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## Perceptions of Administrators and Teachers Regarding the Relevancy and Frequency of Occurrence of Program Characteristics of Alternative High School Programs in North Carolina

Deborah D. Wiseman  
*East Tennessee State University*

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PERCEPTIONS OF ADMINISTRATORS AND TEACHERS  
REGARDING THE RELEVANCY AND FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE  
OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF  
ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS IN NORTH CAROLINA

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Faculty of the Department of  
Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements For the Degree  
Doctor of Education  
in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

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by  
Deborah D. Wiseman  
August 1996



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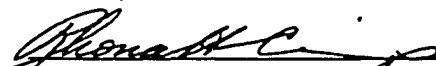
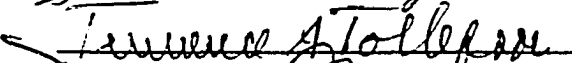
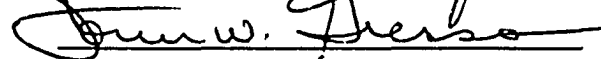
APPROVAL

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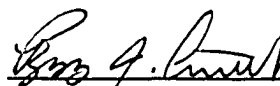
The committee read and examined her dissertation, supervised her defense of it in an oral examination, and decided to recommend that her study be submitted to the Graduate Council, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Administration.

  
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Studies

PERCEPTIONS OF ADMINISTRATORS AND TEACHERS REGARDING THE  
RELEVANCY AND FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE OF PROGRAM  
CHARACTERISTICS OF ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS  
IN NORTH CAROLINA

by

Deborah D. Wiseman

Dr. Marie S. Hill, Dissertation Supervisor

ABSTRACT

Purpose. The purpose of the study was to (1) determine which characteristics of alternative schools exist in North Carolina public alternative high schools for at-risk/potential dropouts, (2) determine the degree to which North Carolina alternative school administrators and teachers perceive each characteristic as important, (3) determine if there was a significant difference between administrators' and teachers' perceptions regarding the frequency of occurrence of program characteristics to alternative high school's, (4) determine if there was a significant difference between administrators' and teachers' perceptions regarding the relevancy of program characteristics to alternative high school's, and (5) determine if there was a significant difference between administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of program characteristics to alternative high schools. Descriptive data were gathered relating to six categories: (1) perceptions about alternative schools, (2) student attitudes toward alternative schools, (3) school climate, (4) leadership, (5) student needs, and (6) student services.

Method. A random sample of 21 of the 42 public alternative high schools in North Carolina for at-risk/potential dropouts made up the study. A survey was sent to each administrator and teacher of the 21 programs to gather information relating to the categories.

Findings. A mean was computed for each program characteristic to determine administrators' and teachers' perceptions regarding the relevancy and level of existence of each program characteristic. A mean gap was calculated, denoting whether or not more resources should be devoted to specific program characteristics. Kendall's Tau Coefficient was calculated, signifying that there was no significant difference in rank order between administrators' and

teachers' perceptions regarding level of existence, importance, and mean gap.

Conclusions. Nine conclusions were drawn based on the findings. First, administrators' perceptions were higher than teachers' perceptions about existence of program characteristics of alternative schools. Second, administrators and teachers differed significantly in their perceptions of existence of nine of the 40 program characteristics of alternative schools. Third, administrators' perceptions were higher than teachers' perceptions about importance of program characteristics of alternative schools. Fourth, administrators and teachers differed significantly in their perceptions of importance of five of the 40 program characteristics of alternative schools. Fifth, the categories of student needs and services consistently ranked at the bottom of the lists for both levels of existence and importance among administrators and teachers. Sixth, teacher mean gaps concluded that more resources should be devoted to 39 of the 40 program characteristics while administrator mean gaps revealed that too many resources are being devoted to three of the 40 program characteristics. Seventh, the results of the use of Kendall's Tau Coefficient demonstrated substantial similarities in the perceptions of administrators and teachers regarding the degrees of existence, importance, and mean gaps between selected characteristics of alternative schools. Eighth, North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth are to be commended as they are exhibiting to some degree all of the 40 program characteristics. Ninth, administrators and teachers surveyed exhibit commitment to their alternative school and are anxious to participate in research on alternative schools. Implications for further research are discussed.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

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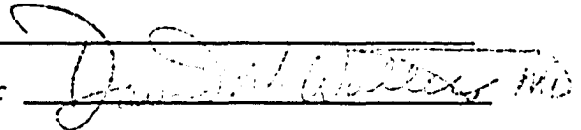
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OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL  
PROGRAMS IN NORTH CAROLINA

Principal Investigator Deborah D. Wiseman

Department Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

Date Submitted January 25, 1996

Institutional Review Board, Chair

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Deborah D. Wiseman', is written over a horizontal line.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Much research has been devoted to students leaving traditional public high schools prior to graduating. For the past 30 years approximately one-quarter of all students in the nation dropped out of school in grades K-12 (United States General Accounting Office, 1988). According to Rumberger (1987), more research was conducted considering the dropout situation during the mid-1980's than during the previous 15 years. Of all documents published by the United States General Accounting office in 1987, the most requested was a report on innovative ways to reduce school dropout rates (United States General Accounting, 1988).

