

Evaluation of the Statewide Alternative Education Grant Program, 2002-2003

This report, prepared by the Oklahoma Technical Assistance Center, presents the findings from the 2002-2003 evaluation of the Statewide Alternative Education Grant Program. The report consists of two sections. The first section presents an evaluation of the grant program as a whole. The second section of the report consists of the individual evaluation reports for each of the 274 programs funded through the Statewide Alternative Education Program.

The mission of the Statewide Alternative Education Grant program was to assist Oklahoma school districts in implementing and refining alternative education programs across the state. The program's major goal was to provide all Oklahoma students with access to alternative education services. In 2002-2003, a total of 467 districts received Statewide funds. Not all of these districts implemented programs at their site. Many chose to form cooperatives with neighboring school districts or to join existing cooperative programs. Each year, the districts may revise the structure of their program by submitting a plan with the State Department of Education. By doing so, the districts may change most elements of their structure, including whether the district program will meet on site or participate in a cooperative. Districts have the freedom to change cooperative membership at the beginning of each year. The 467 districts operated a total of 274 alternative education programs. A total of 237 districts served as the LEA for at least one Statewide Alternative Education program.

The geographic distribution of the Statewide programs is depicted in Figure 1. The number of programs offered in a county or region was related to the population density of the area. Oklahoma and Tulsa counties had the greatest number of participating districts. In addition to the multiple programs offered by the Oklahoma City (9) and Tulsa Public Schools (5), eight districts in Oklahoma County and eleven districts in Tulsa County offered alternative education programs. Four counties did not have alternative education programs located within their boundaries: Alfalfa, Jefferson, Love, and Roger Mills. Participating districts in these counties joined cooperative alternative education programs in neighboring counties.

I. Student Participation and Characteristics

A total of **13,149** students was served in the Statewide Alternative Education Grant program during the 2002-2003 school year, 67 fewer students than in 2001-2002. This decrease in the number of students served was not as severe as anticipated considering the 25% budget reduction that the programs absorbed in May 2002. The program capacity, or number of “slots” reported to be available (the number of students the 274 programs could serve at any one point in time), was **8,563**, a decrease of 362 slots compared to the previous year.

Statewide Program Capacity: 8,563 Total Students Served: 13,149
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Statewide Alternative Education programs were not required to begin serving students until September 15; however, most districts opened their programs at the beginning of the school year. Most of the alternative education programs had open enrollment policies. Consequently, the enrollment numbers fluctuated throughout the year. For the most part, the programs began the school year with a group of students who continued from the previous year. Historically, enrollment levels have risen gradually throughout the fall semester and tapered off toward the end of the school year. The total enrollment did not reach the program capacity during any month. This was largely due to an overstated capacity in rural programs. Many districts calculated their program capacity as a maximum of 15 students per teacher even though they had no plans to serve that many students at a time.

Figure 2 displays the month-by-month enrollment in 2002-2003. In August the programs began the school year with 6,354 students. The number enrolled increased each month until December, when the number of students served across the state decreased from 7,692 to 7,160. This decrease was most likely the result of students graduating at the semester or being returned to the conventional school at the semester break. New students were not enrolled until January. During the second semester, the programs filled again to a high of 7,883 in February. A slight downward trend was noted through the end of the school year. This trend was due to a number of factors including early graduation, student completion of coursework before the end of the school year, and a reluctance to enroll new students late in the school year.

Evaluation sample. The evaluation of the Statewide Alternative Education Academies was based on four independent sources of information: observational data collected during site visits by OTAC staff, student surveys, student focus groups, and student outcome data. The student outcome data included both demographic and program effectiveness data. Local program staff recorded data in a customized, secure data-entry form that was made available to schools in several formats: Microsoft Access, Microsoft Excel, Open Office (available at no cost), and Star Office (available at minimal cost).

The student data gathered included demographic information, program entry and exit information, and pre-post data on educational variables strongly related to dropping out of school. These variables were identified through a review of the literature on dropping out of school and OTAC’s own studies on variables associated with dropping out in Oklahoma. Student participation

data were collected on specific program components (e.g., the number and type of counseling services provided).

Data were collected and returned by most programs in June 2003. A large number of schools were late in reporting information this year and four programs (Chouteau-Mazie, Liberty [Sequoyah County], Healdton, and South Coffeyville) did not report any student data. Some districts that operated more than one alternative education program returned a single data set while others sent separate data for each program. This year, a number of districts returned incomplete or incorrect data sets. In most years during the summer months, OTAC is able to contact the individual responsible for data collection to “clean up” problems with their data sets. This data-checking process was more limited this year because many districts had laid off alternative education and central office personnel due to state budget cuts. Ambiguous data, which in past years had been verified or corrected, was simply deleted this year. Because of the size of the data set, this had little impact on the evaluation of the Statewide Alternative Education Program *as a whole*. However, the *individual* program evaluations were affected to a greater extent.

The total evaluation data set consisted of all of the valid data available in September 2003. This evaluation sample comprised 12,879 students from 260 of the 274 programs. The remainder of this report will summarize information from this sample of 12,879 students.

Characteristics of students in alternative education programs

Grade level. Information on the students’ grade level was available for 12,858 students in the evaluation sample. Figure 3 presents the grade level distribution of alternative education students served in 2002-2003. This distribution is very much like last year’s; in fact, the stability across years is extraordinary. The programs were designed to serve students in grades 6-12; however, a very small fraction (0.4%) of students in grades 3-5 was served. Most of the students served (84%) were in high school (grades 9-12). Seniors accounted for the largest grade level served (28%). Approximately 19% of the students were in each of the grades 9-11.

Nearly 5,000 of the students were at least one year overage for the grade in which they were enrolled.

Age. The Statewide alternative education programs served students aged 8-24, but less than one percent were younger than 12 or older than 20. Students between the ages of 16 and 18 accounted for nearly 2/3 (64.4%) of all program participants. The range of Statewide students’ ages is depicted in Figure 4.

Students in Statewide Alternative Education programs tended to be older than typical students in the same grade level, usually the result of having been retained in a previous grade. (These students are referred to as “*overage for grade*” or more simply, “*overage.*”) Nearly 5,000 of the students (38.8%) were at least one year overage for the grade in which they were enrolled (see Figure 5).

Gender. One of the most stable findings from year to year is that more males than females were served in alternative education programs. In 2002-2003, 53.8% of the students were males (see Figure 6). More males than females were served at every grade level. The disparity was more pronounced in grades 6-8; the number of males served was almost twice that of females (see Table 1).

Table 1. Gender distribution of students by grade level.

Grade	Gender	
	F	M
3	37.5%	62.5%
4	26.7%	73.3%
5	16.7%	83.3%
6	28.3%	71.7%
7	34.8%	65.2%
8	40.0%	59.9%
9	47.4%	52.6%
10	48.7%	51.3%
11	47.1%	52.9%
12	48.5%	51.5%
Total	46.1%	53.9%

The increased number of females served in the higher grade levels may be the result of differences in program design and purpose. For example, the majority of programs at the middle school level were designed to bring about behavioral changes, while the high school programs were more focused on academics. This difference was evident in the students' reported reasons for referral (Figure 7). The referral profiles by gender were quite dissimilar. The primary reason for referral for both genders was academic deficiency. The #2 reason for males – behavioral difficulties – was the #5 reason for females. The #2 reason for females was their status as pregnant or parenting teens, the least common reason for referral for males.

Race. Figure 8 shows the distribution of minority students in alternative programs. The percentage of minority students in Statewide Alternative Education programs has been increasing at a very slow rate over the past few years (Table 2). This year, the percentage of minority students was 42.5%; the highest in the program's history. Last year (2001-02), 39% of the alternative education students were members of racial or ethnic minorities; the value in 2000-01 was 37.5%; in 1999-2000 it was 37.2%.

Table 2. Racial/ethnic composition of students in evaluation sample and all Oklahoma public schools.

Population	African-American	Asian-American	Caucasian	Hispanic/Latino	Native American	Other
All public schools	11%	1%	64%	6%	17%	-
Statewide AE 2002-03	17%	0%	58%	7%	17%	1%
Statewide AE 2001-02	16%	0%	61%	6%	16%	1%
Statewide AE 2000-01	11%	0%	61%	5%	16%	0%

In 33 programs, the proportion of minority students was 2/3 or greater. The predominant minorities tended to be African Americans in urban areas and Native Americans in other parts of Oklahoma. Hispanic/Latino students were in the majority in only one program (located in the Panhandle). The 33 programs with a high proportion of minorities included eight Oklahoma City schools but only one in Tulsa. Two suburban programs were in this group. Small cities in southern and

eastern Oklahoma and rural towns in all parts of the state were also equally represented in this high proportion of minorities group.

In many cases, one minority group comprised most, if not all, of the students served by the alternative education program. A case in point is the Jones Academy, which served students who attended a residential program for American Indian youth. The racial distribution of students in each program is reviewed annually to determine whether participants are differentially referred (or placed). Over the past ten years, relatively few programs have shown a substantial discrepancy between the district (or neighborhood) ethnic profile and the alternative education ethnic profile.

Reason for referral. A reason for referral to the Statewide alternative program was reported for all but 26 students in the evaluation sample. The population of students in alternative education programs included students for whom dropping out of school was imminent, students in need of only a few credits to graduate, former dropouts, low achievers, students with behavioral problems, and students dealing with life crises such as pregnancy or parenting. The major reasons for referral and the proportion of students associated with them are displayed in Figure 9. Academic deficiency was the easily the most frequently reported reason for referral to a Statewide program, accounting for more than one third (35.9%) of the total population. Behavioral difficulties (17.1%) and excessive absences (14.5%) were also commonly reported as reasons for referral.

Student age and grade level were factors in the referral to an alternative program. Table 3 presents the reasons for referral by grade level. In the middle school grades, behavioral difficulty was clearly the principal reason for referral, accounting for 38% of all referrals in grades 6-8. As students grew up, the percentage of behavioral referrals dropped sharply, to 21% for ninth-graders and to 8% for seniors. Middle schools tended to implement programs that identified and removed misbehavers from the regular class environment, in most cases for the full school day. High school programs, except for a few programs in which students were placed as an alternative to suspension, tended to be academically oriented.

Referral Reason	Grade Level							
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
Absences	12.1%	10.8%	13.2%	15.3%	15.2%	14.3%	14.9%	14.5%
Academic	26.8%	38.2%	27.8%	26.2%	33.2%	38.6%	45.4%	36.0%
Behavioral	46.8%	34.0%	38.0%	20.8%	15.7%	11.7%	7.7%	17.1%
Pregnant/parenting	0%	1.0%	4.6%	9.6%	10.4%	10.4%	9.9%	8.9%
Adjustment	7.6%	9.7%	8.5%	8.9%	8.8%	9.4%	6.4%	8.2%
Former dropout	2.2%	2.4%	4.0%	10.7%	10.6%	10.5%	11.9%	9.8%

Referral Reason	Grade Level							
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
Juvenile justice	.6%	.4%	1.5%	3.1%	2.7%	2.1%	1.0%	1.9%
Other	3.8%	3.3%	2.4%	5.3%	3.5%	2.9%	2.8%	3.6%

In only nine of the 260 programs were more than half the students referred because of bad behavior. Six of these were in urban areas (in descending order: OKC About Face, Putnam City Cooper Middle School, Canadian County Education Cooperative, Putnam City Mayfield Middle School, Tulsa Pershing, and Tulsa Twilight). Three (Cushing High School, Oktaha, and Skiatook MS) were in small towns. Only one (Oktaha) was a cooperative. In contrast to these nine, 54 programs reported that none of their students were referred because of behavior. With the exception of Tulsa's Margaret Hudson, Oklahoma City Emerson's Outreach, and Ponca City's Teen Pep programs (for pregnant and parenting teens), all of these were situated in small towns or rural areas. 127 programs reported that no more than 10% of their students were referred for this reason.

In 94 programs, at least half of all students were referred because of academic difficulties. In 31 programs, at least half were referred because of problems in living (this category includes former dropouts, pregnant and parenting teens, students experiencing a wide range of difficulties that were classified as "adjustment problems," and students who were directly referred to the alternative program by juvenile justice agencies). Three programs limited their services to pregnant and parenting teens. Eleven programs successfully targeted former dropouts; more than one third of their students were in this high-risk category. In 12 programs, at least 10% of the students were directly referred by juvenile justice agencies.

