teachers use formative and summative assessment tools that are frequent, rigorous, and align with curriculum and instruction to track student performance and progress.

6.5   The program utilizes multiple assessments that continually monitor the academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational needs of the student while using those assessments to make individual programming decisions for the learner.

6.6   Frequent, reliable and rigorous measures using both quantitative and qualitative procedures are used to identify student progress as prescribed by the district and state.

6.7   Assessments are directly linked to choosing curriculum and instructional methods while accommodating a variety of learning styles and multiple intelligences.

6.8   Results of assessments are used to inform students and parents/guardians of learner progress, guide curriculum and instruction, and monitor the individualized student learner plan (ISLP).

EXEMPLARY PRACTICE 7.0: TRANSITIONAL PLANNING AND SUPPORT

An exemplary alternative education program has clear criteria and procedures for transitioning students from the traditional education setting to the alternative education setting, from the alternative program to the student's next education or workforce setting while ensuring timely access to community agencies and support services. This process calls for trained transitional personnel experienced in this particular area. Furthermore, the transitional process ensures that the alternative placement is the most appropriate placement for student's specific academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational needs.

Indicators of Quality Programming:

7.1   The alternative education program has a Screening Committee to ensure that the alternative placement is most appropriate for the student's specific academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational needs (individual student, individual placement decision).

7.2   The program has a formal transition process for students from pre-entry through post-exit which includes the following elements: an orientation which consists of rapport building, assessment of the student, IEP review, information and record sharing regarding the student, short and long-term goal setting, development of an individualized student learner plan (ISLP), and other mechanisms designed to orient the student to the alternative education setting.

7.3   Transition planning and the ISLP afford students the opportunity to maintain and accelerate their current progress toward graduation.

7.4   A Student Support Team (SST) is established that consists of educators from the school of origin, educators from the alternative education program, the student, the parents/guardians and other trained transitional personnel. The team is directly involved in all aspects of the transitional process including assessment, planning, and implementation of the student's transitional plan and ISLP.

7.5   Transition planning includes referral and timely access to community agencies and support services such as mental health, public health, family support, housing, physical fitness activities, and other youth services.

7.6   When appropriate, students in the alternative education program are provided with opportunities to develop and maintain supportive links to the school of origin.

7.7   Student needs (i.e., academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational needs) are addressed before, during, and after the student's transition.

7.8   Prior to a student's entrance and exit from the alternative education program, transition services are coordinated by the SST with all appropriate entities to ensure successful entry into the student's next educational setting or into the workforce.

7.9   Within the bounds of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), information sharing (availability of pertinent records) takes place between the school of origin, the alternative education program, and other social service organizations. Copies of the following items are forwarded to the alternative

education program: attendance records, birth certificate, current health treatments and medications needed during the school day, discipline records, immunization records, report cards, school enrollment letter, social security card, special education file and IEP (if applicable), state assessment test scores, transcripts and other appropriate information on the student.

EXEMPLARY PRACTICE 8.0: PARENT/GUARDIAN INVOLVEMENT

An exemplary alternative education program actively involves parents/guardians beyond parent/guardian-teacher meetings. The alternative program emphasizes a non-judgmental, solution-focused approach that incorporates parents/guardians as respected partners throughout the student's length of stay in the program. Furthermore, the program works with parents/guardians to provide proper training and support to advance the learning and personal success of each student in the program.

Indicators of Quality Programming

8.1 Parental/guardian involvement is welcomed and actively recruited by the alternative education program.

8.2 Effective communication and interaction takes places between parents/guardians and school staff to include being continually notified of students progress (regular progress reports or as needed).

8.3 Parents/guardians are recognized as equal partners and involved in the decision-making process for the student and the program, including the following: to serve on the Student Support Team (SST), to help develop the individualized student learner plan (ISLP), to help guide and direct the mission and purpose of the program via an Advisory Council, and to help evaluate the overall effectiveness of the alternative program.

8.4 Parents/guardians participate in solution-focused problem-solving for academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational issues involving students.

8.5 Consultation regarding strategies to support the learning and personal success of students is made readily available to all parents/guardians.

8.6 Parents/guardians have access to parent education programs sponsored by the alternative education program or other community social service organizations.

8.7 Privacy is afforded to parents/guardians when engaging them as equal partners in the alternative program.

8.8 Procedures are in place to address all parent/guardian grievances in a timely fashion while respecting and considering the dispositions of parents/guardians.

EXEMPLARY PRACTICE 9.0: COLLABORATION

An exemplary alternative education program establishes authentic partnerships with community resources based on trust, open communication, clearly defined goals, and shared responsibility which links the program, home, and community. Collaborative partnerships promote opportunities for service learning, life skills, and career exploration for all students. Community representatives also have a role in the planning, resource development, and the decision-making process for the alternative program.

Indicators of Quality Programming

9.1 Authentic partnerships with community resources are secured and established to help the alternative education program solve problems and achieve goals as outlined in the program's mission and purpose.

9.2 Partnerships are designed to support and enrich the program by including the community as a resource for education, advocacy, and volunteerism.

9.3 Collaborations with community partners are based on trust, open communication, clearly defined goals, and shared responsibility, which links the program, home, and community.

9.4 A comprehensive program of community relations is established by the alternative education program.

9.5 Partnerships exist with community service organizations, cultural groups, faith-based representatives and agencies, and business and industry.

9.6 Relationships are established that support the physical and mental health of students enrolled in the program.

9.7 There is a strong collaboration with law enforcement, the juvenile justice system, and juvenile treatment centers. When appropriate, these partnerships facilitate an integrated case management strategy and wraparound services for students and parents/guardians.

9.8 Program planning incorporates collaboration with community agencies and other support services that help in providing a comprehensive student assistance program, which allows for referrals to community agencies when appropriate.

9.9 As needed, collaborative partnerships with public and private agencies are established, formalized (i.e., memoranda of understanding or MOUs), and outline the roles and responsibilities of partner social service organizations (i.e., mental health, juvenile justice, public health, advocacy agencies, child welfare, family support, judicial/legal, youth service agencies, and research/evaluation institutions).

9.10 Community representatives are drawn upon as resources during the planning phase of the individualized student learner plan (ISLP) that involves student planning for the following: community participation, employment, independent living and post-secondary education.

9.11 Community partners are utilized when integrating service learning, life skills, and career exploration into the alternative education program.

9.12 Community representatives serve on the Advisory Board and assist in planning, resource development, and decision-making for the alternative program.

EXEMPLARY PRACTICE 10.0: PROGRAM EVALUATION

An exemplary alternative education program systematically conducts program evaluations for continuous program improvement. Data triangulation is employed with three different sources of data collected for analysis. Data collection includes the following items: program implementation ratings, student outcome data, and student, parent/guardian, and staff surveys. All sources of data are gathered and used to assess quality, provide a course for improvement, and direct future activities of the program. The guidelines presented herewith titled *Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming,* as well as state specific standards, would be an appropriate means in which to evaluate the program.

Indicators of Quality Programming

10.1 The alternative education program routinely conducts program evaluations to determine progress toward meeting the mission and purpose of the program, and plans for continuous program improvement.

10.2 Evaluation measures include a review of program implementation ratings (based on observable data). Ratings are given based on alignment with state specific standards and *Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming.*

10.3 Student outcome data for core content, non-core content areas, and non-academic areas are gathered as a means to evaluate the success of the alternative program.
This includes collecting data on the following: absences, disciplinary data, credits earned, dropout statistics, grades, graduation rates, student achievement data, and recidivism rates (quasi-experimental design).

10.4 Student, parent/guardian, and community surveys are administered by the alternative education program to assess attitudes and opinions about discipline, program culture and climate, the learning environment, staff-student and staff-parent/guardian and program-community relations, perceptions of program effectiveness, and success relative to students' academic, behavioral, and social progress.

10.5 Staff surveys are administered by the program to assess attitudes and opinions about discipline, program culture and climate, the learning environment, staff-administrator/staff-staff relations, perceptions of program effectiveness and success relative to students' academic, behavioral, and social progress.

10.6 Transition services are routinely evaluated to determine the program's effectiveness in transitioning the student to the next educational setting or into the workforce. Evaluation of transitional services includes follow-up visits with past students of the program.

10.7 Program evaluation results are used to develop or update a plan for continuous program improvement.

10.8 When available, an external evaluator is called upon to evaluate the program's effectiveness based on the principles set forth. The NAEA offers external evaluators as part of an effort to provide outreach. For more information visit our website at: http://the-naea.org.

Appendix B: UTC Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

THE UNIVERSITY of
TENNESSEE UT
CHATTANOOGA

Institutional Review Board
Dept. 4905
615 McCallie Avenue
Chattanooga, TN 37403-2598
Phone: (423) 425-4443

MEMORANDUM

TO: James Vince Witty   IRB #10-085
           Ted Miller

FROM: Lindsay Pardue, Director of Research Integrity
           M.D. Roblyer, IRB Committee Chair

DATE: June 22, 2010

SUBJECT: Tennessee Practitioner Perceptions of the Construct, Content and Utility of Exemplary
           Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming for Use as an
           Evaluation Instrument

The IRB Committee has review and approved your application and assigned you the IRB number listed
above. You must include the following approval statement on research materials seen by participants
and used in research reports:

> **The Institutional Review Board of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (FWA00004149) has
> approved this research project #10-085.**

Please remember that you must complete Form C when the project is completed or provide an annual
report if the project takes over one year to complete. The IRB Committee will make every effort to
remind you prior to your anniversary date; however, it is your responsibility to ensure that this
additional step is satisfied.

Please remember to contact the IRB Committee immediately and submit a new project proposal for
review if significant changes occur in your research design or in any instruments used in conducting the
study. You should also contact the IRB Committee immediately if you encounter any adverse effects
during your project that pose a risk to your subjects.

For any additional information, please consul our web page at http://www.utc.edu/irb or email us at:
instrb@utc.edu

Best wishes for a successful research project.

Appendix C: Two-Phased, Sequential Mixed-Model Research Timeline

PHASE ONE
Purpose: To examine the validity of the construct and content of the *Exemplary Practices*
Research Strategy: Concurrent Embedded (Creswell, 2009)

Sequential Steps	Date of Completion
STEP 1: Quantitative and Qualitative Descriptive Survey Development Finalized and Administered	June, 2010
STEP 2: Quantitative Data Analysis (Primary)	October, 2010
STEP 3: Qualitative Data Analysis (Secondary)	December, 2010

PHASE TWO
Purpose: To examine the utility of the *Exemplary Practices* when transformed into an evaluation instrument
Research Strategy: Sequential Explanatory (Creswell, 2009)

Sequential Steps	Date of Completion
STEP 6: Program Evaluation Instrument Development and Utility Tested	January, 2011
STEP 7: Quantitative Data Analysis	January, 2011
STEP 8: Semi-Structured Interviews	February, 2011
STEP 9: Qualitative Data Analysis	February, 2011
STEP 11: Program Evaluation Instrument Finalized	March, 2011
STEP 12: Dissertation Defense	April, 2011

Appendix D: Descriptive Survey

Introduction and Purpose:
Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. The following survey was developed to capture your perceptions of the construct (i.e., standards) and content (i.e., quality indicators) as presented in *Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming* by the National Alternative Education Association (2009). Participants and responses will remain anonymous. The decision to participate in this research project is voluntary. Refusal will involve no penalty. You may choose not to partake and may discontinue your participation at any time. As a participant there are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you, nor are there any direct benefits. Please note, however, that the information you provide will help further research in the field of alternative education as it relates to best practice. Thank you for your time, your attention to detail in taking the survey and your commitment to alternative education.

Survey Instructions:
The survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Please begin by filling out the participant information section. ***Next, you are asked to quantify your perceptions as to the validity of each standard (10 total), as well as the validity of each indicator (110 total) by applying the following Likert scale rating system: 4 (Essential), 3 (Valuable), 2 (Useful), 1 (Non-Essential).*** At the end of the survey, you will have the opportunity to recommend necessary edits to the standards and indicators presented, as well as suggest additional standards and indicators not currently identified in the *Exemplary Practices*.

Participant Information:

Gender (*Please check the correct box*)
☐ Male ☐ Female

Age _____

Ethnicity _____

Which best describes your current position in the alternative school or program? (*Please check the correct box.*)
☐ Teacher ☐ Administrator ☐ Crisis Worker ☐ School Counselor

☐ Social Worker ☐ Para-professional ☐ School Resource Officer ☐ Other *(Please Specify):*_____

How many years have you worked in the field of alternative education? _____

How many years have you worked in general education? _____

For each standard and indicator presented below, please check the box that most accurately represents your perception of the item's validity. Your options for each standard and indicator include the following: 4 (Essential), 3 (Valuable), 2 (Useful), 1 (Non-Essential).

	Standard: Mission and Purpose	**Essential**	**Valuable**	**Useful**	**Non-Essential**
1.0	An exemplary alternative education program develops a guiding mission and purpose that drives the overall operation of the program. All stakeholders (i.e., administrators, community representatives, parents/guardians, staff, and students) share in developing, implementing, directing and maintaining the program's mission and purpose. The mission and purpose of the program include the identification of the target student population and promote the success of all students. Additionally, the mission and purpose embody high expectations for academic achievement, along with the nurturing of positive social interactions between staff and students.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
	Indicators of Success	**Essential**	**Valuable**	**Useful**	**Non-Essential**
1.1	The program mission clearly articulates the purpose, goals, and expectations of the program to students, parents/guardians, program staff, and the community at large.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
1.2	The mission and purpose are documented, published and visible to students, parents/guardians, program staff, and the community.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
1.3	All stakeholders are involved in developing the mission, purpose, goals, and expected outcomes for the program.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
1.4	The program mission includes the identification of the student population for whom the alternative education program is designed to serve.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
1.5	The mission and purpose of the program have a unifying theme that evokes high levels of student and other stakeholder support.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
1.6	The driving mission and purpose of the alternative program is consistent with the district's goals while aligning with specific state standard(s).	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
1.7	Student success is central to the mission and purpose of the program, which includes learning across academic areas, behavioral management, life skills, and the vocational domains.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
1.8	The mission and purpose of the program promotes the personal safety, security, and emotional and physical well being of all students in the program.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
1.9	The mission and purpose is communicated through the use of symbols, ceremonies, stories, and similar activities.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
1.10	Needed resources are sought and obtained to support the implementation of the mission and purpose.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
1.11	Barriers to achieving the mission and purpose of the program are identified, clarified, and addressed.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐

		E	V	U	NE
1.12	The mission and purpose shape the educational plans and activities undertaken by the alternative program.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
1.13	The mission and purpose are regularly monitored, evaluated, and revised as needed.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐

For each standard and indicator presented below, please check the box that most accurately represents your perception of the item's validity. Your options for each standard and indicator include the following: 4 (Essential), 3 (Valuable), 2 (Useful), 1 (Non-Essential).

