



Study of Alternative Education Options for Suspended/Expelled Students

Second Year

April 3, 2007

Leah D. Hamaker



Presentation Outline

- Study Mandate
- Virginia's Regional Alternative Education Programs
- Survey of Virginia's Alternative Education Programs
- Upcoming Study Activities



Study Mandate

- The Commission on Youth will continue to study alternative education program options and report findings to the Commission on Youth prior to the 2008 General Assembly Session.
- Issues to be studied include:
 - existing prevention programs for at-risk youth;
 - available funding for school-based prevention programs; and
 - funding for a second tier of regional alternative education programs.



Virginia's Regional Alternative Education Programs

- The General Assembly provides funding to establish and maintain Virginia's 29 regional alternative education programs.
- During the 2005-2006 school year, state funding was slightly over \$5.5 million.

Source: *Virginia Board of Education Report on Regional Alternative Education Programs, 2006.*



Virginia's Regional Alternative Education Programs

- Regional Alternative Education programs are designed to establish options for students who have violated school board policy, have been expelled or suspended on a long-term basis, or are returning from correctional centers.
- Program goals are:
 - reduce the dropout rate;
 - build self-esteem and responsibility;
 - return students to the sending high school to graduate; and
 - correct dysfunctional or dangerous behavior.

Source: *Virginia Board of Education Report on Regional Alternative Education Programs, 2006.*



Virginia's Regional Alternative Education Programs

- Section 22.1-209.12 of the *Code of Virginia* requires an annual evaluation of the effectiveness of these programs.
- Conclusions related to the programs are:
 - Over 70 percent of program administrators perceived changes in student academic performances.
 - Observed decreases in violence, firearms, and weapon violations.
 - Ratings of good or excellent were noted for parental involvement, discipline policies, student assessments, and academics.

Source: *Virginia Board of Education Report on Regional Alternative Education Programs, 2006.*



Survey of Alternative Education Programs

- There is little information regarding the availability of local programs that provide educational services to suspended and expelled students.
- A complete picture of alternative education programs, supported by data, is important for collecting and sharing information on:
 - unmet service needs; and
 - existing programs and promising practices throughout the Commonwealth.
- A survey of school divisions regarding alternative education programs would demonstrate whether there was a need for additional programs.



Survey of Alternative Education Programs

- Survey forms were mailed to each school division in November 2006 to collect information from 2005-2006 school year on existing programs serving students who were:
 - *long-term suspended;*
 - *expelled;*
 - *released from a correctional/detention center into alternative education; or*
 - *placed in alternative education in lieu of long-term suspension or expulsion.*
- Information was also requested on:
 - *local alternative education programs created and utilized by school divisions;*
 - *funding and structure of these programs; and*
 - *per pupil cost.*
- Survey responses were returned in late 2006.



Survey of Alternative Education Programs

Initial Results



Survey Response

- Responses included information on:
 - *Virginia's 29 regional alternative education programs;*
 - *school divisions' practices for offering alternative educational services to suspended/expelled students*
- The response rate from school divisions was 95% (126 of 132).
- Responses reflect activity during the 2005-2006 academic year.



Survey – Students Served

- Superintendents reported 15,602 students were served by local alternative education programs during the 2005-2006 academic year.
- Regional programs accounted for 4,155 additional students being served during 2005-2006.*
- Alternatives included online courses, career training, court educational services, and the opportunity to make up assignments for short-term suspensions.

**Source: Virginia Board of Education Report on Regional Alternative Education Programs, 2006.*



Survey – Students Served

- 92 school divisions provided detailed information regarding the number of students offered educational services.
- The majority of school divisions offered some form of educational service to suspended/expelled students.*
 - More than half of the reporting divisions offered all disciplined students some form of educational service.
 - 8,820 students were offered alternative education services.

**Note: Fairfax, Hampton, and Clarke Counties offer all students some form of educational services.*



Survey – Students not Offered Services

- 57 of those responding reported occurrences where suspended/expelled students were not offered educational services.
 - The total number of students not offered services was 6,268.
 - The average number of youth not offered any form of educational service was 68 per division.
 - This may include those suspended for 10 days or less.
- Other divisions indicated their school board policies supported the concept of discipline for inappropriate misconduct.