Student gender was a factor in the reason for student referral to a Statewide alternative education program (see Figure 7). Males were more likely to be referred because of behavioral problems than for any other reason. Of the students referred because of misbehavior, 72.7 percent were male. Ten percent of the alternative education population were pregnant or parenting teens; nearly all (96.7 percent) were female. The number of females served was greater than males in only two other groups, students referred because of adjustment problems and because of excessive absences.

Reason for Referral		Racial/Ethnic Identification				Total
		African American	Caucasian	Hispanic	Native American	
Excessive Absences	Count	240	1043	145	408	1863
	Percent	10.80%	14.10%	16.50%	18.40%	14.50%
Academic Deficiency	Count	585	2902	327	754	4626
	Percent	26.40%	39.20%	37.30%	34.10%	36.00%
Behavioral Difficulties	Count	602	1107	114	360	2202
	Percent	27.10%	15.00%	13.00%	16.30%	17.10%

Reason for Referral		Racial/Ethnic Identification				
		African American	Caucasian	Hispanic	Native American	Total
Pregnant/parenting teen	Count	244	547	124	212	1140
	Percent	11.00%	7.40%	14.10%	9.60%	8.90%
Adjustment problem	Count	89	701	42	215	1058
	Percent	4.00%	9.50%	4.80%	9.70%	8.20%
Recovered dropout	Count	201	790	70	183	1259
	Percent	9.10%	10.70%	8.00%	8.30%	9.80%
Juvenile justice referral	Count	47	145	11	42	248
	Percent	2.10%	2.00%	1.30%	1.90%	1.90%
Other	Count	210	159	44	39	457
	Percent	9.50%	2.20%	5.00%	1.80%	3.60%
Total	Count	2218	7394	877	2213	12853
	Percent	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

The reasons for referral for each racial group that represented at least five percent of the alternative education students in Oklahoma are delineated in Table 4 and depicted in Figure 10. The referral profiles for all groups were similar except for African-Americans. African-American children were referred for behavioral difficulties far more often than any other group. Urban programs, which had greater percentages of African-Americans in alternative education programs, were more likely to refer students for misbehavior. Note also that 9.5% of African-American youth were referred to alternative education programs for unspecified "Other" reasons. This unusually high percentage is attributable to the referral reporting for Oklahoma City's SeeWorth Academy. SeeWorth is easily the largest Statewide program. It enrolled 652 students for at least part of the school year; 83% of SeeWorth's population was African American. SeeWorth reported that 35% of its students were referred for unspecified reasons.

II. Characteristics of Alternative Education Programs

Statewide alternative education programs were created in all shapes and sizes, from stand-alone alternative schools serving more than 600 students to solitary teachers working in abandoned buildings with five to fifteen students. Common arrangements for alternative education programs included separate buildings on school campuses, separate wings within larger school buildings, single classrooms within schools, and off-campus locations. Alternative programs included full-day alternative schools, part-day alternative schools, evening alternative schools, alternative classrooms (either day or evening), and supplemental programs.

Program arrangements and teaching qualifications

Alternative education programs, and in particular high-quality alternative education programs, were difficult to classify into discrete categories. These are programs whose goal is to “break the mold” as they often do not fit neatly into existing categories. Various classification schemes have been developed by theorists and practitioners; these were not useful in describing the wide variety of programs conducted with Statewide Alternative Academy funds because so many of the programs were “hybrids” – borrowing structures and strategies in order to design an alternative program that will meet the needs of students, faculty, administrators, parents, and local communities.

One defining factor was the time of day alternative education programs were in operation (see Figures 11-13). Full-day programs ran on roughly the same schedule as the conventional school and were open 30 or more hours per week. Part-time programs were more varied; they included half-day programs, evening programs, and supplemental programs.

The law that created the Statewide Alternative Education Program included an exception to Oklahoma teacher certification requirements. This exception states that,

...a certified teacher who is qualified to teach in an alternative education program or alternative school as determined by the district board of education offering the alternative education program or alternative school or who teaches students in a residential or treatment facility may be certified to teach subjects in which the teacher does not hold certification. The rules shall provide:

- 1. The certification may be granted only upon application of a district board of education offering an alternative education program or alternative school pursuant to the provisions of this act or upon application of a district board of education offering a residential or treatment facility; and*
- 2. The teacher's certification in subjects in which the teacher does not otherwise hold certification pursuant to the provisions of this section shall be valid only for purposes of teaching in the alternative education program or alternative school offered by the district board or in a residential or treatment facility located within the district making application. (70-1210.567)*

When this legislation was passed, its purpose was to encourage districts to hire excellent teachers in their alternative programs. In fact, the law required them to pay these teachers 5% more. Two of the seventeen criteria set out in state law relate to the qualifications of teachers:

- *Demonstrate that teaching faculty are appropriately licensed or certified teachers.*
- *Demonstrate that teaching faculty have been selected on the basis of a record of successful work with at-risk students or personal and educational factors that qualify them for work with at-risk students.(70-1210.568)*

In the school year 2003-2004, alternative education programs in Oklahoma's rural schools may be affected by changes in federal law. Accompanying the description of each type of program arrangement is a preliminary analysis of the impact of the "highly qualified teacher" requirements of federal education law.¹ The law, as currently interpreted, requires all secondary-level teachers to either pass a certification test (any teacher not currently employed by the district) or meet uniform state standards for each subject they teach (currently employed teachers).

Full-time Programs. Full-time programs afford students the opportunity to take a full load of classes within the alternative setting. This was the largest group of programs, comprising 53.1% of the total. The typical full-day program employed the equivalent of two full-time teachers and had a program capacity of 30 students.

Two types of full-day programs, stand-alone alternative schools and alternative classrooms, were defined. *Stand-alone alternative schools* were defined as programs placed outside the conventional school building, operating at least 30 hours per week and staffed by at least four full-time teachers. These programs tended to be situated in larger communities; those in rural areas were cooperative programs formed by several smaller districts.

Teachers in stand-alone alternative schools, for the most part, were content-area specialists who taught within their area of certification. Because most of these programs were large enough to employ content-area specialist in four core areas, stand-alone alternative schools should not have any difficulty in conforming to the narrowly-framed "highly qualified teacher" requirements of federal education law.

¹It should be noted that, at the time this report was completed, the US Department of Education had not released final regulations regarding the requirements for "highly qualified teachers" set out in the 2001 re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, also referred to as the "No Child Left Behind" Act. Appraisal of the impact of this law on Oklahoma's alternative education programs was based upon draft (non-regulatory) guidance released by the US DOE in September 2003.

Small districts often offered daytime *alternative classrooms*, rather than alternative schools. These programs, usually located in or near the regular school, were taught by one teacher (infrequently, two teachers) in a “one-room schoolhouse” environment. The teacher was responsible for teaching all curriculum areas and many were generalists trained in special education or elementary education. Alternative classroom programs will be adversely impacted by the expected requirements for “highly qualified teachers.” Teachers in alternative classroom programs would, by definition, be designated as “not highly qualified” for at least part of the school day. This could require a teacher to meet these requirements for as many as fourteen separate certification areas.

Half-day Programs. Part-time alternative programs were generally of three types: half-day programs, evening programs, and supplementary programs. Half-day programs operated during the school day. Generally, the program was open either in the morning or afternoon, allowing students to enroll in Career Tech during the other half day. Most districts operated half-day programs because they were less expensive; a few operated half-day programs as a way of developing innovative educational opportunities for high-risk or disaffected students.

Since half-day programs, by definition, did not provide students with the opportunity to take a full class load in the alternative setting, teachers and administrators worked to find both conventional and creative ways in which their students could legitimately earn course credit. These choices included enrollment in an area Career Tech, part-time enrollment at the traditional high school, work-study options, and service-learning courses. The proportion of programs that operated for only a half day was markedly reduced, from 34% in 2001-02 to 18% in 2002-03. The average number of hours of operation per week for these programs was 20.24.

Most half-day programs were small; the median program capacity was 15 students. These programs faced the same difficulties as the alternative classroom programs – they were too small to have more than one teacher. The only way to provide a “highly qualified teacher” for each subject area was to change teachers for each subject. This has, indeed, been tried in a few locations, without success.

Evening programs. Evening programs allowed students who work during the day to attend school. This was of benefit to a small proportion of at-risk students. The principal advantages of operating night programs accrue to districts, administrators, teachers, and low-risk students. Evening programs were less expensive to operate. They required no additional space and fewer staff hours. Many were staffed by (and provided extra income for) regular faculty members who teach one or two nights a week. Evening programs could be used (and misused) to permit regular-education students to make up missed credits; this was especially attractive in districts that have no provision for summer school. These programs permitted districts to completely remove high-risk adolescents from the regular

Five years ago, one fourth of all Statewide Alternative Academies were part-time evening programs. In 2002-03, only 17% were operated solely in the evening.

learning environment. For these reasons, evening programs were very popular when the Statewide Alternative Education Program was initiated.

Five years ago, one fourth of all Statewide Alternative Academies were part-time evening programs. As evaluative feedback has been accrued on the effectiveness of these programs, their number has slowly but steadily declined. In 2002-2003, only 47 (17.1%) of all Statewide Alternative Academies were operated solely in the evening.

Evening programs were generally open for fewer hours per week than daytime programs; consequently, students lacked the opportunity to earn a satisfactory number of credits each semester. The State Board of Education is routinely asked to approve deregulation applications from districts operating evening programs. Most evening programs requested deregulation from the requirement that all programs follow the regular school calendar. Many districts found it counterproductive to try to keep their programs open on Friday nights. During the 2002-2003 school year, 70% of the evening programs asked for deregulation from the time/calendar requirement. Since most evening programs were open the minimum length required for a school day (4 hours, 12 minutes), the deregulated programs could be open less than 17 hours per week.

Two years ago, OTAC began emphasizing the number of credits students earned toward graduation in its evaluative feedback to school districts. Evaluation studies over several years had demonstrated that evening programs were just as likely as day programs to have positive student outcomes, with one important exception – students earned fewer credits toward graduation. In 2001-2002, less than half (44%) of the evening programs were open 20 or more hours per week. This year, despite state budget cuts (and threats of further cuts), the number of hours that evening programs were open increased; 57% were open 20 or more hours.

In small districts, evening programs may be the only way to provide an alternative education program with teachers who are certified in all the areas that they teach. This has a high cost – a lack of the continuity and sense of community that is integral to effective alternative education programs. Some districts have been successful in operating an evening program in which a program director or counselor is present each night to provide constancy; others provide this by arranging for weekly or biweekly meetings to foster communication among teachers and create a sense of “faculty.”

Supplemental programs. Statewide programs were classified as supplemental if they did not provide a substantial proportion of the typical student’s day or if they offered only ancillary services (e.g., tutoring). These programs were located in small, rural districts. In six districts, a supplemental program was the only “alternative education” option. Eight programs served at least half their Statewide Alternative students on a supplemental basis. In 26 programs, at least one third of the alternative students were served for less than three hours per day.

In most cases, districts that served students for only one or two hours per day were using their Statewide Alternative Education funds to provide high-school students with a free option for credit

recovery. Credit recovery options allow students who have failed courses to “catch up” on credits that they need to graduate. Evening programs were more likely to serve credit recovery students.

Supplemental programs, again this year, were found to serve a greater proportion of students who would not be classified as “at risk.” These programs were also far less likely to meet the 17 criteria for alternative education programs mandated by law, which is not surprising since they were not true alternative education programs.

Instructional time

Alternative education programs, by law, may operate on an abbreviated school day. The State Board and Department of Education have determined that any program planning to operate for less than 4 hours 12 minutes per day, five days per week, in accordance with the district’s regular school calendar, must file an application for deregulation. The degree to which schools have taken advantage of this provision increased substantially in 2001-2002 (when program funds were cut by 25%) and remained steady this year. According to records provided by the Department, 46 of the 260 programs in the evaluation sample were deregulated; most of these were related to the abbreviated school day.