	Standard: Leadership	Essential	Valuable	Useful	Non-Essential
2.0	An exemplary alternative education program employs passionate, innovative, competent, and experienced leadership that has administrative and bureaucratic autonomy, as well as operational flexibility. The administrators, teachers, and staff must be committed to full implementation of the program's mission and core values. On-site leadership utilizes and engages in a collaborative approach that ensures shared decision-making, high expectations for the program, and continuous monitoring of program quality. The superintendent or designated district administrator sustains the independence of the program and allocates sufficient resources (i.e., financial or other necessary resources) to protect the integrity of the program while supporting overall program quality.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
	Indicators of Success	**Essential**	**Valuable**	**Useful**	**Non-Essential**
2.1	The district provides sufficient oversight to ensure quality programming while protecting the autonomy of the alternative education program's operation.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
2.2	The district provides adequate financial support and other needed resources for implementation of quality alternative education services (e.g., teaching and non-teaching staff, equipment, technology, supplies, curriculum, etc.).	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
2.3	Program administrators are experienced and competent, enabling them to be engaged in all aspects of the program's operation and management.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
2.4	The shared vision of the alternative education program is communicated by the leadership through the program's mission and purpose.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
2.5	Where appropriate, leadership engages stakeholders in a collaborative process when making program decisions (i.e., Advisory Board and other opportunities that promote stakeholder participation in the decision-making process).	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
2.6	Program leadership ensures that decisions regarding program operation align with state legislation and local policies and procedures.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐

		E	V	U	NE
2.7	Program leadership develops and operates under a current policies and procedures manual that is consistent with the mission and purpose of the program, approved by the local board of education, and articulated to all stakeholders in the form of standard operating procedures (SOPs).	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.8	Program leadership recruits, hires and trains qualified teachers and non-teaching staff.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.9	Program administrators ensure low student to teacher ratios exist, that ratios reflect the needs of the student population, and that the student to teacher ratio never exceeds 12 to 1.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.10	Leadership promotes collaboration among the school of origin, community, and home, thereby fostering an effective learning environment for the student.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.11	Administration ensures that reliable data and student performance measures guide the instructional practices of the program.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.12	Program leaders work to offer transportation, food services, and appropriate health services to students.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.13	Consistent and constructive performance evaluations of administrative, teaching, and non-teaching staff are conducted by leadership in a timely manner.	☐	☐	☐	☐

For each standard and indicator presented below, please check the box that most accurately represents your perception of the item's validity. Your options for each standard and indicator include the following: 4 (Essential), 3 (Valuable), 2 (Useful), 1 (Non-Essential).

	Standard: Climate and Culture	Essential	Valuable	Useful	Non-Essential
3.0	An exemplary alternative education program maintains a safe, caring, and orderly climate and culture that promotes collegial relationships among students, parents/guardians, and program staff. The program culture and climate are characterized by a positive rather than punitive atmosphere for behavioral management and student discipline. Program staff establishes clear expectations for learning and student conduct. The staff actively models and rewards appropriate student behavior. The program uses proven practices such as positive behavior support to organize student support systems. The alternative program actively promotes connections among students and between program staff that is positive and encourages academic, behavioral, and social success.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
	Indicators of Success	Essential	Valuable	Useful	Non-Essential
3.1	Alternative education services are efficiently organized into effective delivery systems whether the entity is an alternative school, program, or classroom.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
3.2	The program is housed in a safe, well maintained, aesthetically pleasing, and physically accessible environment that supports optimal student learning.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐

		Essential	Valuable	Useful	Non-Essential
3.3	Rules and behavioral expectations are clearly written (i.e., code of conduct and comprehensive student discipline action plan), understood and accepted by staff, students, and parents/guardians. Both mechanisms ensure that students are actively taught, rewarded, recognized and monitored which guide and manage student behavior, evaluate progress, and direct the learner's experience in the alternative education program.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
3.4	The program has a designated team of representatives (i.e., administrative, teaching and non-teaching staff, parents/guardians, and, if possible, student representatives) that strategically plan, monitor, and implement prevention and intervention strategies that reflect the culture and climate of the alternative education program.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
3.5	The program actively promotes student engagement and affords students with the opportunity to have a role in shaping the learning environment to facilitate feelings of connectedness.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
3.6	The alternative education program communicates high expectations for teacher performance, which in turn results in improved student academics and behavior with opportunities to celebrate individual successes on a regular basis.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
3.7	Student and staff evaluation data and feedback regarding the program are presented at staff meetings and used to make appropriate programming changes.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
3.8	The program demonstrates an understanding and sensitivity to academic, behavioral, cultural, developmental, gender, and societal needs of students, parents/guardians and the community.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
3.9	Short and long-term program goals address the needs of the students, staff, parents/guardians, and the program.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
3.10	Program objectives are measurable and built upon student academic achievement, student behavior, and social improvement and are the basis of program accountability, evaluation, and improvement.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐

For each standard and indicator presented below, please check the box that most accurately represents your perception of the item's validity. Your options for each standard and indicator include the following: 4 (Essential), 3 (Valuable), 2 (Useful), 1 (Non-Essential).

	Standard: Staffing and Professional Development	Essential	Valuable	Useful	Non-Essential
4.0	An exemplary alternative education program is staffed with effective, innovative, and qualified individuals trained in current research based teaching methods that facilitate active learning. Written professional development plans exist that identify staff training needs, match needs to relevant training, emphasize quality implementation of research based and best practices, and establish performance evaluations aimed at improving program and student outcomes and overall program quality.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐

	Indicators of Success	Essential	Valuable	Useful	Non-Essential
4.1	The program employs enthusiastic, energetic, and innovative teachers who demonstrate multiple teaching styles.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
4.2	The staff understands and practices the concept of facilitative learning.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
4.3	The diversity of the staff mirrors the diversity of the student body and the experience of the alternative education faculty mirrors the faculty experience of the school district.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
4.4	A sufficient number of teaching and non-teaching staff are working in or assigned to the alternative education program.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
4.5	Staff members create written professional development plans that facilitate personal and professional growth, identify the professional development needs of the individual, establish short and long term goals, and align professional development training to address the individual's overall plan.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
4.6	Professional development reflects a good use of internal and external resources by the program.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
4.7	The focus of professional development relates to positive student outcomes across academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational domains and increases the likelihood of student success in present and future settings.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
4.8	The program uses a variety of professional development approaches, including technology, to accomplish the goals of improving instruction and increasing student achievement.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
4.9	Professional development opportunities include information related to effectively collaborating with community support services and how to connect with students and families.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
4.10	The program strategically increases staff capacity through training, modeling and ensuring the use of research based strategies that align with the needs of the program population.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
4.11	Sufficient resources, such as time, substitutes, and incentives allow all staff to participate in workshops, conferences, and seminars.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
4.12	Administration ensures that ongoing professional development is geared towards the adult learner, promotes lifelong learning, helps build the staff's capacity through the use of research based strategies and best practices, and ensures that learned techniques are implemented.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐

For each standard and indicator presented below, please check the box that most accurately represents your perception of the item's validity. Your options for each standard and indicator include the following: 4 (Essential), 3 (Valuable), 2 (Useful), 1 (Non-Essential).

	Standard: Curriculum and Instruction	Essential	Valuable	Useful	Non-Essential
5.0	An exemplary alternative education program maintains high academic expectations for students across academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational domains. Furthermore, the program integrates a creative and engaging curricula and instructional methods that are relevant to the individual student's needs. Additionally, the program uses an integrated, well-organized framework of research based curricula and teaching practices designed to address the "whole" student while continuing to meet or exceed federal and state standards.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
	Indicators of Success	Essential	Valuable	Useful	Non-Essential
5.1	The alternative education program ensures that all students have access to the academic core curriculum.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
5.2	Teachers are highly qualified in the content area based on individual state standards.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
5.3	Teachers are competent in research based teaching techniques and behavior management strategies appropriate for the target student population.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
5.4	The program operates in full compliance with laws governing students with special needs.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
5.5	Curricular options reflect, but are not limited to, those offered in the traditional educational setting.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
5.6	Teaching across all curricula is employed by program staff.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
5.7	The alternative education program individualizes the student's curriculum and instruction utilizing an individualized student learner plan (ISLP). The plan engages and challenges the student while also addressing the academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational needs of the participant.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
5.8	Teachers identify and provide appropriate instruction designed to close gaps in student learning.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
5.9	A variety of instructional strategies are employed to accommodate for students with different backgrounds, individual learning styles (e.g. visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners), and multiple intelligences.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
5.10	Students have opportunities to learn and/or participate in non-core content areas to include, but not limited to, the following: adventure learning, art, character education, health, music, physical activities/education, recreation, and vocational education.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐

5.11	Programs promote community involvement using service learning as a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction, teaches civic responsibility, and aims to strengthen the learner's role in his or her community. Furthermore, the community involvement component includes student reflection as a part of the learner's experience.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
5.12	Instruction integrates life skills (e.g., career preparation, citizenship, conflict resolution, decision making skills, problem solving, public speaking, self-management, social skills, teamwork, time management, work-based learning, etc.) into the curricula and affords the student with opportunities to put the acquired skills into action.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
5.13	Secondary programs provide opportunities for career exploration (e.g., job shadowing and training, mentorships, work-based learning, career fairs, etc.) related to the student's career interests and postsecondary goals.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
5.14	Group delivery systems are used to build social relationships by supporting collaboration and teamwork.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
5.15	The alternative education program uses researched based dropout prevention strategies for those learners at risk of dropping out of school.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
5.16	Technology is embedded in the curricular delivery process and distance learning is utilized when appropriate.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
5.17	The curriculum is supported by access to a balance of up-to-date, well-maintained collection of textbooks, library media, technology, software, and other instructional supplies and materials.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐

For each standard and indicator presented below, please check the box that most accurately represents your perception of the item's validity. Your options for each standard and indicator include the following: 4 (Essential), 3 (Valuable), 2 (Useful), 1 (Non-Essential).

	Standard: Student Assessment	**Essential**	**Valuable**	**Useful**	**Non-Essential**
6.0	An exemplary alternative education program includes screening, progress monitoring, diagnostic and outcome-based measurements and procedures to improve short and long term results at the student level. Student assessments are used to measure achievement and indentify specific learner needs. The program exercises a research based framework that values use of reliable measures to monitor student progress and adjust program services accordingly.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
	Indicators of Success	**Essential**	**Valuable**	**Useful**	**Non-Essential**
6.1	Program administrators enforce data-driven accountability to measure achievement and identify individual learner needs.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐

6.2	The purpose of assessments is clearly defined and communicated to students, staff and parents/guardians.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
6.3	Data collection procedures are clearly outlined to ensure reliable and valid student assessment results.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
6.4	Teachers use formative and summative assessment tools that are frequent, rigorous, and align with curriculum and instruction to track student performance and progress.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
6.5	The program utilizes multiple assessments that continually monitor the academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational needs of the student while using those assessments to make individual programming decisions for the learner.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
6.6	Frequent, reliable and rigorous measures using both quantitative and qualitative procedures are used to identify student progress as prescribed by the district and state.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
6.7	Assessments are directly linked to choosing curriculum and instructional methods while accommodating a variety of learning styles and multiple intelligences.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
6.8	Results of assessments are used to inform students and parents/guardians of learner progress, guide curriculum and instruction, and monitor the individualized student learner plan (ISLP).	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐

For each standard and indicator presented below, please check the box that most accurately represents your perception of the item's validity. Your options for each standard and indicator include the following: 4 (Essential), 3 (Valuable), 2 (Useful), 1 (Non-Essential).

	Standard: Transitional Planning and Support	Essential	Valuable	Useful	Non-Essential
7.0	An exemplary alternative education program has clear criteria and procedures for transitioning students from the traditional education setting to the alternative education setting, from the alternative program to the student's next education or workforce setting while ensuring timely access to community agencies and support services. This process calls for trained transitional personnel experienced in this particular area. Furthermore, the transitional process ensures that the alternative placement is the most appropriate placement for student's specific academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational needs.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
	Indicators of Success	Essential	Valuable	Useful	Non-Essential
7.1	The alternative education program has a Screening Committee to ensure that the alternative placement is most appropriate for the student's specific academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational needs (individual student, individual placement decision).	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
7.2	The program has a formal transition process for students from pre-entry through post-exit which includes the following elements: an orientation which consists of rapport building, assessment of the student, IEP review, information and record sharing regarding the student, short and long-term goal setting, development of an individualized student learner plan	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐

		Essential	Valuable	Useful	Non-Essential
	(ISLP), and other mechanisms designed to orient the student to the alternative education setting.				
7.3	Transition planning and the ISLP afford students the opportunity to maintain and accelerate their current progress toward graduation.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
7.4	A Student Support Team (SST) is established that consists of educators from the school of origin, educators from the alternative education program, the student, the parents/guardians and other trained transitional personnel. The team is directly involved in all aspects of the transitional process including assessment, planning, and implementation of the student's transitional plan and ISLP.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
7.5	Transition planning includes referral and timely access to community agencies and support services such as mental health, public health, family support, housing, physical fitness activities, and other youth services.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
7.6	When appropriate, students in the alternative education program are provided with opportunities to develop and maintain supportive links to the school of origin.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
7.7	Student needs (i.e., academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational needs) are addressed before, during, and after the student's transition.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
7.8	Prior to a student's entrance and exit from the alternative education program, transition services are coordinated by the SST with all appropriate entities to ensure successful entry into the student's next educational setting or into the workforce.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
7.9	Within the bounds of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), information sharing (availability of pertinent records) takes place between the school of origin, the alternative education program, and other social service organizations. Copies of the following items are forwarded to the alternative education program: attendance records, birth certificate, current health treatments and medications needed during the school day, discipline records, immunization records, report cards, school enrollment letter, social security card, special education file and IEP (if applicable), state assessment test scores, transcripts and other appropriate information on the student.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐

For each standard and indicator presented below, please check the box that most accurately represents your perception of the item's validity. Your options for each standard and indicator include the following: 4 (Essential), 3 (Valuable), 2 (Useful), 1 (Non-Essential).

	Standard: Parent/Guardian Involvement	Essential	Valuable	Useful	Non-Essential
8.0	An exemplary alternative education program actively involves parents/guardians beyond parent/guardian-teacher meetings. The alternative program emphasizes a non-judgmental, solution-focused approach that incorporates parents/guardians as respected partners throughout the student's length of stay in the program. Furthermore, the program works with parents/guardians to provide proper training and support to advance the learning and personal success of each student in the program.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐

145

	Indicators of Success	Essential	Valuable	Useful	Non-Essential
8.1	Parental/guardian involvement is welcomed and actively recruited by the alternative education program.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
8.2	Effective communication and interaction takes places between parents/guardians and school staff to include being continually notified of students progress (regular progress reports or as needed).	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
8.3	Parents/guardians are recognized as equal partners and involved in the decision-making process for the student and the program, including the following: to serve on the Student Support Team (SST), to help develop the individualized student learner plan (ISLP), to help guide and direct the mission and purpose of the program via an Advisory Council, and to help evaluate the overall effectiveness of the alternative program.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
8.4	Parents/guardians participate in solution-focused problem-solving for academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational issues involving students.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
8.5	Consultation regarding strategies to support the learning and personal success of students is made readily available to all parents/guardians.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
8.6	Parents/guardians have access to parent education programs sponsored by the alternative education program or other community social service organizations.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
8.7	Privacy is afforded to parents/guardians when engaging them as equal partners in the alternative program.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
8.8	Procedures are in place to address all parent/guardian grievances in a timely fashion while respecting and considering the dispositions of parents/guardians.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐

For each standard and indicator presented below, please check the box that most accurately represents your perception of the item's validity. Your options for each standard and indicator include the following: 4 (Essential), 3 (Valuable), 2 (Useful), 1 (Non-Essential).

