

**ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL PROGRAM**

**Submitted By**

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## ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL PROGRAM

In the Fall of 1973, middle school and high school principals recommended that an alternative program be developed to serve students with special needs in grades 6-12. It was recommended that the program be designed especially for students who had been unsuccessful in school because of emotional and social difficulties. The School Board approved the recommendation and directed the Superintendent of Schools to have his staff develop a program to meet the needs of these students. The Director of Instruction appointed a committee made up of a supervisor, two counselors, two teachers, and two people from other community agencies to study the problem and to make recommendations for an alternative program. The members of this committee reviewed the literature on the subject, surveyed the secondary schools in Loudoun to identify the problems and numbers of students with special needs, and visited other school systems that either had special programs or were developing plans for alternative schools. Based on the information obtained from these sources, the committee developed the following rationale and recommendations for an alternative program in Loudoun County.

### Purposes and Goals

The alternative program should be an individualized program for each student that would stress the affective as well as the cognitive domain in the learning process, nurturing the student as a whole human being, while at the same time maintaining the student's academic achievement at levels comparable to the levels of the students at the regular school program. The alternative program should be the kind suited to: develop a command of fundamental concepts and skills; achieve a positive sense of personal identity, worth, and purpose through the pursuit of the individual's interest and aptitude; develop the student's ability to think rationally and analytically; and develop an understanding of the phenomenon of change in our society in order that a student could take an active part in directing the course of change in his life.

It is also hoped that the existence of an alternative program as a small educational center could be an aid to teachers and staffs of other Loudoun Schools as a laboratory to try out new ideas and techniques. Close contact should be kept with central office supervisors who could help teachers in both the alternative and regular schools maintain communication with one another. Teachers from the regular schools could be encouraged to visit and participate in the alternative program to produce a situation where a free flow of ideas both to and from the regular school program would generate enthusiasm and development in both types of programs. The alternative centers could provide not only for the needs of students with special problems but also provide a place to try out new ideas and materials.

### Characteristics of Students

Students in the program would have problems that stem from different causes and situations and have a wide range of behavior patterns and educational needs. Their problems may have been intensified with the growing pressures of adolescence. Some of the students, because of communication problems, are either withdrawn or are openly hostile to

adults. Some live in homes that do not provide stability or lack order and consistent management practices. Others have suffered school experiences that were negative. They may have a failing record in school or have problems in reading, paying attention, and completing school assignments. Some may lack internal controls that cause long range goals to be meaningless.

### Curriculum and Program of Instruction

Emphasis should be placed on developing basic skills through a task-oriented curriculum. Emphasis would also be stressed on promoting insights and social behaviors needed by the student to cope with the circumstances in his own environment. For students pursuing a graduation program course requirement would follow those established by the State Department of Education. For elective courses or courses for students who will not be pursuing a graduation program, independent study will be available as well as work-study programs that place the student in the community. It is possible that a large portion of the work accomplished in the regular courses as well as that done in independent or work-study programs can be done on a contract basis. Goals and objectives would be set for each student. The student and teacher will cooperate in devising course structure based on the student's interests and needs as well as the strengths of the teacher. The small classes or groups would provide opportunities for remediation of deficiencies while maintaining academic progress. Extensive use would be made of audio-visual equipment. Career and life education would help develop the students' goals and direction. In all situations, however, students would be expected to do work comparable to what would be expected in the regular school program.

A major emphasis of the program would be to help the student develop appropriate interaction with peers and adults. This would be a responsibility shared by all teachers in the program. Students would be provided the opportunity to explore the consequences of their behavior and alternative modes available to them for responding to a given situation.

The program should also provide for evening meetings with parent groups to: familiarize them with general school policies and procedures and to familiarize them with the center's program. Conferences should be held on a regular basis with parents to provide them with a verbal and written report of their child's academic and behavioral progress. Parents would also be contacted regarding crisis situations and absences. Cooperation with other agencies could provide guidance and other supportive services to parents. Another opportunity to help students would be through educational opportunities, such as courses on communication skills and management practices, for parents. A parent advisory group could also provide opportunities for increased parent involvement in their child's education.