The mean (and median) number of hours of operation for all programs was 25 hours. The variance in the number of hours of operation was quite large; the standard deviation was 7.4 hours per week. Twenty percent of all programs engaged students less than 20 hours per week. Another 20% engaged students 35 or more hours per week. Some of these programs had a unique format that accommodated a variety of student needs. They ran three 4-hour sessions per day (morning, afternoon, evening). Students could enroll in one, two, or three sessions. Some teens who had to work or care for children during the day enrolled only in the evening session. Former dropouts who wanted to work hard to earn their diploma as quickly as possible could enroll in all three sessions, although they did have to demonstrate a capacity to handle the course load.

Curriculum and instruction

Since 1998, the year in which the Statewide Alternative Education Program was initiated, a large proportion of programs have relied on “canned” course materials – either computer-delivered or text-based. Students independently worked through course materials. Initially, commercial vendors had convinced district personnel (who had never operated alternative education programs) that their software or text package was complete – students did not need anything else (except for occasional help from a teacher) to complete a high school curriculum.

The proportion of programs that relied on packaged instruction increased each year as the number of programs expanded rapidly. Vendors successfully placed their products in the majority of alternative schools. These products were useful in helping districts initiate their new alternative programs. As the programs and teachers matured, the reliance on packaged curricula leveled off. In 2000-01, the percentage of programs that relied primarily on pre-packaged course materials began to level off (57%); it remained at a steady through 2001-02 and decreased, for the first time, in 2002-03.

The principal emphasis of OTAC and the SDE over the past three years has been the improvement of curriculum and instruction in alternative education programs. These two agencies have worked together to reduce program reliance on packaged materials and to improve the academic rigor of alternative education programs. They agencies used the introduction of end-of-instruction tests to motivate teachers to develop course syllabi based on the PASS skills and document their students' mastery levels. The principal method employed to effect change was professional development. The processes involved included:

This year marked the first substantial reduction in programs' reliance on pre-packaged courses.

- an intensive, site-based teacher coaching process (OTAC),
- a full-day initial training for new alternative education teachers (OTAC),
- an annual summer conference (SDE/OTAC),
- less formal regional teacher meetings (OTAC),
- and dissemination of printed and web-based information (OTAC/SDE).

In 2002-03, field observations suggested a number of qualitative changes in the use of packaged curricula. This year, the first substantial reduction in programs' reliance on pre-packaged courses was noted: only 40% of Statewide alternative education programs relied on packaged course materials to provide at least half of the instruction. While this represents a substantial change in curricular emphasis in Oklahoma alternative education programs, 12% of programs still relied on packaged materials to provide 90% or more of the total instruction.

Traditional textbooks have replaced commercial course packages as the basic material for instruction in Statewide Alternative Education Programs. Half of all programs (51.3%) used textbooks as their primary instructional material; in another 26.2%, textbooks were relied on to a significant degree. This represents a substantial change over last year, when only 25% of programs relied on textbooks as their primary material. Reliance on textbooks as the principal material does not mean that all instruction is textbook-dependent. Approximately one-fourth of the instruction in Oklahoma alternative education programs was activity-based; this type of instruction was typically built on teacher-developed units of instruction that were cross-curricular in nature.

Credit accrual

Instruction in many alternative education programs was highly individualized – students worked at their own pace through designated materials in order to earn course credit. Many alternative programs used self-paced learning as a motivational tool. In more than half (61%) of all Statewide alternative programs, course credit could be earned by demonstrating competency (see Figure 14). In competency-based programs, students were not allowed to move forward in the curriculum until they demonstrated that they had learned the material. In most courses, an average of at least 70% was required before moving on. (In a few programs, a grade of 80% was required.) On-site evaluation of alternative education programs suggested that this is one of the most important and most successful

features for increasing student engagement in learning. Students' written responses to open-ended questions on an annual survey have consistently referenced their opportunity to work at their own pace as one of the key motivational features of alternative education.

In traditional secondary schools and in 16% of Statewide programs, course credit was earned by completing 65-70 hours of class time with a course average of at least 60%. (This is often referred to as "seat time" or a Carnegie unit – the benchmark by which most courses are defined.) Advocates of a competency-based system believe that the "seat time" standard teaches students that "barely passing" is good enough; conversely, competency-based programs encourage students to increase the quality of their work. Because competency-based programs only give credit for work that is at the "C" level or better, they build a pattern and habit of success.

The remaining 21% of Statewide programs awarded credit on the basis of a mix of competency-based and Carnegie principles. In mixed systems, students who completed course requirements before accruing a minimum amount of "seat time" were not awarded credit; they were instead assigned additional work. This hybrid system is usually put in place because of concerns that competency-only systems allow students to earn credits too quickly. OTAC field staff have determined that this concern, which is sometimes warranted by actual data and sometimes speculative, is usually a concern about the academic rigor of the alternative education program. OTAC's recommendations to districts generally focus on separating the issues:

- Academic rigor is an important issue that merits considerable attention. To help districts assess the academic rigor of their alternative education programs, OTAC has changed its data collection requirements to include student scores on the Oklahoma School Testing Program 5th-grade, 8th-grade, and End-of-Instruction (EOI) exams. The 5th-grade and 8th-grade test scores will be used to set a baseline expectation for students' scores on the EOI tests. These data will provide a rough measure of program rigor in core courses.²
- Districts that are concerned about academic rigor should address that issue explicitly. Requiring 70 hours of "seat time" usually does not result in greater academic rigor. In fact, the results are often contrary to policymakers' intent and result in lowered student motivation and increased alienation.
- Some districts are satisfied with the academic rigor of their programs but were concerned about students who are able to meet requirements too quickly. In general, this type of concern indicates a perception problem that often results from the isolation of the alternative education program from the rest of the school community. Productive responses – those that result in program improvement – generally focus on freely providing information, inviting scrutiny, and fostering better communication and increased familiarity with the program and its students.

²Note that this is different from the schools' use of OSTP scores to determine the proportion that reach a proficient level (in accordance with NCLB). Assuming that the program is of sufficient size, OTAC will use the test scores to determine (a) the proportion of students who are proficient, and (b) whether the program resulted in improvement over students' baseline levels.

Length of enrollment

The average length of enrollment in 2002-03 was 22 weeks – longer than a school semester. (This statistic excludes winter and spring breaks). A steady increase has been noted in this statistic during the six years of the Statewide Alternative Program, followed by a leveling-off over the past two years. This is another indicator of the development of alternative education programs into long-term alternatives rather than short-term disciplinary placements. Only one fifth of all Statewide Alternative Programs had an average enrollment less than one semester. Only one program (Hinton) had an average stay of less than nine weeks.

Program type

Alternative education programs can be classified into two categories, based upon the research of Dr. Mary Ann Raywid. Raywid has studied alternative education programs for more than 30 years and developed a typology based upon program purpose. This typology has been employed in much of the published research on alternative education programs:

- Type I programs are characterized by *voluntary participation* of students. They are schools of choice whose primary purpose is to provide a curriculum and atmosphere that are conducive to students earning the credits needed for graduation.
- Type II programs are characterized as *disciplinary* programs. Enrollment is not voluntary; these programs are typically alternatives to suspension. Their purpose is to segregate disruptive students.

Using the definitions and descriptions in Raywid’s typology, OTAC field observers classified each Statewide Alternative program. Very few could be classified as “pure types” along the comprehensive dimensions defined by Raywid. More than half (57%) met enough of the criteria to be classified as a Type I program. Only 16% were classified as Type II. A substantial number, 27%, had characteristics of both types and were classified as “Mixed.”

As a check on the validity of OTAC classifications, the proportion of students who voluntarily enrolled in each program was recorded. Voluntary enrollment is the key characteristic, but not the only characteristic, in the Raywid typology. An initial analysis revealed that only six programs had a mandatory enrollment policy for 100% of their students. The classification of programs as Type II was more dependent upon other characteristics (e.g., program purpose, segregation of students, referral process). Type I programs were easier to identify; 76 programs voluntarily enrolled 100% of their students. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and post hoc analysis demonstrated that the OTAC field staff differentiated three clear program types. The percentage of voluntary enrollment for each program type is depicted in Figure 15.

Raywid’s extensive research concluded that Type I programs have the best evidence of effectiveness for the students enrolled in them. A preliminary factor analysis suggested that Oklahoma’s program component and student outcome data support Raywid’s conclusions. Preliminary analyses

indicated that the data will support detailed studies of the relative effectiveness of Type I and Type II programs as well as studies of the program components most associated with successful programs.

Table 5. ANOVA Summary Table: Raywid Types and Voluntary Enrollment.					
Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	58706.41	2	29353.21	80.04	0.000
Within Groups	91687.31	250	366.75		
Total	150393.72	252			
Tukey HSD: Multiple Comparisons					
Dependent Variable: Percent Voluntary					
Program Type	Program Type	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	
Mixed	Type I	25.06	2.83	0.000	
	Type II	12.16	3.77	0.004	
Type I	Mixed	25.06	2.83	0.000	
	Type II	37.22	3.36	0.000	
Type II	Mixed	12.16	3.77	0.004	
	Type I	37.22	3.36	0.000	

III. Program Compliance and Quality Assessment

OTAC Field Coordinators conducted 1,215 site visits to Statewide Alternative Education programs, an average of 4½ visits to each alternative education program during the school year. These visits had a dual purpose: program evaluation and technical assistance. The program evaluation emphasis was formative evaluation, providing useful feedback with a goal of program improvement. Field Coordinators offered technical assistance in the areas of professional development, curriculum standards, alignment with the Oklahoma Priority Academic Student Skills, program development, policy development, and “troubleshooting” specific problems with the alternative education program staff and district administrators. At the end of the year, Field Coordinators used the information they collected during site visits and other technical assistance contacts, as well as project documents, to rate each program’s level of implementation of the seventeen criteria established by Oklahoma school law.

OTAC has developed and refined an evaluation rubric for rating each program’s implementation of the 17 criteria. A copy of the rubric (see Appendix) is provided to each Statewide Alternative Education program as an initial step in the program evaluation process. The rubric has undergone continual revision to ensure inter-rater reliability and to make certain that it accurately reflects current variations in practice. Each set of ratings is reviewed for reliability and validity; this includes a check of the congruence between implementation ratings and student outcomes. Program ratings, once reviewed and revised if necessary, are detailed in of each program’s evaluation report.

Nine of the criteria were rated on a Criterion Met/Not Met basis. The remaining criteria were rated on a five-point scale that ranged from Exemplary to Noncompliance. The mean ratings on each criterion are enumerated in Table 6.

<i>Criterion</i>	<i>Mean Rating</i>
Intake and Screening	3.52
Collaboration	3.41
Individualized Instruction	3.45
Counseling and Social Services	3.22
Individual Graduation Plans	3.77
Life Skills Instruction	3.59
Self Evaluation	3.41
Effective Instruction	3.32
Arts Education	3.29
Average	3.45

Rating Scale

5 = Exemplary
 4 = Excellent
 3 = Satisfactory
 2 = Minimal Compliance
 1 = Noncompliance

In 2002-03, the overall average rating for these nine criteria was 3.46 – halfway between “Satisfactory” and “Excellent.” All numerically rated criteria had mean ratings greater than Satisfactory. The highest-rated criterion was one of the most important, developing an individual graduation plan for each student. The OTAC field observer’s rating on this criterion is validated by a review of the program’s dropout and graduation rates. In other words, programs cannot achieve high ratings on this criterion simply by developing graduation plans on paper only. The value of the plans must be established by a high graduation rate and a low dropout rate. Other criteria with a mean rating higher than 3.5 were Intake and Screening and Life Skills Instruction.

A second analysis of the ratings focused on the proportion of programs that earned ratings of “Noncompliant” or “Minimally Compliant.” Table 7 shows the number of programs that were rated as Noncompliant on at least one of the seventeen criteria. More than 80% of programs were in compliance with all 17 criteria. More than 90% of the programs complied with all of the criteria but one. Eight programs were out of compliance with at least three of the criteria, signaling a failure to implement even a marginally adequate alternative education program.

<i>Number of Criteria with which Program were Noncompliant</i>	<i>Number of Programs</i>	<i>Percent of Programs</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent of Programs</i>
0	227	82.5	82.5
1	30	10.9	93.5
2	10	3.6	97.1
3	5	1.8	98.9
5	1	.4	99.3
6	1	.4	99.6
8	1	.4	100.0
Total	288	100.0	100.0

The next two tables provide detail on the criteria. Table 8 summarizes compliance information by criterion for the eight criteria that were rated on the five-point continuum. Table 9 summarizes compliance data for the nine criteria rated on a Met/Not Met basis.