	Standard: Collaboration	Essential	Valuable	Useful	Non-Essential
9.0	An exemplary alternative education program establishes authentic partnerships with community resources based on trust, open communication, clearly defined goals, and shared responsibility which links the program, home, and community. Collaborative partnerships promote opportunities for service learning, life skills, and career exploration for all students. Community representatives also have a role in the planning, resource development, and the decision-making process for the alternative program.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
	Indicators of Success	Essential	Valuable	Useful	Non-Essential
9.1	Authentic partnerships with community resources are secured and established to help the alternative education program solve problems and achieve goals as outlined in the program's mission and purpose.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐

9.2	Partnerships are designed to support and enrich the program by including the community as a resource for education, advocacy, and volunteerism.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
9.3	Collaborations with community partners are based on trust, open communication, clearly defined goals, and shared responsibility, which links the program, home, and community.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
9.4	A comprehensive program of community relations is established by the alternative education program.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
9.5	Partnerships exist with community service organizations, cultural groups, faith-based representatives and agencies, and business and industry.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
9.6	Relationships are established that support the physical and mental health of students enrolled in the program.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
9.7	There is a strong collaboration with law enforcement, the juvenile justice system, and juvenile treatment centers. When appropriate, these partnerships facilitate an integrated case management strategy and wraparound services for students and parents/guardians.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
9.8	Program planning incorporates collaboration with community agencies and other support services that help in providing a comprehensive student assistance program, which allows for referrals to community agencies when appropriate.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
9.9	As needed, collaborative partnerships with public and private agencies are established, formalized (i.e., memoranda of understanding or MOUs), and outline the roles and responsibilities of partner social service organizations (i.e., mental health, juvenile justice, public health, advocacy agencies, child welfare, family support, judicial/legal, youth service agencies, and research/evaluation institutions).	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
9.10	Community representatives are drawn upon as resources during the planning phase of the individualized student learner plan (ISLP) that involves student planning for the following: community participation, employment, independent living and post-secondary education.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
9.11	Community partners are utilized when integrating service learning, life skills, and career exploration into the alternative education program.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
9.12	Community representatives serve on the Advisory Board and assist in planning, resource development, and decision-making for the alternative program.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐

For each standard and indicator presented below, please check the box that most accurately represents your perception of the item's validity. Your options for each standard and indicator include the following: 4 (Essential), 3 (Valuable), 2 (Useful), 1 (Non-Essential).

	Standard: Program Evaluation	**Essential**	**Valuable**	**Useful**	**Non-Essential**
10.0	An exemplary alternative education program systematically conducts program evaluations for continuous program improvement. Data triangulation is employed with three different sources of data collected for analysis. Data collection includes the following items: program implementation ratings, student outcome data, and student, parent/guardian, and staff surveys. All sources of data are gathered and used to assess quality, provide a course for improvement, and direct future activities of the program. The guidelines presented herewith titled *Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming,* as well as state specific standards, would be an appropriate means in which to evaluate the program.	**E** ☐	**V** ☐	**U** ☐	**NE** ☐
	Indicators of Success	**Essential**	**Valuable**	**Useful**	**Non-Essential**
10.1	The alternative education program routinely conducts program evaluations to determine progress toward meeting the mission and purpose of the program, and plans for continuous program improvement.	**E** ☐	**V** ☐	**U** ☐	**NE** ☐
10.2	Evaluation measures include a review of program implementation ratings (based on observable data). Ratings are given based on alignment with state specific standards and *Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming.*	**E** ☐	**V** ☐	**U** ☐	**NE** ☐
10.3	Student outcome data for core content, non-core content areas, and non-academic areas are gathered as a means to evaluate the success of the alternative program. This includes collecting data on the following: absences, disciplinary data, credits earned, dropout statistics, grades, graduation rates, student achievement data, and recidivism rates (quasi-experimental design).	**E** ☐	**V** ☐	**U** ☐	**NE** ☐
10.4	Student, parent/guardian, and community surveys are administered by the alternative education program to assess attitudes and opinions about discipline, program culture and climate, the learning environment, staff-student and staff-parent/guardian and program-community relations, perceptions of program effectiveness, and success relative to students' academic, behavioral, and social progress.	**E** ☐	**V** ☐	**U** ☐	**NE** ☐
10.5	Staff surveys are administered by the program to assess attitudes and opinions about discipline, program culture and climate, the learning environment, staff-administrator/staff-staff relations, perceptions of program effectiveness and success relative to students' academic, behavioral, and social progress.	**E** ☐	**V** ☐	**U** ☐	**NE** ☐
10.6	Transition services are routinely evaluated to determine the program's effectiveness in transitioning the student to the next educational setting or into the workforce. Evaluation of transitional services includes follow-up visits with past students of the program.	**E** ☐	**V** ☐	**U** ☐	**NE** ☐

10.7	Program evaluation results are used to develop or update a plan for continuous program improvement.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐
10.8	When available, an external evaluator is called upon to evaluate the program's effectiveness based on the principles set forth.	E ☐	V ☐	U ☐	NE ☐

Edits to the *Exemplary Practices*:

Indicate below if any edits to the standards or indicators in the *Exemplary Practices* are needed to properly frame best practice in alternative education.

Standard Number	Indicator Number	Suggested Edit

Additional Standards or Indicators Not Presented in the *Exemplary Practices*:

Indicate below any additional standards or indicators representing best practice that were NOT included in the *Exemplary Practices*. Additionally, indicate if your suggestion should be included as a new standard or indicator.

Additional Standard/Indicator	*Please select the correct box.*
	Standard ☐ Indicator ☐
	Standard ☐ Indicator ☐
	Standard ☐ Indicator ☐
	Standard ☐ Indicator ☐

Additional Comments/Suggestions/Feedback:

Use the space below to write any additional comments/suggestions/feedback regarding the *Exemplary Practices*.

Thank you again! Your participation in this study is much appreciated!

Appendix E: Permission Request to Survey Conference Attendees

James Vince Witty
408 Elegance Way
Hermitage, TN 37076
james.witty@utc.edu
Month, Day, 2010

Dear Executive Officer,

I am a doctoral student under the supervision of Dr. Ted Miller in the Graduate Studies Division at The University of Tennessee, Chattanooga. As part of my dissertation research, I am examining the validity of the construct and content of *Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming* as developed by the National Alternative Education Association. Additionally, I am investigating the utility of the *Exemplary Practices* when translated to an instrument for evaluation purposes.

I am requesting to survey attendees at your upcoming conference to be held on (INSERT DATE) in (INSERT LOCATION), Tennessee. The estimated time to complete the survey is approximately 30 minutes. A copy of the survey has been enclosed for your convenience.

If you approve, the decision to participate in this research project will be voluntary for all conference attendees. Attendees do not have to participate, can refuse to answer any and all questions on the survey and may discontinue participation at any time. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to attendees that chose to participate in the study. Likewise, there are no direct benefits to attendees that choose to participate with the exception of being entered to win door prizes provided by the researcher.

All individual attendee responses and information will remain confidential. You can be assured that all data will be processed as a whole and at no time will individual attendee responses be disaggregated. The research findings of this study will be invaluable to alternative schools and programs in the state of Tennessee and your approval is much appreciated.

This research has been approved by the UTC Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have any questions concerning the UTC IRB policies or procedures or the rights of human subjects, please contact Dr. M. D. Roblyer, IRB Committee Chair, via phone at (423) 425-5567 or via email to instrb@utc.edu. If you have any questions about this study or concerns regarding the survey, please feel free to contact me via phone at (615) 692-4439 or via email to james.witty@utc.edu.

If you permit me to survey your attendees, please sign the consent form and return to the following address: 408 Elegance Way, Hermitage, TN 37076. A self addressed stamped envelope has been enclosed for your convenience. Additionally, I will furnish you with a

copy of all my findings once the study has commenced. Thank you for your time, consideration and continued commitment to the field of alternative education.

Sincerely,

James Vince Witty

James Vince Witty
408 Elegance Way
Hermitage, TN 37076
james.witty@utc.edu

Consent Form to Survey Conference Attendees

This study will examine the validity of the construct, content and utility of the *Exemplary Practices* for use as an evaluation instrument. Participation is voluntary and involves minimal risk. Refusal by you or your conference attendees will involve no penalty. Attendees do not have to participate, can refuse to answer any and all questions on the survey and may discontinue participation at any time. Moreover, you may choose at any time to discontinue the study.

All attendee responses and data will remain confidential. All collected information will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's office. You can be assured that all data will be processed as a whole and at no time will individual attendee responses be disaggregated. The research findings of this study will be invaluable to alternative schools and programs in the state of Tennessee and your approval is much appreciated.

By signing below I give James Vince Witty permission to conduct research through the onetime survey dissemination to attendees at the upcoming conference. Information collected by the survey may be used for purposes of his dissertation research project with the understanding that no personally identifiable information of attendees will be released.

Executive Officer's Printed Name:_____

Executive Officer's Signature:_____

Title:_____

Date:_____

Please sign and return the Consent Form using the enclosed self addressed stamped

envelope.

Appendix G: Observation Checklist

Introduction and Purpose:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. The following checklist was developed to capture your perceptions of the observable constructs (i.e., standards) and content (i.e., quality indicators) at your assigned school or program. ***You are not evaluating the effectiveness of the school or program but instead testing and evaluating the utility of the instrument provided.*** All responses and data will remain anonymous. The decision to participate in this research project is voluntary. Refusal will involve no penalty. You may choose not to partake and may discontinue your participation at any time. As an evaluator there are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you, nor are there any direct benefits. Please note, however, that the information you provide will help further research in the field of alternative education as it relates to best practice. Thank you for your time, your attention to detail in administering the observation checklist and your commitment to alternative education.

Checklist Instructions:

Evaluators will have approximately 2 hours to conduct the school or program visit. Your role is strictly observation. You and your team member will only observe and record information on the instrument provided. You will have access (within reason) to all programming activities at the school or program. At no time will you speak directly to the faculty or students other than simple courtesy greetings and farewells. At no time should you solicit any personal or otherwise confidential information from the school principal or program administrator, nor the faculty or students. Please remember that all obtained information from the site visit MUST remain confidential.

Please begin by filling out the observation information section. ***Next, you are asked to observe programming activities and record those using the checklist provided. For all standards and indicators, you are to note those standards and indicators that are observable at the school or program you are visiting by selecting YES. At the end of the two hours any remaining standards and indicators that were not observable will be indicated by means of selecting NO.*** Upon completion of the site visit, the observation checklist should be returned to the researcher via fax to (615) 532-6638. Only complete one observation checklist per team.

Observation Information:

Date:_____

Evaluator Names:_____

School or Program Name:_____

For each standard and each indicator, you are to note those standards and indicators that are observable at the school or program by selecting YES. At the end of the two hours, any remaining standards and indicators that were not observable will be indicated by means of selecting NO.

	Standard: Mission and Purpose		
1.0	An exemplary alternative education program develops a guiding mission and purpose that drives the overall operation of the program. All stakeholders (i.e., administrators, community representatives, parents/guardians, staff, and students) share in developing, implementing, directing and maintaining the program's mission and purpose. The mission and purpose of the program include the identification of the target student population and promote the success of all students. Additionally, the mission and purpose embody high expectations for academic achievement, along with the nurturing of positive social interactions between staff and students.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
	Indicators of Success		
1.1	The program mission clearly articulates the purpose, goals, and expectations of the program to students, parents/guardians, program staff, and the community at large.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
1.2	The mission and purpose are documented, published and visible to students, parents/guardians, program staff, and the community.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
1.3	All stakeholders are involved in developing the mission, purpose, goals, and expected outcomes for the program.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
1.4	The program mission includes the identification of the student population for whom the alternative education program is designed to serve.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
1.5	The mission and purpose of the program have a unifying theme that evokes high levels of student and other stakeholder support.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
1.6	The driving mission and purpose of the alternative program is consistent with the district's goals while aligning with specific state standard(s).	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
1.7	Student success is central to the mission and purpose of the program, which includes learning across academic areas, behavioral management, life skills, and the vocational domains.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
1.8	The mission and purpose of the program promotes the personal safety, security, and emotional and physical well being of all students in the program.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
1.10	Needed resources are sought and obtained to support the implementation of the mission and purpose.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
1.11	Barriers to achieving the mission and purpose of the program are identified, clarified, and addressed.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
1.12	The mission and purpose shape the educational plans and activities undertaken by the alternative program.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
1.13	The mission and purpose are regularly monitored, evaluated, and revised as needed.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐

For each standard and each indicator, you are to note those standards and indicators that are observable at the school or program by selecting YES. At the end of the two hours, any remaining standards and indicators that were not observable will be indicated by means of selecting NO.

	Standard: Leadership		
2.0	An exemplary alternative education program employs passionate, innovative, competent, and experienced leadership that has administrative and bureaucratic autonomy, as well as operational flexibility. The administrators, teachers, and staff must be committed to full implementation of the program's mission and core values. On-site leadership utilizes and engages in a collaborative approach that ensures shared decision-making, high expectations for the program, and continuous monitoring of program quality. The superintendent or designated district administrator sustains the independence of the program and allocates sufficient resources (i.e., financial or other necessary resources) to protect the integrity of the program while supporting overall program quality.	Yes ☐	No ☐
	Indicators of Success		
2.1	The district provides sufficient oversight to ensure quality programming while protecting the autonomy of the alternative education program's operation.	Yes ☐	No ☐
2.2	The district provides adequate financial support and other needed resources for implementation of quality alternative education services (e.g., teaching and non-teaching staff, equipment, technology, supplies, curriculum, etc.).	Yes ☐	No ☐
2.3	Program administrators are experienced and competent, enabling them to be engaged in all aspects of the program's operation and management.	Yes ☐	No ☐
2.4	The shared vision of the alternative education program is communicated by the leadership through the program's mission and purpose.	Yes ☐	No ☐
2.5	Where appropriate, leadership engages stakeholders in a collaborative process when making program decisions (i.e., Advisory Board and other opportunities that promote stakeholder participation in the decision-making process).	Yes ☐	No ☐
2.6	Program leadership ensures that decisions regarding program operation align with state legislation and local policies and procedures.	Yes ☐	No ☐
2.7	Program leadership develops and operates under a current policies and procedures manual that is consistent with the mission and purpose of the program, approved by the local board of education, and articulated to all stakeholders in the form of standard operating procedures (SOPs).	Yes ☐	No ☐
2.8	Program leadership recruits, hires, and trains qualified teachers and non-teaching staff.	Yes ☐	No ☐
2.9	Program administrators ensure low student to teacher ratios exist, that ratios reflect the needs of the student population, and that the student to teacher ratio never exceeds 12 to 1.	Yes ☐	No ☐
2.10	Leadership promotes collaboration among the school of origin, community, and home, thereby fostering an effective learning environment for the student.	Yes ☐	No ☐
2.11	Administration ensures that reliable data and student performance measures guide the instructional practices of the program.	Yes ☐	No ☐

2.12	Program leaders work to offer transportation, food services and appropriate health services to students.	Yes ☐	No ☐
2.13	Consistent and constructive performance evaluations of administrative, teaching, and non-teaching staff are conducted by leadership in a timely manner.	Yes ☐	No ☐

For each standard and each indicator, you are to note those standards and indicators that are observable at the school or program by selecting YES. At the end of the two hours, any remaining standards and indicators that were not observable will be indicated by means of selecting NO.