### Staff

Since there are few available teachers with the special training needed to work with these students, the staff should be selected from

regular classroom teachers with demonstrated professional competence in classroom management and content knowledge. A training program should also be developed to prepare and support the teachers both individually and collectively with the skills and knowledge needed to achieve the goals of the program. Teachers selected for the alternative program should, in addition to having demonstrated a professional competence in classroom management and content knowledge, also be the type of person who has shown a concern for students with problems and have the ability to communicate with these students.

It is further recommended that a full-time person be employed to develop this program. This person should be employed as soon as possible to develop plans for implementation of this program, determine locations and facilities for the center(s), purchase equipment and materials, recruit and interview staff applicants, screen student referrals from schools, talk with parents of prospective students, work with staff to develop training program for August, and all other areas that need to be developed before the program can get started.

#### Administration

The students should stay formally enrolled at their regular school. They would take all their basic courses such as English, history, social studies, math and science in the alternative program. All elective courses and work-study program activities will also be done through the alternative center. Only classes requiring special equipment or facilities would be done at the regular school. These courses could be done one of two ways: regular classes during the school day or after school hours through the homebound program.

There should be a county-wide student selection committee to screen student referrals. All resources at the local school should be used to meet the student's needs before a referral is made to the alternative program. The student must also meet the conditions needed to maintain a balance in the center's enrollment. Prospective students would be referred to this screening committee by the school principal. Students refused admittance may be presented for reconsideration. No student would be allowed in the program unless he is willing and has parental approval. Only students in grades 6-12 would be eligible to enter the program. If space is available, students who have dropped out of school during the past year would be allowed to enter the program.

This program would be for students with severe problems that cannot be effectively handled by the local school. The program would prepare the student to:

1. Return to the regular school after a probation period is served with a good record.
2. Return to the regular school after the problem is eliminated.

3. Enter the labor market with a job skill.
4. Graduate from high school while still attending the alternative center.

### Facilities

The alternative program should have three centers - one located in each high school attendance area to provide services for the middle school and high school in that attendance area. The centers should be located in facilities separate from the regular school program. Each center would require at least two rooms or teaching areas. The maximum number of students to be enrolled in each center should be limited to 20 students. Staff requirements for each center would be at least two full time teachers and an aide. One teacher should be certified to teach subject areas of math and science. The other teacher should be certified to teach English, social studies, and reading. If the enrollment reached capacity of 20 students, two aides should be provided.

If this type of staffing cannot be done because teachers cannot be found who would be willing or qualified to teach such a wide range of subject areas and grade levels, it is recommended that one county-wide center be established. This would allow a larger staff and narrow the teaching requirements for any one staff member. There would be two serious disadvantages to one center. First, it would be larger and more structured. Second, there could be a transportation problem for some students.

### Additional Services

1. High school distributive education teachers be assigned to provide services to students assigned to the alternative centers.
2. That psychological services be provided to centers through cooperation with the Loudoun Mental Health Center, Court services, or by the school psychologist. This service should be on a regular basis to provide the students with counseling and therapy. It should also provide a supportive role for the teachers in the program, too. The Department of Social Services and the Department of Health could also provide the centers with supportive services for the students and teachers.
3. That the services of reading resource coordinators assigned to middle schools and high schools be available to students with reading problems who are assigned to the alternative program.
4. That the services of special teachers assigned to central office staff (example, teacher of emotionally disturbed children) and itinerant teachers for subject areas such as music and physical education be available to students assigned to the alternative program.
5. That library services and facilities of local schools be made available to either/or students and staff assigned to the alternative program. A collection of materials needed could be checked out or assigned to be used in the classrooms of the alternative program.

### School-Based Programs

A school-based program should be a part of the alternative program, but it would be located in each one of the regular middle schools and high schools. It would be similiar to the school-based programs in Montgomery County, Maryland and the special learning problem program in Fairfax County, Virginia. This program would provide direct help for students with special needs and would also be a resource for the school staff and parents. (See Appendix C.)