Criterion	Noncompliant Schools	Criterion	Noncompliant Schools
Counseling/social services	16	Individualized instruction	4
Art	14	Effective instruction	2
Collaboration	11	Life Skills	1
Intake and screening	7	Individual graduation plan	0
Self-evaluation	5	Total criteria	60

Criterion	Met	Not Met
Courses meet curricular standards	99.6%	0.4%
Program budget	99.6%	0.4%
Student participation	99.3%	0.7%
Certified teachers	98.9%	1.1%
Clear and measurable program objectives	98.1%	1.9%
Faculty selection guidelines	97.8%	2.2%
Effective class size and student/teacher ratio	97.8%	2.2%

Again this year, counseling/social services was the criterion most frequently cited for non compliance. Sixteen programs failed to implement even minimally-compliant counseling programs. Fourteen programs failed to implement an arts component within their alternative program. Eleven did not make at least a minimal effort to develop a collaborative relationship with community agencies or organizations. On the seven criteria assessed as Met or Not Met, most of the Oklahoma school districts met the requirements without difficulty, although 7.3 % were out of compliance with one or more criteria. The number of criteria that schools did not meet ranged from one to two: 5.8% of Statewide programs failed to meet one criterion, 1.5% failed to meet two.

These numbers were similar to last year's, giving the impression that the state budget reductions did not affect program compliance. However, half of the Statewide Alternative Education programs had at least one rating of "Minimally Compliant." This did signal a reduction of services, and qualitative information gathered by OTAC's field staff indicated that state budget reductions were a critical factor. For example, many districts terminated their contractual relationships with counseling and social service

agencies, instead reporting that their school counselors would provide services on an “as-needed” basis. In most of these cases, student data and surveys revealed that regular counseling sessions were not held or were held infrequently.

Table 10. Number of Schools rated as <i>Minimally Compliant</i> on Qualitatively-Rated Criteria, 2002-2003.			
<i>Criterion</i>	<i>Minimally Compliant Programs</i>	<i>Criterion</i>	<i>Minimally Compliant Programs</i>
Counseling/social services	53	Individualized instruction	27
Art	45	Effective instruction	50
Collaboration	34	Life Skills	28
Intake and screening	20	Individual graduation plan	16
Self-evaluation	64	Total criteria	337

IV. Program Effectiveness

Student status at end-of-year

At the end of the year, program directors recorded the educational status of each student. The overall results are presented in Figure 16. Four exit categories, shaded in green in Figure 16, were classified as “positive exits.” These four categories (graduated, returned to the traditional school, continuing in the alternative education program, and earned GED) comprised 72.2% of all Statewide Alternative Education students. Two categories, dropped out and suspended, were classified as “negative exits.” The dropout rate for students in the Statewide Alternative Education program was 12.5%. Less than 2% left school due to long-term suspension. The remaining categories were classified as neutral exits.

Students with a positive exit status comprised nearly three fourths of the program participants.

Table 11 presents the exit status for students by grade level. The most frequently recorded end-of-year status for students in grades 6-8 were “returned to traditional school” and “continuing in the program.” Few districts developed programs that allowed for continuous service directly from a middle school alternative program to a high school alternative program. For this reason, “returned to the traditional program” was the exit status recorded for half of the eighth grade participants.

“Continuing in the program” was also the most frequently reported end-of-year status for students in grades 9-11. Although “returned to traditional school” was the second most frequently recorded reason for exit at the high school level, the percentages were approximately half of those at the middle school level.

Table 11. End-of-year status by grade level, Statewide Alternative program, 2002-03.								
Exit Status	Grade Level							
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
Early exit	1.6%	0.7%	0.7%	1.7%	1.3%	1.0%	0.8%	1.1%
Graduated	0.0%	0.3%	0.2%	0.8%	2.2%	11.3%	68.8%	22.1%
Returned traditional school	40.6%	43.4%	49.8%	23.2%	19.8%	16.6%	5.1%	19.7%
Continuing	35.5%	34.4%	22.8%	33.8%	42.9%	42.5%	8.2%	29.4%
GED	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	1.4%	1.7%	1.4%	1.1%	1.2%
Moved	11.3%	10.0%	8.0%	9.2%	7.9%	5.9%	3.6%	6.8%
Referred	3.2%	3.6%	5.7%	6.9%	6.3%	3.4%	1.7%	4.3%

Table 11. End-of-year status by grade level, Statewide Alternative program, 2002-03.

Exit Status	Grade Level							
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
Dropped out	4.5%	5.4%	7.8%	17.9%	14.3%	15.1%	9.0%	12.5%
Suspended	2.9%	1.6%	3.4%	3.1%	1.9%	1.9%	.8%	1.9%
Other	0.3%	0.4%	1.2%	2.0%	1.7%	1.1%	0.8%	1.3%

More than two thirds (68.8%) of the seniors graduated; another 1.1% earned GEDs. Additionally, 12.7% of the juniors and 3.9% of the sophomores successfully completed their educational careers through graduation or GED.³ A total of 2,962 students in the evaluation sample graduated or earned GEDs this year. This value can be used to estimate the total number of graduates at 3,024.

This year, the dropout rate for participants in the Statewide Alternative Education Program was 12.5%. Last year, the dropout rate was 10.8%; it was 13.1% in 2000-01. In general, the graduation rate was down by about 2% and the dropout rate was up about 2% over the statistics reported last year. This was due, in large part, to a change in the way the percentages were calculated.⁴

Characteristics of students who dropped out:

- The dropouts ranged in grade level from six to twelve although 90% were in high school (grades 9-12). 18% of all the dropouts were classified as ninth-graders. In fact, more than one-fourth (26.2%) of all ninth-graders in alternative education programs dropped out of school.
- Students who were older than their grade peers were far more likely to drop out of school. 62% of the dropouts were classified as overage for grade. This compares to 39% of the entire sample.

³High-school students' grade classifications were based upon the number of accumulated credits as of the beginning of the school year. No distinction was made between students who needed only one credit to move to the next grade level and those who needed six.

⁴In the past, "early exiters" – students who were enrolled in the program for less than three weeks – were eliminated from the database before these statistics were run. This year, a decision was made to begin including early exiters in this part of the statistical analysis of program effectiveness. The number of early exiters is routinely calculated as a part of each individual program evaluation in order to provide feedback to the few programs who lose a relatively large number of students shortly after they enroll. This is usually an indicator that the alternative education program needs to institute some type of new student orientation system.

- Nearly half (45.5%) of the students who dropped out of Statewide alternative education programs had been referred to the program because of excessive absences or academic difficulties.
- 21.4% of dropouts were students who had dropped out of school at least once before. These students comprised the referral group most likely to drop out of school. Students referred by juvenile justice agencies and those referred for unspecified reasons also had dropout rates of approximately 20%
- The referral groups least likely to drop out were those with behavioral difficulties or academic deficiencies. The dropout rates for these groups were 9% and 11%, respectively.
- The dropout rates for males and females were similar.
- African-American students had the highest dropout rate (17.4%), followed by Hispanic (14.8%), Native American (13.8%), and Caucasian (12.4%) students.

Student performance

In order to determine program effectiveness, Statewide Alternative Programs collected data on five common variables highly related to dropping out of school. The data collected for each student included grades, test scores, credits earned (for younger students, courses passed), absences, and disciplinary referrals. Two types of analyses were conducted: pre-post analyses, involving only students enrolled in Statewide programs, and treatment-comparison group analyses.

Pre-post analyses. Pre-post analyses were conducted on variables most highly related to dropping out of school:

- grade point averages
- number of courses or classes successfully completed
- number of absences
- number of days suspended

Each program was asked to collect data on these four variables from (1) the most recent semester completed by the student prior to program entry, and (2) the spring semester of the 2002-2003 school year (or the most recent semester completed in alternative education). Of the 12,879 students in the evaluation database, 11,106 had pre-post data pairs on at least one variable, and 7,220 had pre-post data pairs on all four variables.

These data, along with program-specific information, were used in the evaluation of the individual projects. The individual program evaluations are included in this report. To evaluate the grant program as a whole, the data were combined. Given the large number of students in the database, tests of statistical significance were not needed for simple analyses when using students as the unit of analysis. Tests of significance were used when conducting factor studies (including discriminant

analyses), for tests including the smaller comparison group, and when using the program as the unit of analysis.

Student pre-post test scores on standardized achievement tests were analyzed separately. At least one pre-post set of test scores was available for 7,903 students. Most test score data was reported in three formats: normal curve equivalents (NCEs) and percentiles (which were changed to NCE scores), regular standard scores (with a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15), and Tests of Adult Basic Skills (TABE) scaled scores. Because test scores were reported in three different formats, test score data were not included in major multivariate analyses. Analyses containing test scores were conducted separately.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to determine whether participants' status changed on the set of four outcome variables. Credit recovery students (those enrolled for less than three credits) were eliminated from the evaluation database in order to determine the effects of alternative education as an alternative, rather than a supplement, to the traditional education program. A statistically significant difference was noted between students' pre-program and post-program status on the set of four variables ($\lambda = .525$, $F(4,58456) = 18,380.84$, $p = .000$, $\eta^2 = .475$). Students in alternative education were absent less often, made higher grades, failed fewer courses, earned a greater number of credits, and were referred less often for disciplinary problems.

This result was expected because the very large sample size ensured that even small differences would be statistically significant. A second analysis, with the program (instead of the student) as the unit of analysis was conducted. This analysis also yielded a significant pre-post difference ($\lambda = .290$, $F(4,234) = 3073.97$, $p = .000$, $\eta^2 = .71$). Of greater interest is the practical importance of the pre-post changes. The pre-post differences on the set of four variables (see Figure 17) were substantial, clearly demonstrating tangible improvements in student performance:

- GPA increased by more than one letter grade, from a pre-program average of 1.41 ("D" average) to a post-program average of 2.53 ("C" average).
- This change was most evident in the percent of courses successfully completed. During the semester prior to their enrollment in alternative education, the students passed an average of 3.86 courses, only 62% of the courses they attempted. While in the alternative program, the same students passed an average of 6.09 courses, 88% of the courses attempted.
- The number of days students were absent from school decreased sharply while they were enrolled in a Statewide alternative education program. The students had a mean absentee rate of 16.67 days in the semester prior to their participation in the alternative program and were absent 11.55 days per semester while in the alternative program. The average number of days absent was still quite high. This was due, in part, to the particular problems of some alternative education students, for example, pregnant and parenting teens. Figure 18 shows the differences in pre-program and post-program absences for students in different referral groups. None of the groups had low absences, although considerable progress was noted in most groups. As in years past, high absence rates remained a problem in most alternative programs. The individual

program evaluations in Part II of this report note programs in which absences are a significant problem and those that have made considerable progress in reducing absenteeism in this high-risk population.

- A substantial decrease was noted in the number of days students were suspended from school. Prior to attending an alternative education program, students were suspended out of school an average of 3.09 days per semester. While in alternative education, they were suspended an average of 0.61 days per semester. It is likely that these changes were due not only to changes in students' behavior but also to differences in policies and tolerance levels in traditional and alternative programs.
- Statistically significant positive changes were also noted in all analyses of standardized test scores. All standardized test scores were from tests that measured achievement in reading and mathematics. Tests administered included the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills and Tests of Academic Progress, The Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), the Wide Range Achievement Test - III, the Gates-MacGinitie reading assessment, and other individually-administered tests of achievement. Figure 19 depicts the changes in pre- and post-test NCE scores. Schools that reported NCE scores demonstrated increases of approximately 7-13 NCEs, or one-third to two-thirds of a standard deviation. Changes of this magnitude (at least one-third of a standard deviation) are considered to be educationally important. Reading scores increased from an average NCE of 47.8 to 55.9 and math scores increased from 45.9 to 54.9.
- Effect size analyses (η^2) revealed very strong academic effects (GPA and credits earned) and smaller, although substantial, effects on the two behavioral variables (absences and suspension). The strongest effects, in both analyses, were found for GPA, with partial η^2 values of .70. The weakest effects were found for days suspended out of school.