Survey – Availability of Alternative Education

- 29 regional programs
- 124 locally-administered programs
- 10 not categorized as either regional or local.



Survey – Availability of Alternative Education

- Regional programs accounted for the largest proportion of programs available to local divisions.
 - ◆ *65 school divisions have access to regional programs.*
 - ◆ *54 have both local and regional programs.*
 - ◆ *16 school divisions have local division programs only.*
 - ◆ *4 have no access to alternative education programs.*
- The average number of programs per locality is 2.5 and more than half the divisions reported access to at least one program.



Survey – Availability of Alternative Education

- 188 responses describing alternative education placements.*
 - 88% (166) indicated no difficulty placing students in alternative education programs.
 - 9% (17) indicated difficulty.
 - ✓ This happened slightly more frequently in regional programs.
 - 5% (5) did not respond to this question.
- Majority of responses indicated no difficulty in locating a placement; however, school divisions did note that students frequently had to wait.

*Responses reflect divisions' utilization of both local and/or regional programs.



Survey – Placement Delay Local Programs 2005-2006

Placement Delay	Frequency
Under one week	55
1-2 weeks	16
2 weeks	8
3-4 weeks	2
More than 4 weeks	20
N/A	7

113 instances of a placement delay for 124 local programs



Survey – Placement Delay Regional Programs 2005-2006

Placement Delay	Frequency
Under one week	16
1-2 weeks	6
2 weeks	6
3-4 weeks	3
More than 4 weeks	11
N/A	1

43 instances of a placement delay for 54 regional programs described.*

*Regional programs were described multiple times throughout the survey.



Survey – Students Served by Local Alternative Education Programs

- 75% expelled/long-term suspended
- 72% in danger of being suspended/expelled
- 10% academic reasons
- 7% in danger of dropping out
- 6% required non-traditional classroom setting
- 6% misbehavior/mental health or medical issues
- 5% GED Prep/ISAEP (Individual Student Alternative Education Plan)
- 3% released from a juvenile correctional/detention center

Survey Results – % Students with an Individual Education Program (IEP) Local Programs*

Students w/IEP	# Programs	% Programs
0-10%	60	48
11-20%	21	17
21-30%	18	15
31-40%	8	6
41-50%	9	7
51-75%	3	2
More than 75%	3	2
Did not respond	2	1
Total	124	100

*Responses from 124 local alternative education programs identified in the survey.



Virginia Commission on Youth

Survey Results – Student/Teacher Ratio Local Programs*

Ratio	Frequency	Percent
1 to 1	9	7.26%
2 to 1	3	2.42%
3 to 1	5	4.03%
4 to 1	3	2.42%
5 to 1	7	5.65%
6 to 1	2	1.61%
7 to 1	6	4.84%
8 to 1	11	8.87%
9 to 1	2	1.61%
10 to 1	37	29.84%
12 to 1	13	10.48%
14 to 1	1	0.81%
15 to 1	14	11.29%
15 to 2	1	0.81%
18 to 1 HS 10 to 1 MS	1	0.81%
20 to 1	3	2.42%
40 to 1	1	0.81%
20 to 1 - non behavior programs, 10 to 1 behavior programs	1	0.81%
HS 10 to 1, MS 5 to 1, ES 5 to 1 -	1	0.81%
One teacher services the program; add'l staff as necessary	1	0.81%
N/A	2	1.61%
Total	124	100.00%