	Standard: Climate and Culture		
3.0	An exemplary alternative education program maintains a safe, caring, and orderly climate and culture that promotes collegial relationships among students, parents/guardians, and program staff. The program culture and climate are characterized by a positive rather than punitive atmosphere for behavioral management and student discipline. Program staff establishes clear expectations for learning and student conduct. The staff actively models and rewards appropriate student behavior. The program uses proven practices such as positive behavior support to organize student support systems. The alternative program actively promotes connections among students and between program staff that is positive and encourages academic, behavioral, and social success.	Yes ☐	No ☐
	Indicators of Success		
3.1	Alternative education services are efficiently organized into effective delivery systems whether the entity is an alternative school, program, or classroom.	Yes ☐	No ☐
3.2	The program is housed in a safe, well maintained, aesthetically pleasing, and physically accessible environment that supports optimal student learning.	Yes ☐	No ☐
3.3	Rules and behavioral expectations are clearly written (i.e., code of conduct and comprehensive student discipline action plan), understood and accepted by staff, students, and parents/guardians. Both mechanisms ensure that students are actively taught, rewarded, recognized and monitored, which guide and manage student behavior, evaluate progress, and direct the learner's experience in the alternative education program.	Yes ☐	No ☐
3.4	The program has a designated team of representatives (i.e., administrative, teaching and non-teaching staff, parents/guardians, and, if possible, student representatives) that strategically plan, monitor, and implement prevention and intervention strategies that reflect the culture and climate of the alternative education program.	Yes ☐	No ☐
3.5	The program actively promotes student engagement and affords students with the opportunity to have a role in shaping the learning environment to facilitate feelings of connectedness.	Yes ☐	No ☐
3.6	The alternative education program communicates high expectations for teacher performance, which in turn results in improved student academics and behavior with opportunities to celebrate individual successes on a regular basis.	Yes ☐	No ☐
3.7	Student and staff evaluation data and feedback regarding the program are presented at staff meetings and used to make appropriate programming changes.	Yes ☐	No ☐
3.8	The program demonstrates an understanding and sensitivity to academic, behavioral, cultural, developmental, gender, and societal needs of students, parents/guardians and the community.	Yes ☐	No ☐

3.9	Short and long-term program goals address the needs of the students, staff, parents/guardians, and the program.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
3.10	Program objectives are measurable and built upon student academic achievement, student behavior, and social improvement and are the basis of program accountability, evaluation, and improvement.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐

For each standard and each indicator, you are to note those standards and indicators that are observable at the school or program by selecting YES. At the end of the two hours, any remaining standards and indicators that were not observable will be indicated by means of selecting NO.

	Standard: Staffing and Professional Development		
4.0	An exemplary alternative education program is staffed with effective, innovative, and qualified individuals trained in current research based teaching methods that facilitate active learning. Written professional development plans exist that identify staff training needs, match needs to relevant training, emphasize quality implementation of research based and best practices, and establish performance evaluations aimed at improving program and student outcomes and overall program quality.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
	Indicators of Success		
4.1	The program employs enthusiastic, energetic, and innovative teachers who demonstrate multiple teaching styles.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
4.2	The staff understands and practices the concept of facilitative learning.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
4.3	The diversity of the staff mirrors the diversity of the student body and the experience of the alternative education faculty mirrors the faculty experience of the school district.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
4.4	A sufficient number of teaching and non-teaching staff are working in or assigned to the alternative education program.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
4.5	Staff members create written professional development plans that facilitate personal and professional growth, identify the professional development needs of the individual, establish short and long term goals, and align professional development training to address the individual's overall plan.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
4.6	Professional development reflects a good use of internal and external resources by the program.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
4.7	The focus of professional development relates to positive student outcomes across academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational domains and increases the likelihood of student success in present and future settings.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
4.8	The program uses a variety of professional development approaches, including technology, to accomplish the goals of improving instruction and increasing student achievement.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
4.9	Professional development opportunities include information related to effectively collaborating with community support services and how to connect with students and families.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
4.10	The program strategically increases staff capacity through training, modeling and ensuring the use of research based strategies that align with the needs of the program population.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐

4.11	Sufficient resources, such as time, substitutes, and incentives allow all staff to participate in workshops, conferences, and seminars.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
4.12	Administration ensures that ongoing professional development is geared towards the adult learner, promotes lifelong learning, helps build the staff's capacity through the use of research based strategies and best practices, and ensures that learned techniques are implemented.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐

For each standard and each indicator, you are to note those standards and indicators that are observable at the school or program by selecting YES. At the end of the two hours, any remaining standards and indicators that were not observable will be indicated by means of selecting NO.

	Standard: Curriculum and Instruction		
5.0	An exemplary alternative education program maintains high academic expectations for students across academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational domains. Furthermore, the program integrates a creative and engaging curricula and instructional methods that are relevant to the individual student's needs. Additionally, the program uses an integrated, well-organized framework of research based curricula and teaching practices designed to address the "whole" student while continuing to meet or exceed federal and state standards.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
	Indicators of Success		
5.1	The alternative education program ensures that all students have access to the academic core curriculum.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
5.2	Teachers are highly qualified in the content area based on individual state standards.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
5.3	Teachers are competent in research based teaching techniques and behavior management strategies appropriate for the target student population.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
5.4	The program operates in full compliance with laws governing students with special needs.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
5.5	Curricular options reflect, but are not limited to, those offered in the traditional educational setting.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
5.6	Teaching across all curricula is employed by program staff.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
5.7	The alternative education program individualizes the student's curriculum and instruction utilizing an individualized student learner plan (ISLP). The plan engages and challenges the student while also addressing the academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational needs of the participant.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
5.8	Teachers identify and provide appropriate instruction designed to close gaps in student learning.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
5.9	A variety of instructional strategies are employed to accommodate for students with different backgrounds, individual learning styles (e.g. visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners), and multiple intelligences.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐

5.10	Students have opportunities to learn and/or participate in non-core content areas to include, but not limited to, the following: adventure learning, art, character education, health, music, physical activities/education, recreation, and vocational education.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
5.11	Programs promote community involvement using service learning as a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction, teaches civic responsibility, and aims to strengthen the learner's role in his or her community. Furthermore, the community involvement component includes student reflection as a part of the learner's experience.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
5.12	Instruction integrates life skills (e.g., career preparation, citizenship, conflict resolution, decision making skills, problem solving, public speaking, self-management, social skills, teamwork, time management, work-based learning, etc.) into the curricula and affords the student with opportunities to put the acquired skills into action.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
5.13	Secondary programs provide opportunities for career exploration (e.g., job shadowing and training, mentorships, work-based learning, career fairs, etc.) related to the student's career interests and postsecondary goals.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
5.14	Group delivery systems are used to build social relationships by supporting collaboration and teamwork.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
5.15	The alternative education program uses researched based dropout prevention strategies for those learners at risk of dropping out of school.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
5.16	Technology is embedded in the curricular delivery process and distance learning is utilized when appropriate.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
5.17	The curriculum is supported by access to a balance of up-to-date, well-maintained collection of textbooks, library media, technology, software, and other instructional supplies and materials.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐

For each standard and each indicator, you are to note those standards and indicators that are observable at the school or program by selecting YES. At the end of the two hours, any remaining standards and indicators that were not observable will be indicated by means of selecting NO.

	Standard: Student Assessment		
6.0	An exemplary alternative education program includes screening, progress monitoring, diagnostic and outcome-based measurements and procedures to improve short and long term results at the student level. Student assessments are used to measure achievement and indentify specific learner needs. The program exercises a research based framework that values use of reliable measures to monitor student progress and adjust program services accordingly.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
	Indicators of Success		
6.1	Program administrators enforce data-driven accountability to measure achievement and identify individual learner needs.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐

6.2	The purpose of assessments is clearly defined and communicated to students, staff and parents/guardians.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
6.3	Data collection procedures are clearly outlined to ensure reliable and valid student assessment results.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
6.4	Teachers use formative and summative assessment tools that are frequent, rigorous, and align with curriculum and instruction to track student performance and progress.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
6.5	The program utilizes multiple assessments that continually monitor the academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational needs of the student while using those assessments to make individual programming decisions for the learner.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
6.6	Frequent, reliable and rigorous measures using both quantitative and qualitative procedures are used to identify student progress as prescribed by the district and state.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
6.7	Assessments are directly linked to choosing curriculum and instructional methods while accommodating a variety of learning styles and multiple intelligences.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
6.8	Results of assessments are used to inform students and parents/guardians of learner progress, guide curriculum and instruction, and monitor the individualized student learner plan (ISLP).	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐

For each standard and each indicator, you are to note those standards and indicators that are observable at the school or program by selecting YES. At the end of the two hours, any remaining standards and indicators that were not observable will be indicated by means of selecting NO.

	Standard: Transitional Planning and Support		
7.0	An exemplary alternative education program has clear criteria and procedures for transitioning students from the traditional education setting to the alternative education setting, from the alternative program to the student's next education or workforce setting while ensuring timely access to community agencies and support services. This process calls for trained transitional personnel experienced in this particular area. Furthermore, the transitional process ensures that the alternative placement is the most appropriate placement for student's specific academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational needs.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
	Indicators of Success		
7.1	The alternative education program has a Screening Committee to ensure that the alternative placement is most appropriate for the student's specific academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational needs (individual student, individual placement decision).	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
7.2	The program has a formal transition process for students from pre-entry through post-exit which includes the following elements: an orientation which consists of rapport building, assessment of the student, IEP review, information and	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐

	record sharing regarding the student, short and long-term goal setting, development of an individualized student learner plan (ISLP), and other mechanisms designed to orient the student to the alternative education setting.		
7.3	Transition planning and the ISLP afford students the opportunity to maintain and accelerate their current progress toward graduation.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
7.4	A Student Support Team (SST) is established that consists of educators from the school of origin, educators from the alternative education program, the student, the parents/guardians and other trained transitional personnel. The team is directly involved in all aspects of the transitional process including assessment, planning, and implementation of the student's transitional plan and ISLP.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
7.5	Transition planning includes referral and timely access to community agencies and support services such as mental health, public health, family support, housing, physical fitness activities, and other youth services.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
7.6	When appropriate, students in the alternative education program are provided with opportunities to develop and maintain supportive links to the school of origin.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
7.7	Student needs (i.e., academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational needs) are addressed before, during, and after the student's transition.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
7.8	Prior to a student's entrance and exit from the alternative education program, transition services are coordinated by the SST with all appropriate entities to ensure successful entry into the student's next educational setting or into the workforce.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
7.9	Within the bounds of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), information sharing (availability of pertinent records) takes place between the school of origin, the alternative education program, and other social service organizations. Copies of the following items are forwarded to the alternative education program: attendance records, birth certificate, current health treatments and medications needed during the school day, discipline records, immunization records, report cards, school enrollment letter, social security card, special education file and IEP (if applicable), state assessment test scores, transcripts and other appropriate information on the student.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐

For each standard and each indicator, you are to note those standards and indicators that are observable at the school or program by selecting YES. At the end of the two hours, any remaining standards and indicators that were not observable will be indicated by means of selecting NO.

	Standard: Parent/Guardian Involvement		
8.0	An exemplary alternative education program actively involves parents/guardians beyond parent/guardian-teacher meetings. The alternative program emphasizes a non-judgmental, solution-focused approach that incorporates parents/guardians as respected partners throughout the student's length of stay in the program. Furthermore, the program works with parents/guardians to provide proper training and support to advance the learning and personal success of each student in the program.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
	Indicators of Success		
8.1	Parental/guardian involvement is welcomed and actively recruited by the alternative education program.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
8.2	Effective communication and interaction takes places between parents/guardians and school staff to include being continually notified of students progress (regular progress reports or as needed).	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐

8.3	Parents/guardians are recognized as equal partners and involved in the decision-making process for the student and the program, including the following: to serve on the Student Support Team (SST), to help develop the individualized student learner plan (ISLP), to help guide and direct the mission and purpose of the program via an Advisory Council, and to help evaluate the overall effectiveness of the alternative program.	Yes ☐	No ☐
8.4	Parents/guardians participate in solution-focused problem-solving for academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational issues involving students.	Yes ☐	No ☐
8.5	Consultation regarding strategies to support the learning and personal success of students is made readily available to all parents/guardians.	Yes ☐	No ☐
8.6	Parents/guardians have access to parent education programs sponsored by the alternative education program or other community social service organizations.	Yes ☐	No ☐
8.7	Privacy is afforded to parents/guardians when engaging them as equal partners in the alternative program.	Yes ☐	No ☐
8.8	Procedures are in place to address all parent/guardian grievances in a timely fashion while respecting and considering the dispositions of parents/guardians.	Yes ☐	No ☐

For each standard and each indicator, you are to note those standards and indicators that are observable at the school or program by selecting YES. At the end of the two hours, any remaining standards and indicators that were not observable will be indicated by means of selecting NO.

	Standard: Collaboration		
9.0	An exemplary alternative education program establishes authentic partnerships with community resources based on trust, open communication, clearly defined goals, and shared responsibility which links the program, home, and community. Collaborative partnerships promote opportunities for service learning, life skills, and career exploration for all students. Community representatives also have a role in the planning, resource development, and the decision-making process for the alternative program.	Yes ☐	No ☐
	Indicators of Success		
9.1	Authentic partnerships with community resources are secured and established to help the alternative education program solve problems and achieve goals as outlined in the program's mission and purpose.	Yes ☐	No ☐
9.2	Partnerships are designed to support and enrich the program by including the community as a resource for education, advocacy, and volunteerism.	Yes ☐	No ☐
9.3	Collaborations with community partners are based on trust, open communication, clearly defined goals, and shared responsibility, which links the program, home, and community.	Yes ☐	No ☐
9.5	Partnerships exist with community service organizations, cultural groups, faith-based representatives and agencies, and business and industry.	Yes ☐	No ☐
9.6	Relationships are established that support the physical and mental health of students enrolled in the program.	Yes ☐	No ☐
9.7	There is a strong collaboration with law enforcement, the juvenile justice system, and juvenile treatment centers. When appropriate, these partnerships facilitate an integrated case management strategy and wraparound services for students and parents/guardians.	Yes ☐	No ☐

9.8	Program planning incorporates collaboration with community agencies and other support services that help in providing a comprehensive student assistance program, which allows for referrals to community agencies when appropriate.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
9.9	As needed, collaborative partnerships with public and private agencies are established, formalized (i.e., memoranda of understanding or MOUs), and outline the roles and responsibilities of partner social service organizations (i.e., mental health, juvenile justice, public health, advocacy agencies, child welfare, family support, judicial/legal, youth service agencies, and research/evaluation institutions).	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
9.11	Community partners are utilized when integrating service learning, life skills, and career exploration into the alternative education program.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐

For each standard and each indicator, you are to note those standards and indicators that are observable at the school or program by selecting YES. At the end of the two hours, any remaining standards and indicators that were not observable will be indicated by means of selecting NO.