Treatment-comparison analyses. A quasi-experimental design was employed to determine whether alternative education programs resulted in better student outcomes than traditional education. This quasi-experimental design was a practical, low-cost method for obtaining research-based information on the efficacy of alternative education programs.

Each program that kept a waiting list was asked to collect data on a sample of those students. These data were to be used only for overall program evaluation purposes. The method for sample selection was designed to mimic, as closely as possible, the way in which data were collected for program participants – collecting data on the entire population. Students on waiting lists were presumed to be like those in alternative programs in terms of risk level, motivation, and other salient characteristics because they underwent the same intake and screening process – they simply had not yet been enrolled in alternative programs. In 2001-02, 80 programs collected comparison data. Because of budget reductions, school districts had fewer staff available for tasks such as collecting comparison data. This year, 50 alternative education programs collected data on 481 at-risk students on waiting lists.

Because the number of schools and students was smaller this year, the data were reviewed to determine whether there were any systematic differences from those collected in recent years. The comparison data values have been stable over the past few years; this enabled evaluators to check for any systematic bias in this year's sample. No systematic changes were noted in the geographic or demographic makeup of the programs that collected comparison data. Complete (Spring 2002/Spring 2003) data for all four variables were available for 209 members of the comparison group. A computer-generated random sample of alternative education students was generated so that the size of the evaluation sample would be equivalent to that of the comparison group.

A two-group (treatment and comparison) multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to determine the effects of alternative education on achievement and behavior. At-risk students in alternative education programs outperformed those who were not in alternative education ($F(4,486) = 47.07, p = .000, \eta^2 = .279$). The differences between the treatment and comparison group on each of the four variables are depicted in Figures 20-23 and summarized in Table 12. The alternative education students improved on each of the variables while the comparison students declined. The changes were not only statistically significant but also quite substantial on each variable. The results for alternative education programs have been consistent year after year: ***Eligible students who were placed in alternative education programs became less at risk and eligible students who were not enrolled in alternative programs became more at risk.***

Table 12. Pre-post means by group. Arrows represent statistically significant changes and direction. Oklahoma Statewide Alternative Education Program, 2002-03.

Variable		Group			
		Alternative	Change	Comparison	Change
Days absent	Pre	15.14	↓	12.55	↑
	Post	11.01		15.47	
GPA	Pre	1.53	↑	1.67	↓
	Post	2.55		1.40	
Days Suspended	Pre	3.23	↓	1.89	↑
	Post	0.66		2.55	
Courses Failed	Pre	2.49	↓	2.01	↑
	Post	0.34		2.32	

Student Surveys

Each year, OTAC collects information from alternative education participants. In most years, the data collection involves student surveys and student focus groups. Budget reductions limited OTAC's ability to conduct a sufficient number of focus groups this year, so all of the participant information summarized in this section was collected through the student survey.

This section of the report provides a summary of the key themes that emerged from an analysis of the responses to questions on the student survey. Most, but not all, students appeared to be satisfied with their alternative education programs.

The student survey was administered during the second half of the spring semester and consequently did not reflect the opinions of students who left alternative education programs earlier in the year. In some cases, only a minority of student responses were obtained and these may not have been representative of all students in a particular program. A summary of the survey data for each program may be found in the individual program evaluations included in this report.

Question 1: What caused you to change from the regular program to your alternative program?

Student responses were grouped into three main categories:

1. The student chose to enroll in the alternative program for one or more of the following reasons:

- Academics. Students indicated they were failing classes, had bad grades, needed credits, and/or wanted to graduate earlier than would be possible in the traditional school.

My grades were horrible and I'm not gonna flunk and be a high-school dropout.

- Behavior problems. Students had gotten into trouble at their traditional school for fighting or other prohibited activities; some had been expelled or given lengthy suspensions. They felt that the alternative program would give them a better chance of succeeding in school.

The regular program was way too restrictive, always made new, pointless rules, being too precise with procedures. In the alternative program you have a little slack - I think it's better preparing me for college.

- Excessive absences. Students who had been absent for an unusually large number of days, or anticipated continuing absences, felt that they might have a better chance of catching up and/or keeping up in the alternative program.

I skipped all day 'cause no one cared about me or who I was or what I had to say.

I've been on my own since I was 16, so I've had to keep two jobs. Before I was going to [the traditional] high school and I was taking care of my brother (age 8). I was tardy a lot in first block because I had to get him off to school first.

- Pregnancy or parenthood. A number of pregnant students wrote that they felt “bad” and “set apart” in the traditional program. Alternative programs frequently offered accommodations for and acceptance of teen parents. Students cited specific features such as parenting courses, flexible hours, and, occasionally, a day care program.

Yes. You should know that not everybody was meant to succeed in regular school. There are many kids with kids. There are all kinds of people here that need this place. As a last resort they came here and most have been successful. If you shut us down I guarantee most will drop out or go back to school and fail. It will just result in more uneducated mothers and more people on welfare. But that's my opinion, I guess.

No one makes fun of me here. They don't just look at one thing about you and judge you.

- Age of students.

“I'm turning 20. What do you think?”

- Social problems. Students who had problems getting along with other students or with a particular teacher or teachers found an opportunity for a fresh start in the alternative program.
- Difficulties in dealing with the traditional school environment or interest in a particular feature of the alternative program. These included smaller classes, more individual teacher time, faster credit acquisition, or a schedule better suited to their needs. Many of the students wrote that smaller classes and fewer distractions were responsible for their ability to concentrate and get work done.

There were too many people and negativity so I started slacking on my work. I didn't want to quit school so I came here, and I can think without all the noise. I like it a lot.

Didn't like it because it was too crowded and I was too stressed.

Less students, more one-on-one help.

It was too big and I needed a place to get my act together.

- Dropouts who wanted to return to school.

It's definitely a life-saver. I wouldn't have taken a chance and come back for a good education without it.

Some of us students are dropouts and if it wasn't for alternative school some of us would be nothings

2. Students were required to enroll in the alternative program.

This group of students wrote that the principal or another authority “sent” them to the alternative program; the causes most frequently mentioned were “bad” behavior or excessive absences. Responses in this category were not spread randomly through all programs but were limited to programs that were disciplinary in nature.

3. Students were referred to the program.

Although these students knew that they had a choice, they were strongly encouraged to enroll in the alternative program. These referrals were perceived either as threats [of suspension, expulsion, or other punishments] or as a positive recommendation. Most of the students who wrote that the program was recommended to them emphasized desirable components. Some understood that they were handicapped by their reputations; as students expressed by these two:

I was just some “druggy” kid; so they would never have time for me.

Everybody knew I did drugs and they weren't going to see me any other way.

The longer students remained in the program, the less important their reasons for enrollment became. A more accepting environment and more supportive teachers gave students who had difficulties in the traditional program the chance to start over. On the other hand, a program that was perceived as punitive acted as an extension of the traditional school. Students rarely attributed any positive changes to punitive programs; they were rarely successful in effecting any lasting change, according to their participants.

Question 2. Tell us about the kinds of things you do in your alternative program. How are they different from what you used to do in school?

The most consistent difference mentioned was the individually-paced curriculum. Students also often remarked that the hours of the school day were preferable to those in the regular program, that block scheduling or use of modules allowed concentration on one or two subjects, that the smaller classes reduced distractions and that both the quantity and quality of help from their teachers was increased. Occasionally, students referred to specific curricula that were offered or activities in which they participated. These included parenting or other life skills classes, increased use of computers, an art or music emphasis, and field trips.

Students who had parenting responsibilities or who had to work for whatever reason were most interested in either the hours of the program and/or with the opportunity to finish quickly. This student group was less interested in a program which made learning more interesting or which offered special opportunities than in being able to work at their own pace, and to begin another course as quickly as they could finish the previous one. They also appreciated lack of pressure, knowledge that help was available, and a safe learning environment.

The following student responses illustrate some of the alternative program features cited.

I can go over lessons as much as I need to, so I can learn better. It makes me think and work harder because I don't have anyone to give answers to me.

All the work is the same as it was in regular 7th grade classes. But the teachers motivate us more to do it and they teach it better. They put aside certain times that allow us to make up unfinished work - so there is less pressure. I have learned more in the { alternative program} than I ever have in any other class.

You have a little bit more freedom and a lot more help.

I feel more safe and I feel like I have more of a chance to graduate.

Some of the students objected to the “packaged programs” as less useful and dull.

I don't like the packet work or NovaNet because it doesn't teach you anything but it gets you through.

Some of the programs are just busy work. I don't like busy work. Give me a challenge and I'll give you quick results.

Question 3. How do you get along with teachers and other students in the alternative education program?

A large majority of the students in almost every alternative education program reported getting along well with both teachers and other students. Common responses to the question were brief:

“really well,” “fine,” and “great.” Occasionally, there was a student who indicated that it was impossible to get along with either the teachers or some of the other students.

The most frequent spontaneous statements by students were extended to describe their teacher/s. The general sense of the observations was that alternative teachers provided extra help, more thorough explanations, and infinite patience. Many students stated they received more help in the alternative program than they did when they were enrolled in the regular program. They felt that the teachers cared more about them and were more willing to work with them on an individual basis. Since so many students volunteered these opinions, a representative sample is furnished below:

[Teachers]work with me 'til I get it and show many way to do it and never give up on me.

They respect you on a personal level. They give a damn if you learn something or not.

Every teacher here I can trust. I love every one of them - they were always there for me even when my friends and family weren't.

I think of us as a family and I like the small, close-knit togetherness feel. The teachers make me feel like they really care and the majority really seems to get along.

You should know that the way these people have helped me to achieve my dreams and have inspired me to keep going when I wanted to give up is something I can never repay

Question 4. Rate your program on a scale of 1 (horrible) to 10 (perfect).

The typical program received student ratings between 7.0 and 8.0. Although the ratings were higher this year, the number and tenor of positive remarks were comparable to those on last years surveys. However, the number of complaints and negative remarks were reduced.

An anomaly in the surveys was found in several programs in which student ratings were in the lowest 10%, and yet almost all responses regarding the teachers and the alternative program itself were remarkably positive. In these programs, the statistical analyses supported the poor ratings. Students had apparently made the distinction between the good intentions of their teachers and the limitations imposed by external circumstances [lack of funds, materials or support from administrations and/or traditional school staff].

Question 5. What do your teachers do to help you learn?

Students used this opportunity to comment [further] on attributes and outlooks of their teachers. They emphasized that the teachers did not regard them as “bad” or “hopeless,” offered them respect

as individuals and showed confidence in their abilities. These attitudes were so different from those they had experienced in the traditional school that they were encouraged to do their best.

Some students adopted a more expansive view and indicated that the teacher helped them learn to like school or to think more positively about themselves.

They spend good amounts of time helping you with your work so that you can meet the goals that you set for yourself.

Talk with me instead of at me.

They make activities both fun but challenging. And they put you in a good environment to study. They also give you reasons to strive for graduation. Sometimes I think they care more than I do myself

There were fewer negative remarks about teachers this year. In the past, this phenomenon was centered on particular programs and particular teachers.

Question 6. Do you participate in counseling? How often? Is it helpful?

Many students appeared to be reluctant to discuss - or even acknowledge - the counseling component. One-third to one-half of the students seemed to be unaware that they had participated in counseling, even though the reported data indicated that most programs had group counseling on a regular basis. This question received the lowest number of positive responses and the highest number of criticisms. It also had the highest percentage of "Don't Know" responses. In contrast with the many remarks extended in praise of the teachers, few positive comments were made about counselors.

Several students said that they would have liked to participate in counseling but it wasn't an option.

I need some counseling, but it was eliminated due to budget cuts.

A few students liked the inclusion of their families in the counseling process:

We get counseling and our parents get it, too. That helps us in school and at home with our parents.

Although some students might have been reluctant to acknowledge that they needed or used counseling, the number of students who denied regular participation suggests that something was amiss with this component. If counseling were to be helpful, students needed to see one counselor consistently, and preferably at a regularly scheduled time. The counselor should be an accepting and non-judgmental listener, who encourages students to discuss their concerns. The teacher, however well-qualified and understanding, can be of inestimable help as a listener, advisor, or mentor, but cannot also serve effectively and ethically as a counselor.