Survey Results – Hours Operated Per Week Local Programs*

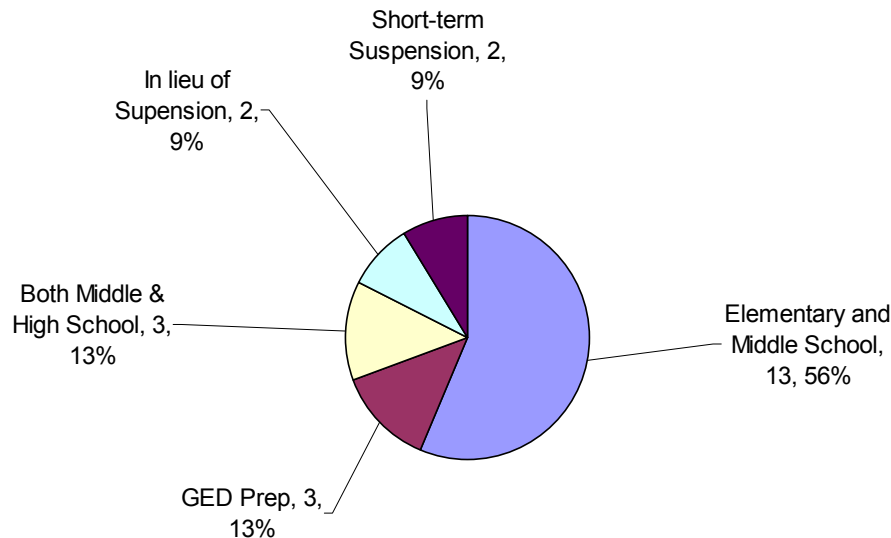
Hours/Week	Frequency	Percent
0-10 hours	16	13
11-20 hours	15	12
21-30 hours	77	62
More than 30 hours	6	5
N/A	10	8
Total	124	100

*Responses from 124 local alternative education programs identified in the survey.



Virginia Commission on Youth

Survey Results – Ability to Earn Verified Credits Local Programs*



- 89 programs allow for verified credits.

- 33 do not.

✓ *23 of these serve students with different needs, as shown.*

- 2 did not respond.



Virginia Commission on Youth

Survey
Results -
Local
Program
Population*

Elementary School	1
Elementary School & Middle School	3
Elementary, Middle & High School	8
Middle School	14
Middle & High School	48
High School	32
High School, Other - GED Prep	2
High School; Other -7th and 8th grade	1
Middle School, High School, Elementary School & GED Prep	1
Middle School, High School & GED Prep	1
Middle School, High School & Elementary School, Other - ungraded special education students	1
Middle School, High School & Returning from Incarceration	1
Other - GED Prep	2
Other - 16 - 18 years old and more than eight (8) credits behind	1
Other - All Special Education Students Grades K-12	2
Other - grades 6-7, 11-13 years old	1
Other - Grades 6-9	1
Other - Grades 7-12	2
Other - Grades 8-9 (14 to 17 years old)	2
Total	124



Virginia Commission on Youth

Survey Results - Program Goals*

Goals	Frequency	Percent
Transition students to regular academic setting	93	50.54%
Afford students the opportunity to acquire remediation in academic areas and to socially mature.	22	11.96%
Earn GED	19	10.33%
Keep students in program for remainder of their education	20	10.87%
Improve behavior, attendance, and academic progress	8	4.35%
Graduate with a diploma	6	3.26%
Continue student education while preventing interruption in the classroom	4	2.17%
Alternative to Suspension	5	2.72%
Provide core academics for period of suspension	4	2.17%
First-time violators related to drug and alcohol	1	0.54%
Hold until felony charges are cleared	1	0.54%
Community involvement & awareness through community service	1	0.54%
N/A	4	2.17%
Total	188	100

*Responses from all programs identified in the survey.



Virginia Commission on Youth

Components of Local Programs

- Academic remediation or tutoring
- Behavior management training
- Community service
- Conflict resolution training
- Core academic classes
- Crisis intervention
- Drug/substance abuse prevention training
- Work participation – not school-based
- Student assistance program
- Restorative justice/practices
- Mediation
- Elective classes
- In-house counseling
- Life skills training
- Parent/family involvement
- Peer mediation
- Referrals to external counseling
- Services provided through a partnership with a community-based organization
- Social skills training
- Technology-based instruction
- GED Prep

Survey – Local Program Per Pupil Cost*

- The average cost per pupil was reported to be \$4,850.75.
- Per pupil program cost ranged from \$100 to \$22,702.
- Median cost was \$6,000.00.
- Half of all local programs were entirely locally funded.

Percent Local \$	Frequency	Percent
0	1	0.81%
20-25	13	10.48%
33-36	5	4.03%
40-48	5	4.03%
50-55	7	5.65%
60-62	2	1.61%
73-75	5	4.03%
80-85	7	5.65%
90-98	7	5.65%
100-110	61	49.19%
N/A	11	8.87%
Total	124	100.00%

*Responses from 124 local alternative education programs identified in the survey.