The students would receive help with:

1. Recognizing self-worth
2. School academic task
3. Relationships with other students
4. Relating to authorities.

Classroom teachers would receive help with:

1. Diagnosing and providing plans around student difficulties - academic and social
2. Finding appropriate activities, materials and techniques to use with these students
3. Developing classroom alternatives with and for teachers (planning or co-teaching)
4. Problem solving with teachers and teacher teams.

The school-based program or the special learning problems program are both designed to give help to students who are having problems with academic tasks, interpersonal relationships, and/or self organization. This program could also be used as a screening device for the alternative program and as a way to re-enter students back into the regular program after they leave the alternative centers. The procedure for referring students to the school-based program would be developed by the alternative program supervisor and the school principal. Teachers and counselors would identify students with needs and use the procedure agreed upon by the supervisor and principal to have students considered for placement in the program. A local school committee consisting of the school-based program teacher, person designated by the principal and the alternative program supervisor would consider each referral. This same committee could also be used to make referrals of students to the county-wide alternative program selection committee and to develop a program at the local school level for students returning to the regular school from the alternative program.

The goal of the alternative school centers is not to provide a program so exciting that students would prefer it to the regular school program. It would be designed to provide students who have severe problems with an option. Hopefully, this program would provide the help the student needs to return to the regular school program or to enter the world of work with the skills and self-image to become a productive citizen of our society.

ALTERNATIVE PROGRAM  
BUDGET

1974-75

Salaries	\$157,920.00
Operations	13,320.00
Instructional Supplies	2,700.00
Equipment	5,040.00
Staff Development	8,520.00
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TOTAL	\$187,500.00

Cost per student in the center (does not include funds of \$54,000 for school-based programs) is \$133,500.00 divided by 60 equals \$2,225.00.

The estimate of the cost per child for the regular program is \$925.00 for the 1973-74 school year.

ALTERNATIVE PROGRAM

Budget

1974-75

Salaries

6 Teachers	\$900/mo.	10 mos. ea.-	\$ 54,000.00
6 Aides	\$300/mo.	10 mos. ea.-	18,000.00
3 Custodians	\$504/mo.	10 mos. ea.-	15,120.00
6 School-based Resource Teachers	\$900/mo.	10 mos. ea.-	54,000.00
1 Program Coordinator	\$1250/mo.	12 months -	15,000.00
1 Itinerant Teacher (Phys. Ed.)		(1 hr. per day) -	1,800.00

TOTAL \$157,920.00

Operations

Rent	\$300/mo. at 3 centers	12 mos.	\$ 10,800.00
Heat	\$ 50/mo. at 3 centers	8 mos.	1,200.00
Other Utilities	\$ 20/mo. at 3 centers	12 mos.	720.00
Incidental Maintenance			600.00

TOTAL \$ 13,320.00

Instructional Supplies - 60 Students

Books	60 X \$25.00	\$ 1,500.00
Other Materials	60 X \$20.00	1,200.00

TOTAL \$ 2,700.00

Equipment

16MM Projector	3 @ \$410.00	\$ 1,230.00
Filmstrip Projector	3 @ 85.00	255.00
Overhead Projector	3 @ 80.00	240.00
Tape Recorder	6 @ 45.00	270.00
F/S Previewers	6 @ 15.00	90.00
A.V. Carts	6 @ 50.00	300.00
Wall Screens	6 @ 20.00	120.00
Record Players	6 @ 65.00	390.00
Spirit Duplicators	3 @ 275.00	825.00
Copiers	3 @ 350.00	1,050.00
Headsets	14 @ 5.00	70.00
Repairs and Replacement of Equipment		200.00

TOTAL \$ 5,040.00



Staff Development (3 week Institute)