At times, schools attempted to substitute various activities they perceived as equivalent to or effective substitutes for personal counseling. These most commonly included:

- Bringing in speakers, providing informational lectures and handouts on relevant personal issues {anger management, substance abuse, study skills, and social skills};
- Providing instruction in useful and applicable skills such as learning to care for a baby, balance a checkbook, or interview for a job;
- Assistance with schedule planning, career information, and assistance with various post-secondary concerns.

These opportunities were helpful and perhaps necessary, but could not be considered adequate substitutes for regular counseling with a qualified specialist.

Question 7. Could you succeed if you transferred back to the traditional school?

The students' reactions were mixed in their response to this question. More than 1/4 of the students were adamant that they could not possibly succeed; they felt they would either fail or drop out if they were "sent" back. The largest group of students were uncertain about their ability to succeed or thought they could succeed only under certain conditions. A number of students said that although they could probably succeed, but they did not want to return. Views along this continuum included:

(Could you succeed...)

No, because it is more biased to people who are different and in traditional school everybody is more concentrated on being accepted and being popular. They have lost the point of coming to learn.

I honestly think not, I wouldn't be able to control my "class skipping" habits.

No, the traditional is not the place for me; if the {specific alternative} program goes under, I'm going to get my GED.

Yes, I was just too lazy to do anything before but now I realize it wasn't that hard.

Yes, I believe I could, because this school has motivated me to succeed.

Yes, but it's not about me being able to, I wouldn't want to.

Probably, but I feel as though I'd be missing out on an extraordinary experience here.

Question 8. Does your school treat the students in alternative education fairly? Can you give an example?

Most students felt that they were definitely treated fairly in the alternative program. The rules and consequences applied to everyone equally in the students' perception. Some even added that they were "treated more than fairly" because they got more "extras" and but the most common sentiment was "*you get what you deserve and work for what you get. Or you do it [the required work] or don't graduate. How much fairer does it get?*" A minority of students still felt they were not treated as well as others and said that "*some kids get favoritism.*"

This year more students felt that the "other people" [traditional high school staff] treated them fairly. There were fewer complaints about being excluded from extracurricular activities, and this was obviously a change for the better. On the other hand, some programs were still the most poorly housed, were crowded in with the ISS program, shared a teacher with another program, and were isolated from the traditional school activities by distance and attitude, if not by policy. The complaint that "*the school system should make us more a part of high school activities*" was still a matter of concern:

We are treated like Alt Ed is a place for trouble makers, and we are very separated from the rest of the school.

We hardly know what is going on over there.

People treat us different.

The most constant complaint about unfairness concerned the continuing stereotype that they were perceived by traditional students...as a bunch of "losers and drug heads." This view was perceived as held by a few faculty but the majority of the other students. After making behavioral and academic improvements, as well as experiencing the acceptance of teachers in the alternative school, students were particularly critical of traditional personnel or students who would "*never give them another chance. I think we deserve more respect because it takes a lot to realize your mistakes and fix them.*"

Question 9. Is there anything else that we should know about your alternative program?

Although more than half of the students said "no" or left this question blank, many took this opportunity to comment about the program as a whole. Those who chose to volunteer comments usually made positive ones. The following are representative of the remarks made by a number of students:

I like it here. I have accomplished more here than anywhere else that I've been.

It really does help all kids. I wasn't the "loser druggy" - I had lots of friends and this place helps me.

{ They should know that } ...it is a great place and more schools should be like alt ed.

The teachers here really do care about the kids at this school and I don't think that everybody sees that.

If I left from here and went to college and from there I went to the NFL, I would contribute money to the program for a bigger building so that more students like myself could get help.

A number of students were concerned about new cuts in funding for alternative education as well as fearful of what future budgetary restrictions might do.

It shouldn't be closed down - too many kids have a chance with this program.

They already had to cut counseling and I needed that.

...the state shouldn't be taking money out of our budget when the other high schools are doing construction. We need our teachers.

Several expressed the opinion again that because the students had problems in the traditional school, the alternative program was viewed as inferior:

It's a good school with a bad name. People think we're thugs but we're just like any other high school kids.

Question 10. What would make your program better?

Few students responded to this question, and most of those who did took the opportunity to emphasize something they had said previously. For example, some students affirmed their satisfaction with the program by commenting, *"there should be more programs just like this."* Another said that *I think teachers at the junior high should be like the teachers [here].* A few students took this opportunity to complain about some of their peers. For example, one student said it needed *"More determined students. If everyone was here to get the job done and nothing more, it would be great. But otherwise, I like it."*

A minority of students felt that the work they were given wasn't hard enough. As one said *"I don't feel like I'm learning. I know just about all we do."* And others requested *"harder work."*

Overall, students were surprisingly tolerant of what educators would tend to see as definite drawbacks. For example, programs clearly described as without variety or hands-on activities were praised by the students because they were *"getting a chance to really get as much work as possible done as fast as possible."* The teachers were the single element which made the most substantial difference in whether the alternative program was seen as helpful or not – and the majority of teachers were praised again and again for their patience, motivational abilities and respectful attitudes.

V. Funding and cost effectiveness

A five-year plan to provide all of Oklahoma's school districts with access to alternative education was originally implemented in 1996. The plan provided alternative education funding to schools, based on the number of dropouts and juvenile justice referrals in the district. The funding formula was not devised to pay the entire costs of alternative education programs but rather the additional costs of educating high-risk students. The 92 districts with the greatest need were funded during the first year and additional districts were funded each subsequent year. All but 74 of Oklahoma's 543 districts have received funding. The 74 districts that have not been funded to date are small, K-8 districts that reported no need for the services. Table 13 summarizes the program's funding history.

<i>School year</i>	<i>New districts</i>	<i>Continuing districts</i>	<i>Allocated Funds</i>
1996-1997	92	-	\$6,199,000
1997-1998	84	92	\$15,948,250
1998-1999	292	179	\$17,861,235
1999-2000	0	468	\$17,861,235
2000-2001	0	468	\$17,861,235
2001-2002	0	468	\$17,868,727
2002-2003	0	467	\$16,690,292

Due to the state's budget shortfall, the allocated amounts shown in Table 13 were not the amounts that the schools received. At the end of the 2001-2002 school year, the fourth-quarter alternative education program payment was cancelled, which resulted in a 25 percent reduction in funds for the year. The funds allocated for the Statewide Alternative Education Program in 2002-03 were 5% lower than in the previous year. They were reduced by an additional 7.85% cut during the school year, lowering the total amount awarded to \$15,380,104.

In 2002-2003, 237 districts operated alternative education programs in Oklahoma. A table listing each of the programs and their funding after the 12.85 percent reduction is attached.

- The districts in bold letters represent the fiscal agent for cooperative programs.
- Members of cooperatives follow each boldface listing.
- The mean funding amount for the alternative education programs was \$64,357, \$8,501 less than last year. The median award was \$28,889.
- Urban districts continued to receive the greatest amount of money, with most operating more than one program within the district.

- The largest award (\$1,763,631) was issued to Tulsa Public Schools. The Tulsa district operated five Statewide Alternative Education programs that served a total of 721 students. This district operated other programs for at-risk students in addition to those funded by the Statewide Alternative Education program.
- The second-highest district was Oklahoma City, which received \$1,300,969 and operated nine programs that served 1,663 students.
- Lawton Public Schools received the third largest award (\$588,898) and operated a cooperative with two other districts that served a total of 129 students.

A base funding amount of \$10,000 was established for the small, mostly rural districts in the program. However, due to the budget cuts, the minimum funding amount was decreased to \$8,754 in 2002-2003. Half of the districts (50.4%) were funded at this level.

State law required districts that served fewer than ten students in their alternative education programs to form or join a cooperative. A total of 95 cooperatives operated during the year. The number of districts participating in each cooperative has fluctuated from year to year, but the location and number of the cooperative programs have been fairly consistent over the last few years. Forty of the cooperatives (41.2%) consisted of two districts. Three of the cooperatives (Atoka-Coal Interlocal, Garfield County Interlocal, and Oktaha) reported that they had nine partner districts. The amount of funding for the cooperatives ranged from \$17,509 to \$606,407. The average funding level for the cooperatives was \$61,017 and the median was \$37,993. Table 14 summarizes the financial data for cooperative programs.

A total of 95 cooperatives operated during the year. Forty consisted of two districts. Three had nine members.

Number of district partners	Number of cooperatives	Funding Range	Mean Funding	Median Funding¹
2	39	\$17,509 - \$229,799	\$40,981	\$27,751
3	25	\$23,461 - \$606,407	\$64,519	\$32,041
4	11	\$35,017 - \$143,920	\$71,745	\$61,192
5	8	\$43,771 - \$167,819	\$75,418	\$65,876
6	5	\$26,724 - \$167,381	\$89,596	\$81,765
7	3	\$67,058 - \$227,260	\$124,894	\$80,364
8	1	\$101,549 - \$101,549	\$101,549	\$101,549
9	3	\$78,788 - \$101,024	\$89,556	\$88,856

Program capacity and cost per slot. The amount of state funds each district received was based on the district's demonstrated need. Often, the design of the alternative education program, including the number of students the programs could serve at one time (slots), was based on the amount of funding awarded. (In some cases, it was not.) The number of students that the programs could serve at any one time – the number of student “slots” – was selected as the cost-effectiveness measure for two reasons: (1) cost per slot is equivalent to the cost for one student for one school year, and (2) cost per student can be lowered merely by serving students for shorter periods of time, and thus is not a satisfactory measure.

The average cost per slot in Statewide Alternative Education funds was \$1,788.73.

The average number of student slots per program was 35.83. The number of slots ranged from 5 to 985. The average cost per slot in Statewide Alternative Education funds was \$1,788.73. (Note that this is over and above the Average Daily Membership funds that the district receives for each student.) Cooperative programs provided a total of 3,961 slots for students. The average costs per slot in the cooperative programs was \$1,793.26. The single-district programs provided a total of 4,602 slots at an average of \$1,784.82 per slot.

It should be noted in a discussion of the cost per program slot that analyses were based on Statewide Alternative Education funding only. In many cases, the programs and districts accessed numerous funding resources in order to operate those programs. These resources often include additional district funds, grant funds, foundation funds, and community donations. In most cases, the total cost of operating the program has not been documented on a statewide basis.

The cost per slot varied greatly across programs. The program with the lowest cost per slot was Skiatook, a single-district program that provided access for 30 students, with a funding level of \$10,418. The Skiatook program was designed to serve students in grades nine through twelve and averaged \$347.27 per slot. The program with the highest cost per slot was the Ellis County Cooperative in Gage that averaged \$7,003.40 per slot. Overall, the cooperative programs had a higher cost per slot than the single-district programs. The cooperatives had an average cost per slot of \$2,167.52 compared to only \$1,491.35 for the single-district programs.

Cooperative programs had an average cost per slot of \$2,167.52 compared to \$1,491.35 for the single-district programs.

Effectiveness. A cost analysis was conducted to estimate the potential financial benefit of the program to the state. Extrapolating from the evaluation sample, the Statewide Alternative Education programs graduated at least 3,024 students in 2002-2003. According to a thorough analysis of the cost to society per dropout by James Catterall in 1987, the estimated cost to the government for each dropout was \$81,000 in direct costs and lost tax revenue. (Dropouts have lower earning rates, higher social costs, higher health costs, higher rates of imprisonment, etc. This analysis does not include the costs to the individual but merely the costs to government.) Accepting Catterall's analysis, without

adjusting for increased costs or inflation since 1987, we can estimate that the investment of \$17 million in Statewide Alternative Education programs saved a total of \$244,944,000 in costs to government:

Table 15. Estimated return on investment from program graduates.				
<i>Program year</i>	<i>Investment</i>	<i>Graduates</i>	<i>Cost per Dropout</i>	<i>Return</i>
1996-1997	\$6,199,000	421	\$81,000	\$34,101,000
1997-1998	\$15,948,250	1,640	\$81,000	\$132,840,000
1998-1999	\$17,861,235	2,066	\$81,000	\$167,346,000
1999-2000	\$17,861,235	2,536	\$81,000	\$205,416,000
2000-2001	\$17,861,235	2,682	\$81,000	\$217,242,000
2001-2002	\$17,868,727	2,894	\$81,000	\$234,414,000
2002-2003	\$16,690,292	3,024	\$81,000	\$244,944,000

This analysis demonstrates the potential benefits of investment in alternative education. The analysis is simplistic, since we cannot assume that all 3,024 students would have dropped out of a traditional high school program, but it also analyzes the data only for those students eligible for graduation this year. It includes all of the costs and none of the benefits for students in grades 6-11.