	Standard: Program Evaluation		
10.0	An exemplary alternative education program systematically conducts program evaluations for continuous program improvement. Data triangulation is employed with three different sources of data collected for analysis. Data collection includes the following items: program implementation ratings, student outcome data, and student, parent/guardian, and staff surveys. All sources of data are gathered and used to assess quality, provide a course for improvement, and direct future activities of the program. The guidelines presented herewith titled *Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming,* as well as state specific standards, would be an appropriate means in which to evaluate the program.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
	Indicators of Success		
10.1	The alternative education program routinely conducts program evaluations to determine progress toward meeting the mission and purpose of the program, and plans for continuous program improvement.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
10.2	Evaluation measures include a review of program implementation ratings (based on observable data). Ratings are given based on alignment with state specific standards and *Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming.*	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
10.3	Student outcome data for core content, non-core content areas, and non-academic areas are gathered as a means to evaluate the success of the alternative program. This includes collecting data on the following: absences, disciplinary data, credits earned, dropout statistics, grades, graduation rates, student achievement data, and recidivism rates (quasi-experimental design).	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
10.4	Student, parent/guardian, and community surveys are administered by the alternative education program to assess attitudes and opinions about discipline, program culture and climate, the learning environment, staff-student and staff-parent/guardian and program-community relations, perceptions of program effectiveness, and success relative to students' academic, behavioral, and social progress.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
10.5	Staff surveys are administered by the program to assess attitudes and opinions about discipline, program culture and climate, the learning environment, staff-administrator/staff-staff relations, perceptions of program effectiveness and success relative to students' academic, behavioral, and social progress.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
10.6	Transition services are routinely evaluated to determine the program's effectiveness in transitioning the student to the next educational setting or into the workforce. Evaluation of transitional services includes follow-up visits with past	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐

	students of the program.		
10.7	Program evaluation results are used to develop or update a plan for continuous program improvement.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
10.8	When available, an external evaluator is called upon to evaluate the program's effectiveness based on the principles set forth.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐

Thank you again! Your participation in this study is much appreciated!

Training Schedule for Evaluators
(Two Hour Training Session)

WORKSHOP AGENDA
- Ethical aspects of an evaluation (Fitzpatrick, Sanders & Worthen, 2004)
- History and origins of *Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming* (National Alternative Education Association, 2009)
- Review of the 10 standards as presented in the *Exemplary Practices*
- Review of the indicators of success as presented in the *Exemplary Practices*
- Consistency in reporting
- Discussion of evaluation procedures and methods
- Instrument delivered to evaluators for review
- School or program site location provided
- Dates of the evaluation confirmed
- Procedures for delivering data to the researcher for analysis
- Questions, comments and/or concerns
- Signature affirming training attendance

EVALUATION PROCEDURES AND METHODS
- *Evaluations should be conducted in a flexible manner* (Fitzpatrick, Sanders & Worthen, 2004). You are a guest in the school. Please be accommodating, understanding and gracious.
- *Evaluations should have a clear purpose and role* (Fitzpatrick, Sanders & Worthen, 2004). Evaluators will have approximately 2 hours to conduct the school or program visit. Your role is strictly observation. ***You are not evaluating the effectiveness of the school or program but instead testing and evaluating the utility of the instrument provided.*** You and your team member will only observe and record information on the instrument provided. You will have access (within reason) to all programming activities at the school or program.
- *Evaluations must be conducted in an ethical manner* (Fitzpatrick, Sanders & Worthern, 2004). At no time will you speak directly to the faculty or students other than simple courtesy greetings and farewells. At no time should you solicit any personal or otherwise confidential information from the school principal or program administrator, nor the faculty or students. Please remember that all obtained information from the site visit MUST remain confidential.
- *At any time you may choose to discontinue participation as an evaluator.* Participation is strictly voluntary. At any point during the evaluation you may

discontinue participation by contacting the researcher directly by phone at (615) 692-4439.

By signing below, I affirm my participation in the workshop. I also affirm that the researcher reviewed the Evaluation Procedures and Methods and that I was given a copy of all workshop materials. Furthermore, I acknowledge my understanding of the Evaluation Procedures and Methods as explained by the researcher. I was also given an opportunity to ask any questions, make comments and express any concerns. Thank you for your time, participation and continued commitment to the field of alternative education.

Evaluator's Printed Name:_____

Evaluator's Signature:_____

Title:_____

Date:_____

Appendix I: Register of Interested Practitioners to Participate as Evaluators

Thank you for your interest in participating in the upcoming study as an evaluator. If chosen, you and another individual will spend approximately two hours onsite in an alternative school or program testing the utility of an instrument provided by the researcher. Please fill out the following information. Note that all information will remain confidential and will be held in the strictest confidence. Also note that filling out the information below only indicates your interest in participating and does not guarantee that you will be chosen for the study. If chosen, you will be contact directly, receive additional information and instructions regarding the study, as well as receive a letter and consent form from the researcher. Thank you for your time and continued commitment to the field of alternative education.

First Name:	
Last Name:	
Title:	
Daytime Phone Number:	
Evening Phone Number:	
Email Address:	
Address: *(Please include City, State and Zip Code)*	
Number of Years Working in Alternative Education:	
Number of Years Conducting Program Evaluations:	
If chosen, would you prefer to conduct a site visit in East, Middle or West Tennessee?	☐ EAST ☐ MIDDLE ☐ WEST
Any other relevant information that the researcher needs to know?	

Appendix J: Letter Requesting Participation as an Evaluator

James Vince Witty
408 Elegance Way
Hermitage, TN 37076
james.witty@utc.edu
Month, Day, 2010

Dear Alternative Educator,

I am a doctoral student under the supervision of Dr. Ted Miller in the Graduate Studies Division at The University of Tennessee, Chattanooga. As part of my dissertation I am conducting research in the field of alternative education. You were selected as a possible evaluator based on your experience in the field of alternative education, as well as your experience in program evaluation.

As a part of my study I am asking individuals to participate in the testing of an evaluation instrument. A copy of the instrument has been enclosed for your convenience. If you choose to participate you will be a part of a two person evaluation team. Participation will include two hours of training on how to utilize the instrument, as well as you and your team member conducting an evaluation of an alternative school or program. Additionally, this will involve an interview with the researcher after the visit and an accuracy review of the researcher's findings.

The decision to participate in this research project is voluntary. You may choose not to partake and may discontinue your participation at any time. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to individuals that chose to participate, nor are there any direct benefits. However, the research findings of this study will be invaluable to alternative schools and programs in the state of Tennessee and your participation would be much appreciated.

All information will remain confidential. Individual responses and all information that permit identification of you will be held in the strictest confidence. You can be assured that all data will be processed as a whole and at no time will individual responses or data be disaggregated.

This research has been approved by the UTC Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have any questions concerning the UTC IRB policies or procedures or the rights of human subjects, please contact Dr. M. D. Roblyer, IRB Committee Chair, via phone at (423) 425-5567 or via email to instrb@utc.edu. If you have any questions about this study or concerns regarding the evaluation tool, please feel free to contact me via phone at (615) 692-4439 or via email to james.witty@utc.edu.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the consent form and return to the following address: 408 Elegance Way, Hermitage, TN 37076. A self addressed stamped envelope has been enclosed for your convenience. Upon receipt of the consent

form, I will contact you immediately with further details and instructions regarding the study. Additionally, as a participant, I will furnish you with a copy of all my findings once the study has commenced. Thank you for your time, consideration and continued commitment to the field of alternative education.

Sincerely,

James Vince Witty

Appendix K: Agreement Form for Evaluators

James Vince Witty
408 Elegance Way
Hermitage, TN 37076
james.witty@utc.edu

Agreement Form for Evaluators

This study will involve the testing of an evaluation instrument provided by the researcher. By choosing to participate you consent to being a part of a two person evaluation team. This will entail two hours of training on how to utilize the instrument, as well as a two hour site visit to an alternative school or program. During the visit you and your team member will conduct an evaluation of the utility of the instrument provided. Additionally, this will involve an interview with the researcher after the visit and an accuracy review of the researcher's findings.

The decision to participate in this research project is voluntary. Refusal will involve no penalty. You may choose not to partake and may discontinue your participation at any time. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to individuals that chose to participate, nor are there any direct benefits. However, the research findings of this study will be invaluable to alternative schools and programs in the state of Tennessee and your participation would be much appreciated.

All evaluator responses and data will remain confidential. All information collected will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's office. You can be assured that data will be processed as a whole and at no time will individual evaluator responses or data be disaggregated.

By signing below you agree to participate in the study as an evaluator. You also agree to partake in the training, site visit, evaluation and interview and to review the researcher's findings for accuracy. In addition, you give James Vince Witty permission to use the data collected for purposes of his dissertation research project with the understanding that no personally identifiable information will be released.

Evaluator's Printed Name:_____

Evaluator's Signature:_____

Title:_____

Date:_____

Please sign and return the Consent Form using the enclosed self addressed stamped envelope.

Appendix L: Register of Interested Participant Schools and Programs

Thank you for your interest in participating in the upcoming study on alternative education. If chosen, a team of two individuals will spend approximately two hours onsite in your alternative school or program observing various programming activities. Please fill out the following information to be considered. Note that all information will remain confidential and be held in the strictest confidence. Also note that filling out the information below only indicates your interest in participating and does not guarantee that your school or program will be chosen for the study. If chosen, you will be contact directly, receive additional information and instructions regarding the study, as well as receive a letter and consent form from the researcher. Thank you for your time and continued commitment to the field of alternative education.

First Name:	
Last Name:	
Title:	
Daytime Phone Number:	
Evening Phone Number:	
Email Address:	
School or Program Address: *(Please include City, State and Zip Code)*	
Are you considered an alternative school or an alternative education program?	
Is your school or program located in East, Middle or West Tennessee?	☐ EAST ☐ MIDDLE ☐ WEST
Is your school in a rural, suburban or urban area?	☐ RURAL ☐ SUBURBAN ☐ URBAN
Are you the principal or lead administrator of the school or program?	☐ YES ☐ NO
Any other relevant information that the researcher needs to know?	

Appendix M: Letter Requesting Participation from Schools and Programs

James Vince Witty
408 Elegance Way
Hermitage, TN 37076
james.witty@utc.edu
Month, Day, 2010

Dear Principal or School Administrator,

I am a doctoral student under the supervision of Dr. Ted Miller in the Graduate Studies Division at The University of Tennessee, Chattanooga. As part of my dissertation I am conducting research in the field of alternative education. You were selected as a possible school or program for utility testing of an evaluation instrument specific to alternative education. A copy of the instrument has been enclosed for your convenience.

If you choose to participate, a two person evaluation team will visit your school or program for approximately two hours. At no time will the individuals speak directly to your faculty or staff other than simple courtesy greetings and farewells. Nor will they solicit any personal or otherwise confidential information from you, your faculty or your students. Evaluators will only be there to observe. The team will only make observations and record information on the instrument provided. *This is done only to test the utility of the tool and not to evaluate the effectiveness of your school or program.*

The decision to participate in this research project is voluntary. Refusal will involve no penalty. You may choose not to partake and may discontinue your participation at any time during the site visit. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you, your students or your staff, nor are there any direct benefits. However, the research findings of this study will be invaluable to alternative schools and programs in the state of Tennessee and your participation would be much appreciated.

All information will remain confidential. Individual responses and all information that permit identification of you or your school will be held in the strictest confidence. You can be assured that all data will be processed as a whole and at no time will individual responses or data be disaggregated.

This research has been approved by the UTC Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have any questions concerning the UTC IRB policies or procedures or the rights of human subjects, please contact Dr. M. D. Roblyer, IRB Committee Chair, via phone at (423) 425-5567 or via email to instrb@utc.edu. If you have any questions about this study or concerns regarding the evaluation tool, please feel free to contact me via phone at (615) 692-4439 or via email to james.witty@utc.edu.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the consent form and return to the following address: 408 Elegance Way, Hermitage, TN 37076. A self addressed

stamped envelope has been enclosed for your convenience. Upon receipt of the consent form I will contact you immediately with further details and instructions regarding the study. As a participating school or program I will furnish you with a copy of all my findings once the study has commenced. Thank you for your time, consideration and continued commitment to the field of alternative education.

Sincerely,

James Vince Witty

Appendix N: Consent Form for School Principal or Program Administrator

James Vince Witty
408 Elegance Way
Hermitage, TN 37076
james.witty@utc.edu

Consent Form for School Principal or Program Administrator

By participating you agree that a two person evaluation team may visit your school or program for approximately two hours. At no time will the individuals speak directly to your faculty or students, other than simple courtesy greetings and farewells. Nor will they solicit any personal or otherwise confidential information from you, your faculty or your students. Evaluators will only be there to observe. The team will only make observations and record information on the instrument provided. ***This is done only to test the utility of the tool and not to evaluate the effectiveness of your school or program.***

The decision to participate in this research project is voluntary. Refusal will involve no penalty. You may choose not to partake and may discontinue your participation at any time during the site visit. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you, your faculty or your students, nor are there any direct benefits. However, the research findings of this study will be invaluable to alternative schools and programs in the state of Tennessee and your participation would be much appreciated.

All information will remain confidential. Individual responses and all information that permit identification of you or your school will be held in the strictest confidence. You can be assured that all data will be processed as a whole and at no time will individual responses or data be disaggregated.

By signing below you agree to allow a two person team to visit your school or program and observe various programming activities. In addition, you give James Vince Witty permission to use the data collected for purposes of his dissertation research project with the understanding that no personally identifiable information about you, your faculty, your students or your school will be released.

Evaluator's Printed Name:_____

Evaluator's Signature:_____

Title:_____

Date:_____

Please sign and return the Consent Form using the enclosed self addressed stamped envelope.

Appendix O: Interview Questions

Name of Evaluator Number One:_____

Name of Evaluator Number Two:_____

Location of Interview:_____

Date of Interview:_____

- **Exemplary Practice 1.0: Mission and Purpose**
  (1) What artifacts or supporting evidence would be needed to determine if the following Indicators had been implemented at the school or program level?
  (A) Indicator 1.3 (All stakeholders are involved in developing the mission, purpose, goals, and expected outcomes for the program.)
  (B) Indicator 1.6 (The driving mission and purpose of the alternative program is consistent with the district's goals while aligning with specific state standard(s).)
  (C) Indicator 1.11 (Barriers to achieving the mission and purpose of the program are identified, clarified, and addressed.)
  (D) Indicator 1.13(The mission and purpose are regularly monitored, evaluated, and revised as needed.)
  (2) What other artifacts or supporting evidence would you need to complete the observation checklist for this construct and corresponding content (based on your experience as an alternative educator and evaluator)?
- **Exemplary Practice 2.0: Leadership**
  (1) What artifacts or supporting evidence would be needed to determine if the following Indicators had been implemented at the school or program level?
  (A) Indicator 2.5(Where appropriate, leadership engages stakeholders in a collaborative process when making program decisions (i.e., Advisory Board and other opportunities that promote stakeholder participation in the decision-making process).)
  (B) Indicator 2.7 (Program leadership develops and operates under a current policies and procedures manual that is consistent with the mission and purpose of the program, approved by the local board of education, and articulated to all stakeholders in the form of standard operating procedures (SOPs).)
  (C) Indicator 2.11 (Administration ensures that reliable data and student performance measures guide the instructional practices of the program.)
  (D) Indicator 2.12 (Program leaders work to offer transportation, food services, and appropriate health services to students.)