Salaries	(\$30.00 per deim, 12 Teachers, 15 days)	\$ 5,400.00
	(\$20.00 per deim, 12 aides, 3 days)	720.00
Consultants	(30 hours at \$50.00 per hour)	1,500.00
Materials		900.00
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TOTAL		\$ 8,520.00

Explanation of Possible Budget Reductions

The funds required in the 1973-74 and the 1974-75 budgets are probably on the high side of what the actual expenditures will be for the program. If the Centers can be located in existing buildings already owned by the School Board instead of paying rent and utilities for other facilities, a savings of over \$12,000.00 could be realized. The buildings referred to are: Carver, School Board Annex, and the old Arcola School. An additional custodian would not be needed at the Annex nor at the Arcola School if it is already being used as an addition to the high school. This would realize another savings of over \$10,000.00. If the three centers were combined into one, the aides needed could be reduced to three. This would be a savings of \$9,000.00. The amount of funds for equipment could also be reduced by about one-third. This would be a savings of \$1,650.00. The expenditures of \$133,500.00 could be reduced to about \$100,000.00. The per pupil cost would be \$1,666.00 compared to \$925.00 for a student in the regular program. The additional funds of \$541.00 per student for this program may seem high, but when compared to what we might have to spend on this person later as an unproductive citizen of the county and the value it will have to the individual student, the program could be considered a good investment. Consideration must also be given to the other students in the regular program whose classes might be affected in a negative way by some of these students who would be in the regular classroom instead of the alternative program. Montgomery County, Maryland has an alternative program that required \$6,000.00 per student. The alternative program that was outlined in this proposal for Loudoun County would follow the same blueprint as used by Montgomery County to provide for continuum programming for meeting educational needs of some students with special needs. A copy of the blueprint used by Montgomery County is attached to this proposal. (See Appendix C.)

APPENDIX A

Programs Visited by Committee Members:

<u>Program</u>	<u>Contact Person</u>
1. Mark Twain School	Mrs. Elaine Leesenco Mark Twain School 1551 Avery Road Rockville, Maryland 20853
2. Special Learning Problems	Mr. Jerry Newberry Key Intermediate School 6402 Franconia Road Springfield, Virginia 22150
3. Woodlawn School	Mr. Ray Anderson Woodlawn School 4720 North 16th Street Arlington, Virginia 22207

APPENDIX B

Programs Contacted For Information by Committee Members:

<u>Program</u>	<u>Contact Person</u>
1. Cinnamison Alternative High School	Mr. Lee Oberparleiter Cinnaminson Public School System Cinnaminson, New Jersey 08077
2. Alternative School Proposal - Area II	Mr. Jim Clark Thomas Jefferson High School 6560 Braddock Road Alexandria, Virginia 22312
3. Langley Alternative Program	Mr. Thomas Cabelus Langley High School 6520 Georgetown Pike McLean, Virginia 22101

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Rockville, Maryland

CONTINUUM PROGRAMMING: A BLUEPRINT FOR MEETING EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Level 7: Specialized Facilities-  
Non-Public School

Pupil needs more protective or more intensive education setting than can be provided in public schools. (Day or residential program)

Level 6: Special School

Pupil receives prescribed program under the direction of a specially trained staff in a specially designed facility within the public school system. (Day Program)

Level 5: Full-time Special Class

Pupil receives prescribed program under the direction of a special class teacher.

Level 4: Regular Classroom and Resource Room

Pupil receives prescribed program under the direction of the regular classroom teacher; in addition he spends part time in a specially staffed and equipped resource room.

Level 3: Regular Classroom with Supplementary Instruction and Service

Pupil receives prescribed program under the direction of the regular classroom teacher; in addition he receives supplementary instruction or service from an itinerant or school-based specialist.

Level 2: Regular Classroom with Consultation to Teacher

Pupil receives prescribed program under the direction of regular classroom teacher who is supported by ongoing consultation from specialists.

Level 1: Regular Classrooms

Pupil receives prescribed program under the direction of the regular classroom teacher.

SEVERITY OF PROBLEMS

Most

Least

NUMBER OF PUPILS

Least

Most

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