The cost-benefit analyses would not be complete without an estimation of the differential dropout rates for students in alternative education. Since we do not know whether or not each student in alternative education would have dropped out of school if an alternative was unavailable, these types of estimates are subject to speculation. A more conservative and more reliable estimate involves only the students who were recovered dropouts. All of these students had dropped out of school and were reclaimed by alternative education programs. Using the evaluation database as a basis for estimation, we can calculate that a minimum of 1,259 students in alternative education programs were recovered dropouts, and that 270 of this subgroup dropped out of an alternative education program during the 2002-2003 school year. If we assume that the Statewide program had *only* the long-term financial benefits of graduating recovered dropouts (this does not include the savings to government for graduates noted above), 989 recovered dropouts results in an estimated \$80,109,000 savings to government. Of direct benefit were the 341 recovered dropouts who either graduated or earned a GED during the 2002-2003 school year. These recovered students saved an estimated \$27,621,000.

The results of the analysis indicated that the return on the state's investment far exceeded the cost of the Statewide Alternative Education program. Oklahoma's investment in high-risk students, even by the most conservative estimates, appeared to be a sound investment for the future.

Table 16. Estimated return on investment from recovered dropouts.

<i>Program Year</i>	<i>Investment</i>	<i>Recovered dropouts</i>	<i>Cost per dropout</i>	<i>Return</i>
1996-1997	\$6,199,000	194	\$81,000	\$15,714,000
1997-1998	\$15,948,250	894	\$81,000	\$72,414,000
1998-1999	\$17,861,235	992	\$81,000	\$80,352,000
1999-2000	\$17,861,235	951	\$81,000	\$77,031,000
2000-2001	\$17,861,235	1010	\$81,000	\$81,810,000
2001-2002	\$17,868,727	983	\$81,000	\$79,623,000
2002-2003	\$16,690,292	989	\$81,000	\$80,109,000

School District (LEA)	Feeder District	State Funding	Cooperative Funding	Total Slots	Total Students
Ada		\$94,983.61		30	36
Afton		\$8,754.25		12	42
Alex		\$8,754.25		10	17
Allen		\$8,754.25		15	14
Altus		\$109,690.75		80	74
Alva		\$20,835.12	\$55,852.12	15	37
	Aline-Cleo	\$8,754.25			
	Burlington	\$8,754.25			
	Cherokee	\$8,754.25			
	Timberlake	\$8,754.25			
Anadarko		\$84,566.06		75	95
Antlers		\$14,707.14	\$23,461.39	27	25
	Moyers	\$8,754.25			
Ardmore		\$149,522.59	\$227,260.33	100	188
	Davis	\$11,643.15			
	Dickson	\$24,511.90			
	Marietta	\$15,319.94			
	Plainview	\$8,754.25			
	Thackerville	\$8,754.25			
	Turner	\$8,754.25			
Arkoma		\$11,643.15		15	22
Atoka-Coal Interlocal			\$88,855.64	35	34
	Atoka	\$14,707.14			
	Caney	\$8,754.25			
	Coalgate	\$12,868.75			
	Farris	\$8,754.25			
	Harmony	\$8,754.25			
	Lane	\$8,754.25			
	Olney	\$8,754.25			
	Stringtown	\$8,754.25			
	Tushka	\$8,754.25			
Barnsdall		\$10,417.56	\$19,171.81	10	9
	Wynona	\$8,754.25			
Bartlesville		\$196,095.20		180	227
Battiest		\$8,754.25		10	16
Beaver		\$8,754.25		5	9
Beggs		\$8,754.25	\$18,559.01	15	15
	Morris	\$9,804.76			
Bethany		\$11,643.15		12	25
Bethel		\$11,030.36	\$28,538.86	30	25
	Dale	\$8,754.25			
	Earlsboro	\$8,754.25			
Big Pasture		\$8,754.25		12	5
Bixby		\$39,219.04		45	62
Blackwell		\$45,959.81		40	43
Blanchard		\$20,222.32		15	21
Boise City		\$8,754.25	\$18,508.50	15	13
	Felt	\$8,754.25			
Boone-Apache		\$14,094.34		10	12
Bowlegs		\$8,754.25	\$26,262.75	15	25
	Butner	\$8,754.25			
	Sasakwa	\$8,754.25			
Bridgecreek		\$20,222.32	\$39,831.84	30	38

School District (LEA)	Feeder District	State Funding	Cooperative Funding	Total Slots	Total Students
	Newcastle	\$19,609.52			
Bristow		\$40,444.64		15	18
Broken Arrow		\$351,132.97		120	186
Broken Bow		\$68,020.52	\$94,283.27	15	38
	Forest Grove	\$8,754.25			
	Glover	\$8,754.25			
	Lukfata	\$8,754.25			
Bryan County Interlocal			\$39,569.21	30	50
	Achille	\$8,754.25			
	Caddo	\$8,754.25			
	Calera	\$9,191.96			
	Colbert	\$12,868.75			
Burns Flat-Dill City		\$14,094.34	\$31,602.84	12	32
	Canute	\$8,754.25			
	Sentinel	\$8,754.25			
Byng		\$30,639.88		15	15
Cache		\$13,481.55	\$22,235.80	15	47
	Indianoma	\$8,754.25			
Cameron		\$8,754.25		15	20
Canadian		\$8,754.25	\$17,508.50	15	21
	Indianola	\$8,754.25			
Canadian Co. Educ. Center			\$44,208.96	60	87
	Calumet	\$8,754.25			
	Darlington	\$8,754.25			
	Minco	\$8,754.25			
	Piedmont	\$9,191.96			
	Union City	\$8,754.25			
Caney Valley		\$14,707.14	\$23,461.39	15	31
	Avant	\$8,754.25			
Canton		\$8,754.25	\$17,508.50	15	23
	O'Keene	\$8,754.25			
Carnegie		\$24,511.90	\$42,020.40	15	21
	Fort-Cobb-Broxtton	\$8,754.25			
	Mt. View-Gotebo	\$8,754.25			
Catoosa		\$37,380.65		15	25
Cave Springs		\$11,643.15	\$20,397.40	15	15
	Dahlgonegah	\$8,754.25			
Cement		\$8,754.25	\$45,434.56	15	38
	Cyril	\$8,754.25			
	Fletcher	\$8,754.25			
	Ninnekah	\$10,417.56			
	Verden	\$8,754.25			
Chandler		\$20,222.32	\$28,976.57	15	50
	Agra	\$8,754.25			
Checotah		\$37,993.45		30	39
Chelsea		\$17,158.33		15	11
Chickasha		\$103,562.78		75	122
Chisholm		\$11,643.15		7	16
Choctaw-Nicoma Park		\$42,895.83	\$69,421.20	60	120
	Jones	\$17,771.13			
	Luther	\$8,754.25			
Chouteau-Maizie		\$23,286.31	\$32,040.56	15	15
	Osage	\$8,754.25			

School District (LEA)	Feeder District	State Funding	Cooperative Funding	Total Slots	Total Students
Claremore		\$99,885.99	\$129,037.65	60	149
	Justus-Tiawah	\$8,754.25			
	Oologah-Talala	\$11,643.15			
	Verdigris	\$8,754.25			
Clayton		\$12,255.95	\$29,764.45	15	17
	Buffalo Valley	\$8,754.25			
	Nashoba	\$8,754.25			
Cleveland		\$45,959.81		15	28
Clinton		\$59,441.36	\$85,704.11	40	83
	Arapaho	\$8,754.25			
	Butler	\$8,754.25			
	Thomas-Fay-Custer	\$8,754.25			
Colcord		\$15,932.74	\$35,717.34	20	22
	Kansas	\$11,030.36			
	Mosley	\$8,754.25			
Collinsville		\$24,511.90		45	66
Comanche		\$26,350.29	\$78,963.34	50	56
	Ryan	\$8,754.25			
	Temple	\$8,754.25			
	Velma-Alma	\$8,754.25			
	Walters	\$26,350.29			
Commerce		\$35,542.26	\$54,538.98	15	30
	Quapaw	\$18,996.72			
Cordell		\$8,754.25		12	16
Cottonwood		\$8,754.25		15	9
Coweta		\$53,313.38		20	29
Coyle		\$8,754.25		10	17
Crooked-Oak		\$11,643.15		15	33
Cushing		\$47,798.21		27	28
Dewey		\$32,478.27	\$41,232.52	15	26
	Copan	\$8,754.25			
Drumright		\$8,754.25		15	20
Duncan		\$121,946.70		120	204
Durant		\$81,502.07	\$90,256.32	80	135
	Silo	\$8,754.25			
Eagletown		\$8,754.25		10	8
Edmond		\$132,977.06		90	145
Elgin		\$23,286.31		15	15
Elk City		\$56,377.37	\$91,394.37	45	76
	Cheyenne	\$8,754.25			
	Hammon	\$8,754.25			
	Merritt	\$8,754.25			
	Reydon	\$8,754.25			
El Reno		\$52,700.59		50	73
Enid		\$265,954.12		100	127
Erick		\$8,754.25	\$17,508.50	12	13
	Sweetwater	\$8,754.25			
Eufaula		\$41,670.23	\$50,424.48	30	40
	Stidham	\$8,754.25			
Fairview		\$14,707.14		10	12
Flower Mound		\$8,754.25		12	13
Fort Gibson		\$34,316.66		20	30
Foyil		\$13,481.55		10	17

School District (LEA)	Feeder District	State Funding	Cooperative Funding	Total Slots	Total Students
Francis Tuttle-Project Hope			\$26,723.50	130	165
	Crescent	\$8,754.25	\$84,300.00		
	Deer Creek	\$8,754.25			
	Edmond				
	Millwood	\$9,215.00			
	Putnam City				
	Western Heights				
Frederick		\$34,929.46	\$61,192.21	20	50
	Davidson	\$8,754.25			
	Grandfield	\$8,754.25			
	Tipton	\$8,754.25			
Frontier		\$8,754.25	\$26,262.75	15	29
	Billings	\$8,754.25			
	Morrison	\$8,754.25			
Gage		\$8,754.25	\$35,017.00	5	12
	Arnett	\$8,754.25			
	Fargo	\$8,754.25			
	Shattuck	\$8,754.25			
Garfield County Interlocal			\$78,788.25	30	43
	Cimarron	\$8,754.25			
	Covington-Douglas	\$8,754.25			
	Deer Creek-Lamont	\$8,754.25			
	Garber	\$8,754.25			
	Kremlin-Hillsdale	\$8,754.25			
	Pioneer-Pleasant Vale	\$8,754.25			
	Pond Creek-Hunter	\$8,754.25			
	Ringwood	\$8,754.25			
	Waukomis	\$8,754.25			
Geary		\$12,255.95		20	33
Glenpool		\$21,447.91		30	34
Gore		\$8,754.25		5	15
Gracemont		\$8,754.25		15	15
Granite		\$10,417.56	\$54,188.81	25	25
	Blair	\$8,754.25			
	Duke	\$8,754.25			
	Eldorado	\$8,754.25			
	Navajo	\$8,754.25			
	Olustee	\$8,754.25			
Grove		\$71,697.31		15	32
Guthrie		\$107,239.56		45	80
Guymon		\$85,791.65		50	67
Haileyville		\$18,996.72		10	18
Harrah		\$31,252.67		15	40
Hartshorne		\$18,996.72		41	50
Haworth		\$14,707.14		15	15
Healdton		\$16,545.53	\$36,330.14	15	20
	Fox	\$8,754.25			
	Ringling	\$11,030.36			
Heavener		\$21,447.91		10	15
Hennessey		\$21,447.91	\$30,202.16	10	16
	Dover	\$8,754.25			
Henryetta		\$24,511.90	\$50,774.65	26	32