(E) Indicator 2.13(Consistent and constructive performance evaluations of administrative, teaching, and non-teaching staff are conducted by leadership in a timely manner.)

(2) What other artifacts or supporting evidence would you need to complete the observation checklist for this construct and corresponding content (based on your experience as an alternative educator and evaluator)?

- **Exemplary Practice 3.0: Climate and Culture**

(1) What artifacts or supporting evidence would be needed to determine if the following Indicators had been implemented at the school or program level?

(A) Indicator 3.4 (The program has a designated team of representatives (i.e., administrative, teaching and non-teaching staff, parents/guardians, and, if possible, student representatives) that strategically plan, monitor, and implement prevention and intervention strategies that reflect the culture and climate of the alternative education program.)

(B) Indicator 3.6 (The alternative education program communicates high expectations for teacher performance, which in turn results in improved student academics and behavior with opportunities to celebrate individual successes on a regular basis.)

(C) Indicator 3.7 (Student and staff evaluation data and feedback regarding the program are presented at staff meetings and used to make appropriate programming changes.)

(D) Indicator 3.9 (Short and long-term program goals address the needs of the students, staff, parents/guardians, and the program.)

(E) Indicator 3.10 (Program objectives are measurable and built upon student academic achievement, student behavior, and social improvement and are the basis of program accountability, evaluation, and improvement.)

(2) What other artifacts or supporting evidence would you need to complete the observation checklist for this construct and corresponding content (based on your experience as an alternative educator and evaluator)?

- **Exemplary Practice 4.0: Staffing and Professional Development**

(1) What artifacts or supporting evidence would be needed to determine if the following Indicators had been implemented at the school or program level?

(A) Indicator 4.5 (Staff members create written professional development plans that facilitate personal and professional growth, identify the professional development needs of the individual, establish short and long term goals, and align professional development training to address the individual's overall plan.)

(B) Indicator 4.6 (Professional development reflects a good use of internal and external resources by the program.)

(C) Indicator 4.7 (The focus of professional development relates to positive student outcomes across academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination,

transitional and vocational domains and increases the likelihood of student
success in present and future settings.)

(D) Indicator 4.8 (The program uses a variety of professional development
approaches, including technology, to accomplish the goals of improving
instruction and increasing student achievement.)

(E) Indicator 4.9 (Professional development opportunities include information
related to effectively collaborating with community support services and how to
connect with students and families.)

(F) Indicator 4.10 (The program strategically increases staff capacity through
training, modeling and ensuring the use of research based strategies that align
with the needs of the program population.)

(G) Indicator 4.11 (Sufficient resources, such as time, substitutes, and incentives
allow all staff to participate in workshops, conferences, and seminars.)

(H) Indicator 4.12 (Administration ensures that ongoing professional development
is geared towards the adult learner, promotes lifelong learning, helps build the
staff's capacity through the use of research based strategies and best practices,
and ensures that learned techniques are implemented.)

(2) What other artifacts or supporting evidence would you need to complete the
observation checklist for this construct and corresponding content (based on your
experience as an alternative educator and evaluator)?

- **Exemplary Practice 5.0: Curriculum and Instruction**
(1) What artifacts or supporting evidence would be needed to determine if the
following Indicators had been implemented at the school or program level?

(A) Indicator 5.2 (Teachers are highly qualified in the content area based on
individual state standards.)

(B) Indicator 5.7 (The alternative education program individualizes the student's
curriculum and instruction utilizing an individualized student learner plan (ISLP).
The plan engages and challenges the student while also addressing the academic,
behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational needs of the
participant.)

(C) Indicator 5.11 (Programs promote community involvement using service
learning as a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community
service with instruction, teaches civic responsibility, and aims to strengthen the
learner's role in his or her community. Furthermore, the community involvement
component includes student reflection as a part of the learner's experience.)

(D) Indicator 5.12 (Instruction integrates life skills (e.g., career preparation,
citizenship, conflict resolution, decision making skills, problem solving, public
speaking, self-management, social skills, teamwork, time management, work-
based learning, etc.) into the curricula and affords the student with opportunities
to put the acquired skills into action.)

(E) Indicator 5.13 (Secondary programs provide opportunities for career exploration (e.g., job shadowing and training, mentorships, work-based learning, career fairs, etc.) related to the student's career interests and postsecondary goals.)

(2) What other artifacts or supporting evidence would you need to complete the observation checklist for this construct and corresponding content (based on your experience as an alternative educator and evaluator)?

- **Exemplary Practice 6.0: Student Assessment**

    (1) What artifacts or supporting evidence would be needed to determine if the following Indicators had been implemented at the school or program level?

    (A) Indicator 6.1 (Program administrators enforce data-driven accountability to measure achievement and identify individual learner needs.)

    (B) Indicator 6.2 (The purpose of assessments is clearly defined and communicated to students, staff and parents/guardians.)

    (C) Indicator 6.3 (Data collection procedures are clearly outlined to ensure reliable and valid student assessment results.)

    (D) Indicator 6.6 (Frequent, reliable and rigorous measures using both quantitative and qualitative procedures are used to identify student progress as prescribed by the district and state.)

    (E) Indicator 6.8 (Results of assessments are used to inform students and parents/guardians of learner progress, guide curriculum and instruction, and monitor the individualized student learner plan (ISLP).)

    (2) What other artifacts or supporting evidence would you need to complete the observation checklist for this construct and corresponding content (based on your experience as an alternative educator and evaluator)?

- **Exemplary Practice 7.0: Transitional Planning and Support**

    (1) What artifacts or supporting evidence would be needed to determine if the following Indicators had been implemented at the school or program level?

    (A) Indicator 7.1 (The alternative education program has a Screening Committee to ensure that the alternative placement is most appropriate for the student's specific academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational needs (individual student, individual placement decision).)

    (B) Indicator 7.3 (Transition planning and the ISLP afford students the opportunity to maintain and accelerate their current progress toward graduation.)

    (C) Indicator 7.4 (A Student Support Team (SST) is established that consists of educators from the school of origin, educators from the alternative education program, the student, the parents/guardians and other trained transitional personnel. The team is directly involved in all aspects of the transitional process including assessment, planning, and implementation of the student's transitional plan and ISLP.)

(D) Indicator 7.6 (When appropriate, students in the alternative education program are provided with opportunities to develop and maintain supportive links to the school of origin.)

(E) Indicator 7.8 (Prior to a student's entrance and exit from the alternative education program, transition services are coordinated by the SST with all appropriate entities to ensure successful entry into the student's next educational setting or into the workforce.)

(2) What other artifacts or supporting evidence would you need to complete the observation checklist for this construct and corresponding content (based on your experience as an alternative educator and evaluator)?

- **Exemplary Practice 8.0: Parent/Guardian Involvement**
  (1) What artifacts or supporting evidence would be needed to determine if the following Indicators had been implemented at the school or program level?

  (A) Indicator 8.2 (Effective communication and interaction takes places between parents/guardians and school staff to include being continually notified of students progress (regular progress reports or as needed).)

  (B) Indicator 8.3 (Parents/guardians are recognized as equal partners and involved in the decision-making process for the student and the program, including the following: to serve on the Student Support Team (SST), to help develop the individualized student learner plan (ISLP), to help guide and direct the mission and purpose of the program via an Advisory Council, and to help evaluate the overall effectiveness of the alternative program.)

  (C) Indicator 8.4 (Parents/guardians participate in solution-focused problem-solving for academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational issues involving students.)

  (D) Indicator 8.5 (Consultation regarding strategies to support the learning and personal success of students is made readily available to all parents/guardians.)

  (E) Indicator 8.6 (Parents/guardians have access to parent education programs sponsored by the alternative education program or other community social service organizations.)

  (F) Indicator 8.8 (Procedures are in place to address all parent/guardian grievances in a timely fashion while respecting and considering the dispositions of parents/guardians.)

  (2) What other artifacts or supporting evidence would you need to complete the observation checklist for this construct and corresponding content (based on your experience as an alternative educator and evaluator)?

- **Exemplary Practice 9.0: Collaboration**
  (1) What artifacts or supporting evidence would be needed to determine if the following Indicators had been implemented at the school or program level?

(A) Indicator 9.2 (Partnerships are designed to support and enrich the program by including the community as a resource for education, advocacy, and volunteerism.)

(B) Indicator 9.3 (Collaborations with community partners are based on trust, open communication, clearly defined goals, and shared responsibility, which links the program, home, and community.)

(C) Indicator 9.5 (Partnerships exist with community service organizations, cultural groups, faith-based representatives and agencies, and business and industry.)

(D) Indicator 9.7 (There is a strong collaboration with law enforcement, the juvenile justice system, and juvenile treatment centers. When appropriate, these partnerships facilitate an integrated case management strategy and wraparound services for students and parents/guardians.)

(E) Indicator 9.8 (Program planning incorporates collaboration with community agencies and other support services that help in providing a comprehensive student assistance program, which allows for referrals to community agencies when appropriate.)

(F) Indicator 9.9 (As needed, collaborative partnerships with public and private agencies are established, formalized (i.e., memoranda of understanding or MOUs), and outline the roles and responsibilities of partner social service organizations (i.e., mental health, juvenile justice, public health, advocacy agencies, child welfare, family support, judicial/legal, youth service agencies, and research/evaluation institutions).)

(G) Indicator 9.11 (Community partners are utilized when integrating service learning, life skills, and career exploration into the alternative education program.)

(2) What other artifacts or supporting evidence would you need to complete the observation checklist for this construct and corresponding content (based on your experience as an alternative educator and evaluator)?

- **Exemplary Practice 10.0: Program Evaluation**
  (1) What artifacts or supporting evidence would be needed to determine if the following Indicators had been implemented at the school or program level?
  (2) What other artifacts or supporting evidence would you need to complete the observation checklist for this construct and corresponding content (based on your experience as an alternative educator and evaluator)?
  (A) Indicator 10.1 (The alternative education program routinely conducts program evaluations to determine progress toward meeting the mission and purpose of the program, and plans for continuous program improvement.)
  (B) Indicator 10.2 (Evaluation measures include a review of program implementation ratings (based on observable data). Ratings are given based on

alignment with state specific standards and *Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming.)*

(C) Indicator 10.3 (Student outcome data for core content, non-core content areas, and non-academic areas are gathered as a means to evaluate the success of the alternative program. This includes collecting data on the following: absences, disciplinary data, credits earned, dropout statistics, grades, graduation rates, student achievement data, and recidivism rates (quasi-experimental design).)

(D) Indicator 10.4 (Student, parent/guardian, and community surveys are administered by the alternative education program to assess attitudes and opinions about discipline, program culture and climate, the learning environment, staff-student and staff-parent/guardian and program-community relations, perceptions of program effectiveness, and success relative to students' academic, behavioral, and social progress.)

(E) Indicator 10.5 (Staff surveys are administered by the program to assess attitudes and opinions about discipline, program culture and climate, the learning environment, staff-administrator/staff-staff relations, perceptions of program effectiveness and success relative to students' academic, behavioral, and social progress.)

(F) Indicator 10.6 (Transition services are routinely evaluated to determine the program's effectiveness in transitioning the student to the next educational setting or into the workforce. Evaluation of transitional services includes follow-up visits with past students of the program.)

(G) Indicator 10.7 (Program evaluation results are used to develop or update a plan for continuous program improvement.)

(H) Indicator 10.8 (When available, an external evaluator is called upon to evaluate the program's effectiveness based on the principles set forth. The NAEA offers external evaluators as part of an effort to provide outreach.)

- Please discuss your perception of the organization and usability of the instrument.
- Please discuss your perception of the aesthetic appearance of the instrument.
- Is an observation checklist or a likert scale rating most appropriate for the evaluation instrument developed to measure implementation of the *Exemplary Practices*?

Appendix P: Unobservable Indicators during Utility Testing – Phase Two Data

Unobservable Indicator	Descriptor
1.3	Stakeholders Involved in Development
1.6	Unifying Theme
1.11	Barriers Identified, Clarified & Addressed
1.13	Regularly Monitored, Evaluated & Revised
2.5	Leadership Engages Stakeholders
2.7	Operate Under a Current Policies & Procedures Manual
2.11	Ensure Data & Performance Measures Guide Instruction
2.12	Transportation, Food & Health Services Offered
2.13	Consistent & Constructive Staff Evaluations Conducted
3.4	Team of Stakeholders Monitor Climate & Culture
3.6	High Expectations for Teacher Performance
3.7	Student & Staff Feedback Guides Programming
3.9	Overall Goals Address Needs of Students and Parents
3.10	Goals Address Achievement, Behavior & Social Development
4.5	Staff Create & Implement Professional Development Plans
4.6	Professional Development Reflects Good Use of Resources
4.7	Professional Development Promotes Positive Student Outcomes
4.8	Training Aims to Improve Instruction & Achievement
4.9	Staff Trained to Collaborate with Available Support Services
4.10	Training, Modeling & Research Builds Staff Capacity
4.11	Sufficient Resources & Incentives for Professional Development
4.12	Ongoing, Professional Development Geared to the Adult Learner
5.2	Teachers are Highly Qualified
5.7	Utilization of Individualized Student Learner Plan (ISLP)
5.11	Promote Community Involvement
5.12	Instruction Integrates Life Skills
5.13	Opportunities for Career Exploration
6.1	Data-Driven Accountability
6.2	Purpose of Assessments Defined
6.3	Data Collection Procedures Outlined
6.6	Quantitative & Qualitative Procedures Identify Progress
6.8	Assessments Inform Learner Progress
7.1	Appropriate Placement Ensured by Screening Committee
7.3	Planning Maintains Student Progress towards Graduation
7.4	Student Support Team (SST) Facilitates Transition
7.6	Opportunities to Maintain Links to School of Origin
7.8	SST Coordinates Transition with All Appropriate Entities

Unobservable Indicator	Descriptor
8.2	Effective & Constant Communication with Parents/Guardians
8.3	Parents/Guardians Included in Decision-Making Process
8.4	Parents/Guardians Partake in Problem-Solving for Student Issues
8.5	Strategies to Support Learning & Success Shared
8.6	Access to Parent Education Programs
8.8	Procedures to Address Parent/Guardian Grievances
9.2	Collaboration for Education, Advocacy & Volunteerism
9.3	Partnerships Based on Trust, Communication & Defined Goals
9.5	Service, Cultural, Faith-Based & Business Partnerships
9.7	Collaboration with Law Enforcement & Juvenile Justice
9.8	Partnerships for a Comprehensive Student Assistance Program
9.9	Where Necessary Partnerships are Formalized with MOU
9.11	Service Learning, Life Skills & Career Exploration
10.1	Routine Program Evaluations for Continuous Improvement
10.2	Ratings on Exemplary Practices & State Standards
10.3	Student Outcome Data Used to Evaluate Services
10.4	Student, Parent/Guardian & Community Surveyed
10.5	Staff Surveyed for Input
10.6	Transition Services Routinely Evaluated
10.7	Evaluation Results inform Plan for Improvement
10.8	External Evaluator to Assess Program Effectiveness