Survey Results – Availability of Alternative Education

- Four school divisions do not have access to either a regional or local alternative education program.
- Several school divisions cited the following as reasons for not having a local alternative education program:
 - financial
 - lack of facility space
 - rare occurrence of suspensions and expulsions
 - use of homebound instruction for special instances
 - prefer use of creative methods to educate students in their home schools
 - school board policy supports the concept of student discipline



Survey – Majority of Students Served

- Expelled
- Suspended (primarily long-term suspensions but some short-term)
- In danger of being suspended or expelled
- Returning from detention-incarceration
- Truancy concerns
- This is the least restrictive environment in which they can be served due to behavioral issues.



- **Survey – Students Placed for Non-disciplinary Issues**
 - Required flexible schedules to work
 - Were not successful in traditional classroom or at risk of dropping out
 - Cannot attend school for documented medical/psychological reasons
 - Needed additional credits to graduate
 - Preparing for their GED
 - Participating in the ISAEP



Survey Results – Benefits of Local Programs

- Students have opportunity to:
 - complete base school assignments;
 - keep up with their academics in a safe environment;
 - receive one-on-one help with assignments;
 - benefit from a structured, small environment; and
 - receive personal and social skill development.



Survey Results – Challenges

- Logistical challenges
 - Transportation
 - Space
 - Adherence to testing schedules
- Maintaining qualified teachers
- Lack of discipline from parents
- Basic needs of students not being met
- Students not working up to their potential/not motivated
- Insufficient “seat hours”
- Peer pressure once student transitions back to home school
- Students who experience success do not want to transition back to the regular school setting



Survey Results – Initial Findings

- School divisions have access to alternative education programs.
- School divisions offer educational services to suspended/expelled youth.
- Local programs offer a variety of program components tailored to meet the needs of their students.
- The majority of local programs serve youth in danger of being suspended or expelled.
- Students may have to wait to receive alternative education services. This is a more frequent occurrence for divisions utilizing regional programs.
- Identified program challenges include offering students more instructional time, lack of facility space, transportation concerns, and retaining qualified staff.
- Lack of family involvement/interest is the challenge most frequently identified.



Upcoming Study Activities

- Complete analysis of Alternative Education Survey
 - Determine whether there are issues that need to be addressed in serving students in alternative education programs.
 - Review various challenges facing school divisions in the Commonwealth regarding alternative education programs.
 - Identify best practices employed by school divisions.
- Compile best practices guide on Virginia's Alternative Education Approaches
 - Clarify existing alternative educations policies and practices.
 - Review Virginia's activities in providing alternative education to students, using survey data and other sources.



Upcoming Studying Activities

- Investigate funding opportunities for school-based prevention programs to supplant the Safe and Drug-Free School grants
 - Investigate availability of federal grants through the U.S. Department of Justice, Center for Disease Control, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, United States Department of Education, Safe and Drug-Free Schools program, and the Center for Mental Health Services.
 - Investigate availability of state grants such as funds available from the DCJS, VDH, and DMHMRSAS.
 - Investigate programs offered through the state Student Assistance Programs.
 - Investigate availability of other funding sources such as the Tobacco Settlement fund. Some states offer grants to school divisions for prevention programs as well as alternative education programs.
 - Review other states' fundraising Initiatives for funding prevention programs, such as accessing independent resources and encouraging local collaboration among schools, agencies, and businesses.
 - Review feasibility of conducting a comprehensive statewide youth risk survey to access untapped federal funds.



Upcoming Study Activities

- Investigate funding for a second tier of regional alternative education programs
 - Utilize survey results to ascertain need for second tier of regional alternative education programs.
 - Offer funding proposal, based on survey findings if appropriate, prior to the 2008 General Assembly Session.
- Review existing state programs that address prevention and discipline for at-risk youth
 - Review Virginia's Student Assistance programs to ascertain their role in prevention of at-risk behavior in students.
 - Review the Behavioral Intervention Plans for Virginia's Schools offered through Virginia's Training/Technical Assistance Center (T/TAC) to determine if it is effective in meeting the needs of at-risk students.
- Reconvene Advisory Group to assist in study effort and review proposed recommendations