School District (LEA)	Feeder District	State Funding	Cooperative Funding	Total Slots	Total Students
	Dewar	\$8,754.25			
	Schulter	\$8,754.25			
	Wilson-Okmulgee Co.	\$8,754.25			
Hinton		\$8,754.25	\$17,508.50	15	18
	Lookeba-Sickles	\$8,754.25			
Hobart		\$18,996.72	\$27,750.97	20	29
	Lone Wolf	\$8,754.25			
Hollis		\$12,868.75		15	13
Hominy		\$22,060.71		25	29
Hooker		\$10,417.56	\$27,926.06	5	10
	Goodwell	\$8,754.25			
	Hardesty	\$8,754.25			
Howe		\$10,417.56		15	19
Hugo		\$37,993.45	\$81,764.70	50	97
	Fort Towson	\$8,754.25			
	Goodland	\$8,754.25			
	Grant	\$8,754.25			
	Rattan	\$8,754.25			
	Soper	\$8,754.25			
Hydro-Eakly		\$8,754.25		15	18
Idabel		\$74,148.50		40	45
Inola		\$13,481.50		15	14
Jay		\$34,316.66		15	16
Jenks		\$142,781.82		120	177
Jennings		\$8,754.25		5	6
Kellyville		\$24,511.90		20	38
Ketchum		\$8,754.25		10	5
Keyes		\$8,754.25		5	12
Kiefer		\$11,643.15	\$38,956.41	15	23
	Allen-Bowden	\$8,754.25			
	Liberty-Tulsa Co.	\$8,754.25			
	Mounds	\$9,804.76			
Kingfisher		\$15,932.74	\$33,441.24	25	32
	Cashion	\$8,754.25			
	Okarche	\$8,754.25			
Kingston		\$30,639.88		30	56
Konowa		\$15,319.94	\$26,963.09	15	16
	Maud	\$11,643.15			
Lawton		\$588,898.40	\$606,406.90	115	129
	Bishop	\$8,754.25			
	Geronimo	\$8,754.25			
Leflore		\$8,754.25		15	9
Lexington		\$36,767.85		15	37
Liberty		\$8,754.25		10	3
Lindsay		\$28,188.69	\$37,993.45	35	34
	Dibble	\$9,804.76			
Little Axe		\$23,286.31		30	25
Locus Grove		\$22,060.71		25	36
Lone Grove		\$22,673.51		15	23
Lost City		\$8,754.25		10	14
Macomb		\$8,754.25	\$17,508.50	15	13
	Wanette	\$8,754.25			
Madill		\$28,801.48		25	73

School District (LEA)	Feeder District	State Funding	Cooperative Funding	Total Slots	Total Students
Mangum		\$12,868.75		15	11
Mannford		\$31,252.67	\$40,006.92	15	17
	Oilton	\$8,754.25			
Marlow		\$23,899.10	\$80,364.02	20	20
	Bray-Doyle	\$8,754.25			
	Central High-Stephens Co.	\$8,754.25			
	Empire	\$9,191.96			
	Rush Springs	\$12,255.95			
	Sterling	\$8,754.25			
	Waurika	\$8,754.25			
Maryetta		\$8,754.25		10	8
Maysville		\$8,754.25	\$44,208.96	15	29
	Elmore City-Pernell	\$8,754.25			
	Paoli	\$8,754.25			
	Washington	\$8,754.25			
	Wayne	\$9,191.96			
McAlester		\$120,721.11	\$167,381.26	80	143
	Crowder	\$8,754.25			
	Kiowa	\$8,754.25			
	Krebs	\$8,754.25			
	Pittsburg	\$8,754.25			
	Savanna	\$11,643.15			
McLoud		\$36,155.05		10	28
Miami		\$85,791.65	\$117,657.12	50	80
	Fairland	\$12,255.95			
	Wyandotte	\$19,609.52			
Midwest City-Del City		\$201,610.38	\$210,364.63	55	109
	Crutcho	\$8,754.25			
Milburn		\$8,754.25	\$26,262.75	15	13
	Coleman	\$8,754.25			
	Wapanuka	\$8,754.25			
Moore		\$433,247.83		180	209
Muldrow		\$29,414.28		15	31
Mulhall-Orlando		\$8,754.25		10	13
Muskogee		\$255,536.56		120	364
Mustang		\$77,825.28		67	111
New Lima		\$8,754.25	\$17,508.50	5	24
	Justice	\$8,754.25			
Noble		\$60,666.95		15	28
Norman		\$343,779.40		95	169
North Rock Creek		\$8,754.25	\$26,262.75	10	17
	Pleasant Grove	\$8,754.25			
	South Rock Creek	\$8,754.25			
Nowata		\$35,542.26		15	24
Oaks-Mission		\$8,754.25		15	20
Okemah		\$20,222.32	\$28,976.57	24	27
	Boley	\$8,754.25			
Oklahoma City		\$1,300,969.09		985	1663
Oklahoma Union		\$8,754.25		10	6
Okmulgee		\$43,508.62		20	40

School District (LEA)	Feeder District	State Funding	Cooperative Funding	Total Slots	Total Students
Oktaha		\$9,804.76	\$101,024.05	30	61
	Boynnton	\$8,754.25			
	Haskell	\$9,191.96			
	Hilldale	\$19,609.52			
	Midway	\$8,754.25			
	Okay	\$14,094.34			
	Porter	\$9,804.76			
	Warner	\$12,255.95			
	Webber Falls	\$8,754.25			
Olive		\$8,754.25		12	13
Owasso		\$61,279.75		45	65
Panama		\$9,191.96		10	21
Pauls Valley		\$49,636.60		30	50
Pawhuska		\$26,963.09		20	29
Pawnee		\$23,899.10		15	14
Peckham		\$8,754.25		11	15
Peggs		\$8,754.25		10	12
Perkins-Tryon		\$25,737.50		25	26
Perry		\$33,091.07		15	14
Picher-Cardin		\$15,319.94		15	16
Pioneer		\$8,754.25	\$17,508.50	10	13
	Middleberg	\$8,754.25			
Pocola		\$12,868.75		10	21
Ponca City		\$217,543.11	\$229,799.06	140	171
	Newkirk	\$12,255.95			
Poteau		\$56,377.37		30	32
Prague		\$15,319.94	\$34,491.75	15	25
	Meeker	\$10,417.56			
	Paden	\$8,754.25			
Preston		\$8,754.25		15	16
Pryor		\$66,182.13		60	95
Purcell		\$28,801.48		10	10
Putnam City		\$405,671.95		206	270
Rock Creek		\$8,754.25	\$26,262.75	15	37
	Bennington	\$8,754.25			
	Boswell	\$8,754.25			
Roff		\$8,754.25	\$43,771.25	15	16
	McLish	\$8,754.25			
	Picket-Center	\$8,754.25			
	Stonewall	\$8,754.25			
	Tupelo	\$8,754.25			
Roland		\$8,754.25	\$35,017.00	15	47
	Central High- Sequoyah Co.	\$8,754.25			
	Gans	\$8,754.25			
	Moffett	\$8,754.25			
Salina		\$33,091.07	\$50,600.25	30	42
	Kenwood	\$8,754.25			
	Spavinaw	\$8,754.25			
Sallisaw		\$52,700.59		12	78

School District (LEA)	Feeder District	State Funding	Cooperative Funding	Total Slots	Total Students
Sand Springs		\$100,498.79	\$119,057.80	75	121
	Anderson	\$8,754.25			
	Prue	\$9,804.76			
Sapulpa		\$91,919.63	\$102,949.98	75	78
	Berryhill	\$11,030.36			
Sayre		\$18,996.72	\$27,750.97	15	4
	Carter (closed)	\$8,754.25			
Seiling		\$12,255.95	\$29,764.45	10	5
	Taloga	\$8,754.25			
	Vici	\$8,754.25			
Seminole		\$59,441.36	\$76,949.86	30	47
	Strother	\$8,754.25			
	Varnum	\$8,754.25			
Sequoyah		\$17,771.13		12	5
Shawnee		\$157,488.96		70	170
Skiatook		\$10,417.56		30	10
Smithville		\$8,754.25		10	5
Snyder		\$8,754.25		15	23
South Coffeerville		\$8,754.25		15	15
Sperry		\$9,804.76		15	28
Spiro		\$13,481.55		15	41
Springer		\$9,804.76		5	5
Stigler		\$12,868.75	\$67,057.56	45	60
	Bokoshe	\$8,754.25			
	Keota	\$10,417.56			
	Kinta	\$8,754.25			
	McCurtain	\$8,754.25			
	Porum	\$8,754.25			
	Quinton	\$8,754.25			
Stillwater		\$117,657.12	\$143,919.87	115	238
	Glencoe	\$8,754.25			
	Ripley	\$8,754.25			
	Yale	\$8,754.25			
Stilwell		\$58,215.76	\$84,478.51	60	117
	Bell	\$8,754.25			
	Greasy	\$8,754.25			
	Peavine	\$8,754.25			
Stratford		\$14,707.14		15	15
Stroud		\$12,868.75	\$32,040.56	15	34
	Davenport	\$10,417.56			
	Depew	\$8,754.25			
Stuart		\$8,754.25		10	7
Sulphur		\$25,737.50		15	13
Tahlequah		\$132,364.26	\$167,818.97	100	130
	Briggs	\$8,754.25			
	Grandview	\$8,754.25			
	Hulbert	\$9,191.96			
	Keys	\$8,754.25			
Talihina		\$21,447.91	\$30,202.16	30	36
	Whitesboro	\$8,754.25			
Tecumseh		\$30,639.88		25	42
Texhoma		\$8,754.25		5	10

School District (LEA)	Feeder District	State Funding	Cooperative Funding	Total Slots	Total Students
Tishomingo		\$23,899.10	\$32,653.35	20	30
	Millcreek	\$8,754.25			
Tonkawa		\$17,158.33		8	13
Tulsa		\$1,763,631.21		510	721
Turpin		\$8,754.25	\$26,262.75	15	14
	Balko	\$8,754.25			
	Forgan	\$8,754.25			
Tuttle		\$28,188.69	\$36,942.94	15	23
	Amber Pocasset	\$8,754.25			
Tyrone		\$8,754.25		10	28
Union		\$216,930.32		112	171
Valliant		\$13,481.55		15	20
Vanoss		\$8,754.25	\$17,508.50	15	15
	Latta	\$8,754.25			
Vian		\$16,545.53		15	21
Vinita		\$39,831.84	\$75,899.35	50	36
	Adair	\$9,804.76			
	Bluejacket	\$8,754.25			
	Welch	\$8,754.25			
	White Oak	\$8,754.25			
Wagoner		\$77,825.28		30	46
Wakita		\$8,754.25	\$17,508.50	10	12
	Medford	\$8,754.25			
Watonga		\$29,414.28		45	61
Watts		\$15,319.94		25	25
Waynoka		\$8,754.25	\$17,508.50	5	6
	Freedom	\$8,754.25			
Weatherford		\$46,572.61	\$55,326.86	40	70
	Washita Heights	\$8,754.25			
Weleetka		\$8,754.25	\$101,549.30	30	61
	Dustin	\$8,754.25			
	Graham	\$8,754.25			
	Hanna	\$8,754.25			
	Holdenville	\$36,767.85			
	Mason	\$8,754.25			
	Moss	\$8,754.25			
	Wetumka	\$12,255.95			
Wellston		\$8,754.25	\$17,508.50	15	27
	Carney	\$8,754.25			
Western Heights		\$60,666.95		45	57
Westville		\$43,508.62		15	32
Wewoka		\$20,222.32		15	40
Whitebead		\$8,754.25		15	10
Wilburton		\$21,447.91	\$38,956.41	30	33
	Panola	\$8,754.25			
	Red Oak	\$8,754.25			
Wilson-Carter Co.		\$8,754.25		10	11
Wister		\$8,754.25		10	21
Woodland		\$11,643.15	\$20,397.40	5	10
	Shidler	\$8,754.25			

School District (LEA)	Feeder District	State Funding	Cooperative Funding	Total Slots	Total Students
Woodward		\$74,148.50	\$117,919.75	30	53
	Buffalo	\$8,754.25			
	Fort Supply	\$8,754.25			
	Laverne	\$8,754.25			
	Mooreland	\$8,754.25			
	Sharon-Mutual	\$8,754.25			
Wright City		\$8,754.25		12	19
Wynnewood		\$15,932.74		15	32
Yukon		\$74,761.30		50	91
Zion		\$8,754.25		10	10

1. The median is often a better descriptor than the mean because it removes the influence of unusually large or small numbers. It is the midpoint of the distribution; half the awards were larger and half were smaller than the median amount.