Appendix Q: Final Evaluation Instrument

Exemplary Practice 1.0	Mission and Purpose				
An exemplary alternative education program develops a guiding mission and purpose that drives the overall operation of the program. All stakeholders (i.e., administrators, community representatives, parents/guardians, staff, and students) share in developing, implementing, directing and maintaining the program's mission and purpose. The mission and purpose of the program include the identification of the target student population and promote the success of all students. Additionally, the mission and purpose embody high expectations for academic achievement, along with the nurturing of positive social interactions between staff and students.					
4 (Exemplary)	3 (Commendable)	2 (Adequate)	1 (Limited)	0 (None)	Overall Rating
All criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	4 3 2 1 0

Indicators of Success:	Evidence Categories:			
Each indicator must be documented from at least criteria met with evidence.	Artifacts:	Observations:	Interviews:	Met?
The program mission clearly articulates the purpose, goals, and expectations of the program to students, parents/guardians, program staff, and the community at large.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The mission and purpose are documented, published and visible to students, parents/guardians, program staff, and the community.	☐	☐	☐	☐
All stakeholders are involved in developing the mission, purpose, goals, and expected outcomes for the program.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The program mission includes the identification of the student population for whom the alternative education program is designed to serve.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The mission and purpose of the program have a unifying theme that evokes high levels of student and other stakeholder support.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The driving mission and purpose of the alternative program is consistent with the district's goals while aligning with specific state standard(s).	☐	☐	☐	☐
Student success is central to the mission and purpose of the program, which includes learning across academic areas, behavioral management, life skills, and the vocational domains.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The mission and purpose of the program promotes the personal safety, security, and emotional and physical well being of all students in the program.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Needed resources are sought and obtained to support the implementation of the mission and purpose.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Barriers to achieving the mission and purpose of the program are identified, clarified, and addressed.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The mission and purpose shape the educational plans and activities undertaken by the alternative program.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The mission and purpose are regularly monitored, evaluated, and revised as needed.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Evidence categories are to be noted above as identified for each indicator of success.		
Artifacts:	Observations:	Interviews:

186

• District Goals and State Standards Documentation of Implementation • Evidence of Mission and Purpose Monitoring, Evaluation, and Revision • Evidence of Stakeholder Inclusion During Development of Mission and Purpose • School Improvement Plan • Student Handbook • Student Journals with Reflections • Written Mission, Purpose, Goals, and Expectations	• Classroom Observations • School or Program Observations	• Assistant Principal or Assistant Program Director • Certified Staff • Community Representatives • Crisis Workers • District Administrators/Staff • Para-Professionals • Parents • Principal or Program Director • School Counselors • School Resource Officer • Students

Comments:

Exemplary Practice 2.0	Leadership				

An exemplary alternative education program employs passionate, innovative, competent, and experienced leadership that has administrative and bureaucratic autonomy, as well as operational flexibility. The administrators, teachers, and staff must be committed to full implementation of the program's mission and core values. On-site leadership utilizes and engages in a collaborative approach that ensures shared decision-making, high expectations for the program, and continuous monitoring of program quality. The superintendent or designated district administrator sustains the independence of the program and allocates sufficient resources (i.e., financial or other necessary resources) to protect the integrity of the program while supporting overall program quality.

4 (Exemplary)	3 (Commendable)	2 (Adequate)	1 (Limited)	0 (None)	Overall Rating
All criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	4 3 2 1 0

Indicators of Success:	Evidence Categories:			
Each indicator must be documented from at least criteria met with evidence.	Artifacts:	Observations:	Interviews:	Met?
The district provides sufficient oversight to ensure quality programming while protecting the autonomy of the alternative education program's operation.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The district provides adequate financial support and other needed resources for implementation of quality alternative education services (e.g., teaching and non-teaching staff, equipment, technology, supplies, curriculum, etc.).	☐	☐	☐	☐
Program administrators are experienced and competent, enabling them to be engaged in all aspects of the program's operation and management.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The shared vision of the alternative education program is communicated by the leadership through the program's mission and purpose.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Where appropriate, leadership engages stakeholders in a collaborative process when making program decisions (i.e., Advisory Board and other opportunities that promote stakeholder participation in the decision-making process).	☐	☐	☐	☐
Program leadership ensures that decisions regarding program operation align with state legislation and local policies and procedures.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Program leadership develops and operates under a current policies and procedures manual that is consistent with the mission and purpose of the program, approved by the local board of education, and articulated to all stakeholders in the form of standard operating procedures (SOPs).	☐	☐	☐	☐
Program leadership recruits, hires and trains qualified teachers and non-teaching staff.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Program administrators ensure low student to teacher ratios exist, that ratios reflect the needs of the student population, and that the student to teacher ratio never exceeds 12 to 1.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Leadership promotes collaboration among the school of origin, community, and home, thereby fostering an effective learning environment for the student.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Administration ensures that reliable data and student performance measures guide the instructional practices of the program.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Program leaders work to offer transportation, food services, and appropriate health services to	☐	☐	☐	☐

students.				
Consistent and constructive performance evaluations of administrative, teaching, and non-teaching staff are conducted by leadership in a timely manner.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Evidence categories are to be noted above as identified for each indicator of success.		
Artifacts:	**Observations:**	**Interviews:**
- Advisory Board Meeting Minutes - Crisis Plan - Data Collection Policies and Procedures - Evidence of Collaboration with School of Origin, Community, and Home by Listing Times, Dates, Outcomes, Etc. - Job Descriptions - MOUs with Public and Private Agencies - Other Policies and Procedures Documentation - Parent/Guardian Engagement Policies and Procedures - Performance Evaluations with Follow-up - Pre and Post Student Assessments - Process and Outcome Evaluations - Referral, Screening, and Intake Policies and Procedures - Safety Plan - School Improvement Plan - Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs) - Student Handbook - Student Records - Transitional Plans - Written Code of Conduct	- Classroom Observations - School or Program Observations	- Assistant Principal or Assistant Program Director - Certified Staff - Community Representatives - Crisis Workers - District Administrators/Staff - Para-Professionals - Parents - Principal or Program Director - School Counselors - School Resource Officer - Students

Comments:

Exemplary Practice 3.0	Climate and Culture				
An exemplary alternative education program maintains a safe, caring, and orderly climate and culture that promotes collegial relationships among students, parents/guardians, and program staff. The program culture and climate are characterized by a positive rather than punitive atmosphere for behavioral management and student discipline. Program staff establishes clear expectations for learning and student conduct. The staff actively models and rewards appropriate student behavior. The program uses proven practices such as positive behavior support to organize student support systems. The alternative program actively promotes connections among students and between program staff that is positive and encourages academic, behavioral, and social success.					
4 (Exemplary)	**3 (Commendable)**	**2 (Adequate)**	**1 (Limited)**	**0 (None)**	**Overall Rating**
All criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	**4 3 2 1 0**

Indicators of Success:	Evidence Categories:			
Each indicator must be documented from at least criteria met with evidence.	**Artifacts:**	**Observations:**	**Interviews:**	**Met?**
Alternative education services are efficiently organized into effective delivery systems whether the entity is an alternative school, program, or classroom.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The program is housed in a safe, well maintained, aesthetically pleasing, and physically accessible environment that supports optimal student learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Rules and behavioral expectations are clearly written (i.e., code of conduct and comprehensive student discipline action plan), understood and accepted by staff, students, and parents/guardians. Both mechanisms ensure that students are actively taught, rewarded, recognized and monitored which guide and manage student behavior, evaluate progress, and direct the learner's experience in the alternative education program.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The program has a designated team of representatives (i.e., administrative, teaching and non-teaching staff, parents/guardians, and, if possible, student representatives) that strategically plan, monitor, and implement prevention and intervention strategies that reflect the culture and climate of the alternative education program.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The program actively promotes student engagement and affords students with the opportunity to have a role in shaping the learning environment to facilitate feelings of connectedness.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The alternative education program communicates high expectations for teacher performance, which in turn results in improved student academics and behavior with opportunities to celebrate individual successes on a regular basis.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Student and staff evaluation data and feedback regarding the program are presented at staff meetings and used to make appropriate programming changes.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The program demonstrates an understanding and sensitivity to academic, behavioral, cultural, developmental, gender, and societal needs of students, parents/guardians and the community.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Short and long-term program goals address the needs of the students, staff, parents/guardians, and the program.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Program objectives are measurable and built upon student academic achievement, student behavior,	☐	☐	☐	☐

and social improvement and are the basis of program accountability, evaluation, and improvement.			

Evidence categories are to be noted above as identified for each indicator of success.		
Artifacts:	**Observations:**	**Interviews:**
- Performance Evaluations - Records of Student/Teacher Conferences - School Improvement Plan - Student Discipline Action Plan - Student Handbook - Student, Staff, Parent, and Community Perception Surveys and Data - Written Code of Conduct - Written Short and Long-Term School or Program Goals	- Classroom Observations - School or Program Observations	- Assistant Principal or Assistant Program Director - Certified Staff - Community Representatives - Crisis Workers - District Administrators/Staff - Para-Professionals - Parents - Principal or Program Director - School Counselors - School Resource Officer - Students

Comments:

Exemplary Practice 4.0	Staffing and Professional Development				
An exemplary alternative education program is staffed with effective, innovative, and qualified individuals trained in current research based teaching methods that facilitate active learning. Written professional development plans exist that identify staff training needs, match needs to relevant training, emphasize quality implementation of research based and best practices, and establish performance evaluations aimed at improving program and student outcomes and overall program quality.					
4 (Exemplary)	3 (Commendable)	2 (Adequate)	1 (Limited)	0 (None)	Overall Rating
All criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	4 3 2 1 0

Indicators of Success:	Evidence Categories:			
Each indicator must be documented from at least criteria met with evidence.	Artifacts:	Observations:	Interviews:	Met?
The program employs enthusiastic, energetic, and innovative teachers who demonstrate multiple teaching styles.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The staff understands and practices the concept of facilitative learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The diversity of the staff mirrors the diversity of the student body and the experience of the alternative education faculty mirrors the faculty experience of the school district.	☐	☐	☐	☐
A sufficient number of teaching and non-teaching staff are working in or assigned to the alternative education program.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff members create written professional development plans that facilitate personal and professional growth, identify the professional development needs of the individual, establish short and long term goals, and align professional development training to address the individual's overall plan.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Professional development reflects a good use of internal and external resources by the program.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The focus of professional development relates to positive student outcomes across academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational domains and increases the likelihood of student success in present and future settings.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The program uses a variety of professional development approaches, including technology, to accomplish the goals of improving instruction and increasing student achievement.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Professional development opportunities include information related to effectively collaborating with community support services and how to connect with students and families.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The program strategically increases staff capacity through training, modeling and ensuring the use of research based strategies that align with the needs of the program population.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sufficient resources, such as time, substitutes, and incentives allow all staff to participate in workshops, conferences, and seminars.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Administration ensures that ongoing professional development is geared towards the adult learner, promotes lifelong learning, helps build the staff's capacity through the use of research based strategies and best practices, and ensures that learned techniques are implemented.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Evidence categories are to be noted above as identified for each indicator of success.		
Artifacts:	**Observations:**	**Interviews:**
- Classroom Observations with Feedback - Documented Professional Development Options - Peer Teacher Observations with Feedback - Professional Development Policies and Procedures - Staff Handbook - Written Professional Development Plans	- Classroom Observations - School or Program Observations	- Assistant Principal or Assistant Program Director - Certified Staff - Community Representatives - Crisis Workers - District Administrators/Staff - Para-Professionals - Parents - Principal or Program Director - School Counselors - School Resource Officer - Students

Comments:

Exemplary Practice 5.0	Curriculum and Instruction				

An exemplary alternative education program maintains high academic expectations for students across academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational domains. Furthermore, the program integrates a creative and engaging curricula and instructional methods that are relevant to the individual student's needs. Additionally, the program uses an integrated, well-organized framework of research based curricula and teaching practices designed to address the "whole" student while continuing to meet or exceed federal and state standards.

4 (Exemplary)	3 (Commendable)	2 (Adequate)	1 (Limited)	0 (None)	Overall Rating
All criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	4 3 2 1 0

Indicators of Success: Each indicator must be documented from at least criteria met with evidence.	Evidence Categories:			
	Artifacts:	Observations:	Interviews:	Met?
The alternative education program ensures that all students have access to the academic core curriculum.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teachers are highly qualified in the content area based on individual state standards.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teachers are competent in research based teaching techniques and behavior management strategies appropriate for the target student population.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The program operates in full compliance with laws governing students with special needs.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Curricular options reflect, but are not limited to, those offered in the traditional educational setting.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teaching across all curricula is employed by program staff.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The alternative education program individualizes the student's curriculum and instruction utilizing an individualized student learner plan (ISLP). The plan engages and challenges the student while also addressing the academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational needs of the participant.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teachers identify and provide appropriate instruction designed to close gaps in student learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐
A variety of instructional strategies are employed to accommodate for students with different backgrounds, individual learning styles (e.g. visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners), and multiple intelligences.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students have opportunities to learn and/or participate in non-core content areas to include, but not limited to, the following: adventure learning, art, character education, health, music, physical activities/education, recreation, and vocational education.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Programs promote community involvement using service learning as a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction, teaches civic responsibility, and aims to strengthen the learner's role in his or her community. Furthermore, the community involvement component includes student reflection as a part of the learner's experience.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Instruction integrates life skills (e.g., career preparation, citizenship, conflict resolution, decision making skills, problem solving, public speaking, self-management, social skills, teamwork, time management, work-based learning, etc.) into the curricula and affords the student with opportunities	☐	☐	☐	☐

to put the acquired skills into action.				
Secondary programs provide opportunities for career exploration (e.g., job shadowing and training, mentorships, work-based learning, career fairs, etc.) related to the student's career interests and postsecondary goals.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group delivery systems are used to build social relationships by supporting collaboration and teamwork.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The alternative education program uses researched based dropout prevention strategies for those learners at risk of dropping out of school.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Technology is embedded in the curricular delivery process and distance learning is utilized when appropriate.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The curriculum is supported by access to a balance of up-to-date, well-maintained collection of textbooks, library media, technology, software, and other instructional supplies and materials.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Evidence categories are to be noted above as identified for each indicator of success.		
Artifacts:	**Observations:**	**Interviews:**
- Distance Learning Options - Evidence of Career Exploration - Evidence of Student Support Teams - Highly Qualified Documentation - Individualized Student Learner Plans - Lesson Plans - Life Skills Curricula - Pre and Post Student Assessments - Records of Student/Teacher, Student/Counselor, or Student/Administrator Meetings with Outcomes and Reflections - School Improvement Plan - Service Learning and Community Involvement Documentation - Student Handbook - Written Curricular Options	- Classroom Observations - School or Program Observations	- Assistant Principal or Assistant Program Director - Certified Staff - Community Representatives - Crisis Workers - District Administrators/Staff - Para-Professionals - Parents - Principal or Program Director - School Counselors - School Resource Officer - Students

Comments:

Exemplary Practice 6.0	Student Assessment				
An exemplary alternative education program includes screening, progress monitoring, diagnostic and outcome-based measurements and procedures to improve short and long term results at the student level. Student assessments are used to measure achievement and indentify specific learner needs. The program exercises a research based framework that values use of reliable measures to monitor student progress and adjust program services accordingly.					
4 (Exemplary)	3 (Commendable)	2 (Adequate)	1 (Limited)	0 (None)	Overall Rating
All criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	4 3 2 1 0

Indicators of Success:	Evidence Categories:			
Each indicator must be documented from at least criteria met with evidence.	**Artifacts:**	**Observations:**	**Interviews:**	**Met?**
Program administrators enforce data-driven accountability to measure achievement and identify individual learner needs.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The purpose of assessments is clearly defined and communicated to students, staff and parents/guardians.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Data collection procedures are clearly outlined to ensure reliable and valid student assessment results.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teachers use formative and summative assessment tools that are frequent, rigorous, and align with curriculum and instruction to track student performance and progress.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The program utilizes multiple assessments that continually monitor the academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational needs of the student while using those assessments to make individual programming decisions for the learner.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Frequent, reliable and rigorous measures using both quantitative and qualitative procedures are used to identify student progress as prescribed by the district and state.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Assessments are directly linked to choosing curriculum and instructional methods while accommodating a variety of learning styles and multiple intelligences.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Results of assessments are used to inform students and parents/guardians of learner progress, guide curriculum and instruction, and monitor the individualized student learner plan (ISLP).	☐	☐	☐	☐

Evidence categories are to be noted above as identified for each indicator of success.		
Artifacts:	**Observations:**	**Interviews:**
• Agendas, Discussions, Outcomes as Recorded • Assessment Policies and Procedures • Formative and Summative Assessments • Pre and Post Student Assessments • State Standardized Test Scores • Student Handbook • Student Report Card	• Classroom Observations • School or Program Observations	• Assistant Principal or Assistant Program Director • Certified Staff • Community Representatives • Crisis Workers • District Administrators/Staff • Para-Professionals • Parents

		• Principal or Program Director • School Counselors • School Resource Officer • Students

Comments:

Exemplary Practice 7.0	Transitional Planning and Support				
An exemplary alternative education program has clear criteria and procedures for transitioning students from the traditional education setting to the alternative education setting, from the alternative program to the student's next education or workforce setting while ensuring timely access to community agencies and support services. This process calls for trained transitional personnel experienced in this particular area. Furthermore, the transitional process ensures that the alternative placement is the most appropriate placement for student's specific academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational needs.					
4 (Exemplary)	3 (Commendable)	2 (Adequate)	1 (Limited)	0 (None)	Overall Rating
All criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	4 3 2 1 0

Indicators of Success:	Evidence Categories:			
Each indicator must be documented from at least criteria met with evidence.	Artifacts:	Observations:	Interviews:	Met?
The alternative education program has a Screening Committee to ensure that the alternative placement is most appropriate for the student's specific academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational needs (individual student, individual placement decision).	☐	☐	☐	☐
The program has a formal transition process for students from pre-entry through post-exit which includes the following elements: an orientation which consists of rapport building, assessment of the student, IEP review, information and record sharing regarding the student, short and long-term goal setting, development of an individualized student learner plan (ISLP), and other mechanisms designed to orient the student to the alternative education setting.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Transition planning and the ISLP afford students the opportunity to maintain and accelerate their current progress toward graduation.	☐	☐	☐	☐
A Student Support Team (SST) is established that consists of educators from the school of origin, educators from the alternative education program, the student, the parents/guardians and other trained transitional personnel. The team is directly involved in all aspects of the transitional process including assessment, planning, and implementation of the student's transitional plan and ISLP.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Transition planning includes referral and timely access to community agencies and support services such as mental health, public health, family support, housing, physical fitness activities, and other youth services.	☐	☐	☐	☐
When appropriate, students in the alternative education program are provided with opportunities to develop and maintain supportive links to the school of origin.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Student needs (i.e., academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational needs) are addressed before, during, and after the student's transition.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Prior to a student's entrance and exit from the alternative education program, transition services are coordinated by the SST with all appropriate entities to ensure successful entry into the student's next educational setting or into the workforce.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Within the bounds of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), information sharing	☐	☐	☐	☐

(availability of pertinent records) takes place between the school of origin, the alternative education program, and other social service organizations. Copies of the following items are forwarded to the alternative education program: attendance records, birth certificate, current health treatments and medications needed during the school day, discipline records, immunization records, report cards, school enrollment letter, social security card, special education file and IEP (if applicable), state assessment test scores, transcripts and other appropriate information on the student.				

Evidence categories are to be noted above as identified for each indicator of success.		
Artifacts:	**Observations:**	**Interviews:**
• Documentation of Information Sharing • Evidence of Student Support Teams • MOUs with Public and Private Agencies • Policies and Procedures for Referrals to Community Agencies and Support Services • Proof of a Screening Committee • Student Handbook • Transitional Plans	• Classroom Observations • School or Program Observations	• Assistant Principal or Assistant Program Director • Certified Staff • Community Representatives • Crisis Workers • District Administrators/Staff • Para-Professionals • Parents • Principal or Program Director • School Counselors • School Resource Officer • Students

Comments:

Exemplary Practice 8.0	Parent/Guardian Involvement				
An exemplary alternative education program actively involves parents/guardians beyond parent/guardian-teacher meetings. The alternative program emphasizes a non-judgmental, solution-focused approach that incorporates parents/guardians as respected partners throughout the student's length of stay in the program. Furthermore, the program works with parents/guardians to provide proper training and support to advance the learning and personal success of each student in the program.					
4 (Exemplary)	3 (Commendable)	2 (Adequate)	1 (Limited)	0 (None)	Overall Rating
All criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	4 3 2 1 0

Indicators of Success:	Evidence Categories:			
Each indicator must be documented from at least criteria met with evidence.	Artifacts:	Observations:	Interviews:	Met?
Parental/guardian involvement is welcomed and actively recruited by the alternative education program.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Effective communication and interaction takes places between parents/guardians and school staff to include being continually notified of students progress (regular progress reports or as needed).	☐	☐	☐	☐
Parents/guardians are recognized as equal partners and involved in the decision-making process for the student and the program, including the following: to serve on the Student Support Team (SST), to help develop the individualized student learner plan (ISLP), to help guide and direct the mission and purpose of the program via an Advisory Council, and to help evaluate the overall effectiveness of the alternative program.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Parents/guardians participate in solution-focused problem-solving for academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational issues involving students.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Consultation regarding strategies to support the learning and personal success of students is made readily available to all parents/guardians.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Parents/guardians have access to parent education programs sponsored by the alternative education program or other community social service organizations.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Privacy is afforded to parents/guardians when engaging them as equal partners in the alternative program.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Procedures are in place to address all parent/guardian grievances in a timely fashion while respecting and considering the dispositions of parents/guardians.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Evidence categories are to be noted above as identified for each indicator of success.		
Artifacts:	Observations:	Interviews:
• Evidence of Communication and Interaction between Staff and Parent/Guardian • Evidence of Staff and Parent/Guardian	• Classroom Observations • School or Program Observations	• Assistant Principal or Assistant Program Director • Certified Staff • Community Representatives

Meetings • Grievance Policies and Procedures • Parent/Guardian Education Programs Agendas/Curriculums • Policies and Procedures for Ensuring Parent/Guardian Privacy • Student Handbook		• Crisis Workers • District Administrators/Staff • Para-Professionals • Parents • Principal or Program Director • School Counselors • School Resource Officer • Students

Comments:

Exemplary Practice 9.0	Collaboration				
An exemplary alternative education program establishes authentic partnerships with community resources based on trust, open communication, clearly defined goals, and shared responsibility which links the program, home, and community. Collaborative partnerships promote opportunities for service learning, life skills, and career exploration for all students. Community representatives also have a role in the planning, resource development, and the decision-making process for the alternative program.					
4 (Exemplary)	3 (Commendable)	2 (Adequate)	1 (Limited)	0 (None)	Overall Rating
All criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	4 3 2 1 0

Indicators of Success:	Evidence Categories:			
Each indicator must be documented from at least criteria met with evidence.	Artifacts:	Observations:	Interviews:	Met?
Authentic partnerships with community resources are secured and established to help the alternative education program solve problems and achieve goals as outlined in the program's mission and purpose.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Partnerships are designed to support and enrich the program by including the community as a resource for education, advocacy, and volunteerism.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Collaborations with community partners are based on trust, open communication, clearly defined goals, and shared responsibility, which links the program, home, and community.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Partnerships exist with community service organizations, cultural groups, faith-based representatives and agencies, and business and industry.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Relationships are established that support the physical and mental health of students enrolled in the program.	☐	☐	☐	☐
There is a strong collaboration with law enforcement, the juvenile justice system, and juvenile treatment centers. When appropriate, these partnerships facilitate an integrated case management strategy and wraparound services for students and parents/guardians.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Program planning incorporates collaboration with community agencies and other support services that help in providing a comprehensive student assistance program, which allows for referrals to community agencies when appropriate.	☐	☐	☐	☐
As needed, collaborative partnerships with public and private agencies are established, formalized (i.e., memoranda of understanding or MOUs), and outline the roles and responsibilities of partner social service organizations (i.e., mental health, juvenile justice, public health, advocacy agencies, child welfare, family support, judicial/legal, youth service agencies, and research/evaluation institutions).	☐	☐	☐	☐
Community partners are utilized when integrating service learning, life skills, and career exploration into the alternative education program.	☐	☐	☐	☐

202

Evidence categories are to be noted above as identified for each indicator of success.		
Artifacts:	**Observations:**	**Interviews:**
- Evidence of Community Partnerships - MOUs with Public and Private Agencies - Proof of Partnerships Integrating Service Learning, Life Skills, and Career Exploration - Signed Privacy Memorandums - Student Assistance Program Documentation	- Classroom Observations - School or Program Observations	- Assistant Principal or Assistant Program Director - Certified Staff - Community Representatives - Crisis Workers - District Administrators/Staff - Para-Professionals - Parents - Principal or Program Director - School Counselors - School Resource Officer - Students

Comments:

Exemplary Practice 10.0	Program Evaluation				
An exemplary alternative education program systematically conducts program evaluations for continuous program improvement. Data triangulation is employed with three different sources of data collected for analysis. Data collection includes the following items: program implementation ratings, student outcome data, and student, parent/guardian, and staff surveys. All sources of data are gathered and used to assess quality, provide a course for improvement, and direct future activities of the program. The guidelines presented herewith titled *Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming,* as well as state specific standards would be an appropriate means in which to evaluate the program.					
4 (Exemplary)	**3 (Commendable)**	**2 (Adequate)**	**1 (Limited)**	**0 (None)**	**Overall Rating**
All criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	At least criteria met with evidence.	**4 3 2 1 0**

Indicators of Success:		Evidence Categories:			
Each indicator must be documented from at least criteria met with evidence.		**Artifacts:**	**Observations:**	**Interviews:**	**Met?**
The alternative education program routinely conducts program evaluations to determine progress toward meeting the mission and purpose of the program, and plans for continuous program improvement.		☐	☐	☐	☐
Evaluation measures include a review of program implementation ratings (based on observable data). Ratings are given based on alignment with state specific standards and *Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming.*		☐	☐	☐	☐
Student outcome data for core content, non-core content areas, and non-academic areas are gathered as a means to evaluate the success of the alternative program. This includes collecting data on the following: absences, disciplinary data, credits earned, dropout statistics, grades, graduation rates, student achievement data, and recidivism rates (quasi-experimental design).		☐	☐	☐	☐
Student, parent/guardian, and community surveys are administered by the alternative education program to assess attitudes and opinions about discipline, program culture and climate, the learning environment, staff-student and staff-parent/guardian and program-community relations, perceptions of program effectiveness, and success relative to students' academic, behavioral, and social progress.		☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff surveys are administered by the program to assess attitudes and opinions about discipline, program culture and climate, the learning environment, staff-administrator/staff-staff relations, perceptions of program effectiveness and success relative to students' academic, behavioral, and social progress.		☐	☐	☐	☐
Transition services are routinely evaluated to determine the program's effectiveness in transitioning the student to the next educational setting or into the workforce. Evaluation of transitional services includes follow-up visits with past students of the program.		☐	☐	☐	☐
Program evaluation results are used to develop or update a plan for continuous program improvement.		☐	☐	☐	☐
When available, an external evaluator is called upon to evaluate the program's effectiveness based on the principles set forth.		☐	☐	☐	☐

Evidence categories are to be noted above as identified for each indicator of success.		
Artifacts:	**Observations:**	**Interviews:**
• Continuous Improvement Plan • Evidence of Transitional Planning Evaluations • Past Program Evaluations • Program Evaluation Ratings by External Evaluator • Program Implementation Ratings • School Improvement Plan • Student, Staff, Parent, and Community Perception Surveys and Data	• Classroom Observations • School or Program Observations	• Assistant Principal or Assistant Program Director • Certified Staff • Community Representatives • Crisis Workers • District Administrators/Staff • Para-Professionals • Parents • Principal or Program Director • School Counselors • School Resource Officer • Students

Comments:

Appendix R: Vita

James Vince Witty was born in Murfreesboro, Tennessee and attended several public schools in Rutherford County. James spent his entire life living in the greater Nashville area. Mr. Witty graduated from Middle Tennessee State University in 2003 with a Bachelors Degree in Political Science with minors in Business Law, Criminal Justice Administration, History and Secondary Education. Mr. Witty earned a Masters in Business Education from Middle Tennessee State University in 2005 with a graduate minor in Secondary Education.

James has a unique past working as an afterschool teacher, site director of an afterschool program, district administrator and state director. Currently, Mr. Witty works for the Office of Safe and Supportive Schools, a division of the Tennessee Department of Education, where he serves as Director of the Center for Dropout Prevention. James is a certified teacher with endorsements in Government, History and English to Speakers of Other Languages. Mr. Witty also holds a license in Administration and Supervision. Additionally, James is a certified instructor and trainer for the American Red Cross with extensive training and practical expertise in emergency management for schools.

Mr. Witty's notable scholarly achievements include writing, editing and publishing *Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming*. Other works include the following (organized by sequential order):

1. *Recommended Standards for the Eligibility, Qualifications and Training of School Resource Officers: Guidelines for Successful Partnerships between School Districts and Law Enforcement Agencies,*

2. *A Metaevaluation of Proposed Support Mechanisms Aimed at Enhancing the Quality of Alternative Education in Tennessee,*

3. *A Framework for Building and Preserving Safe and Supportive Learning Environments*,

4. *A Feasibility Study Related to the Establishment of Pilot Alternative Education Programs in Tennessee*,

5. *Pandemic Influenza Preparedness: A Planning Guide for Tennessee School Districts*, and

6. *Findings on Facebook in Higher Education: A Comparison of College Faculty and Student Uses and Perceptions of Social Networking Sites*.

James has also been an active member of the National Alternative Education Association. He was elected as Vice President of the Association twice serving as the youngest Vice President in the organization's history. In this role, James wrote several executive briefs on behalf of the Association for the Obama Administration aimed at steering legislative policy to drive the expansion and quality of alternative education in the United States. Furthermore, James presented in Washington D.C. at the American Youth Policy Forum to an audience of U.S. Senators, Representatives and Legislative Staffers on *Growing Alternative Education: Tennessee's Story*.

Mr. Witty is a Doctor of Education candidate at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga with a graduation date of May 7, 2011. After graduation James will continue working at the national level to improve services to students in alternative settings, as well as gear all research efforts towards the field of alternative education. Mr.

Witty will also begin legal studies at Nashville School of Law working on a Doctor of

Jurisprudence degree in the fall of 2011.