Since the middle of the century, the proportion of young people who have failed to finish high school has decreased substantially. In 1940, more than 60% of all persons 25 to 29 years old had not completed high school; by 1980, that proportion had dropped to less than 16% (United States Bureau of the Census, 1985). The national dropout rate for 1992 was 13.6% (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1992).

Despite long-term declines in dropout rates, interest in the issue among educators, policymakers, and researchers has increased substantially in recent years (Rumberger, 1987). State and local education officials are currently devoting increased time and resources to measuring the

extent of this problem, to examining its causes, and establishing programs for dropout prevention and recovery. Policymakers are promoting and supporting these efforts and passing legislation for funding support.

With a decline in the long-term incidence of students dropping out of school, why is there an increased concern? Rumberger (1987) gave several explanations that may account for expanded initiatives and renewed efforts. One reason for the increased attention to dropouts is that minority populations, who have always had higher dropout rates than the white population, are increasing in numbers in the public schools (Rumberger, 1987). In 1982, racial and ethnic minorities represented the majority of students enrolled in most large United States cities and more than 90% of all students in such cities as Newark, Atlanta, and San Antonio (Plisko & Stern, 1985). As the proportions increase in the future, this alone could drive up the high school dropout rates.

In 1991 9% of Caucasians left high school prior to graduating, 14% of African-Americans, and 35% Hispanics (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1992). The Hispanic dropout rate has been consistently higher than the African-American and Caucasian dropout rates (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1992). The U.S. Department of Education (1994) estimated that in 1993 alone, over 380,000 students dropped out of high school. The dropout rates were reported at 19.1% for whites, 24.5% for

blacks, and 41.3% for Hispanics (U.S. Department of Education, 1993). Again, it is evident from these statistics that the dropout rate for Hispanics continues to rise and is considerably higher than the dropout rate for whites and blacks.

A second reason for increased concern about dropouts, as cited by Rumberger (1987), is that many states have recently passed legislation to increase the number of courses required for high school graduation. Therefore, Levin (1986) contended that major efforts will be required to prevent more students in this high-risk population from dropping out as academic rigor is added to minimum high school exiting requirements.

A third reason for the increased concern about students leaving high school prior to graduation is a widespread belief that the educational requirements and essential skills for future careers will increase. Recent state reform efforts and the national reports on education have been predicated on a belief that the increased use of new technologies and structural changes in the composition of jobs in the economy will require more educational skills (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).

Considering the amount of research and attention given to this issue, it is apparent that dropouts have become a serious concern within the traditional public high school. In the past, efforts have focused on low achievers likely to drop out or already withdrawn from high school. These

approaches include the following: alternative opportunities such as in-school suspension programs, magnet schools, and schools-within-a-school (Dayton, 1992); employment linkages to provide part-time employment training and/or improvement in vocational education (Grubb, 1992); special social services and counseling programs such as those for delinquents or pregnant girls (Henn-Reinke, 1991); modifications in curriculum and instruction to make education more motivating and relevant for disinterested students (Toby & Armor, 1992); smaller classes and schools providing more personal contact between teachers and students and creating supportive communities (Koepke, 1992); selection of dedicated teachers who are willing and able to work with potential dropouts (Kagan, 1992); experiential learning activities (Bernard, 1992); and mentoring and advocacy assistance from sympathetic adults (Hamilton & Hamilton, 1992).

Various studies have examined these approaches. However, researchers have not yet fully explored approaches attempted within alternative programs offered by public school systems targeted at reducing student failure and early school learning. It is also not clear what perceptions administrators and teachers within these settings hold regarding program characteristics and approaches. In establishing program parameters, and in forging ahead, one can draw on the ideas of practitioners and the findings of researchers who have studied these

programs in the past.

### Statement of the Problem

One significant result of the attention recently focused on the problems of this country's educational system is that many innovative programs are being established attempting to prevent young people from dropping out of school. Students not completing high school affect not only those who leave school but also society at large. Dropouts are visible and costly in terms of wasted potential and public expense (DeBlois, 1989). Much of the work that has been done concerning students leaving school prior to graduation has focused on why these students drop out and the effects of dropouts on society (DeBlois, 1989). According to DeBlois (1989), somewhat less research has examined the structure of programs that deal with dropouts because many of these programs are fairly new. DeBlois (1989) noted that still less has been written on the specific curricula employed by alternative programs for at-risk students.

The problem of this research study was to determine: (1) administrators' and teachers' perceptions of the level of importance of program characteristics of alternative schools, (2) if there was a significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of the level of importance of program characteristics, (3) if there was a significant difference in administrators' and teachers'

perceptions of the extent of each characteristic's presence, (4) if there was a significant difference in administrators' and teachers' gaps, and (5) the extent of each characteristic's presence within North Carolina public alternative high school programs.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine perceptions of administrators and teachers regarding the importance of program characteristics related to the following 12 categories which include teacher perceptions about alternative schools, administrator perceptions about alternative schools, teacher perceptions about student attitudes of alternative schools, administrator perceptions about student attitudes of alternative schools, teacher perceptions about school climate, administrator perceptions about school climate, teacher perceptions about leadership, administrator perceptions about leadership, teacher perceptions about student needs, administrator perceptions about student needs, teacher perceptions about student services, and administrator perceptions about student services, to promoting student completion of high school within alternative high school programs in North Carolina. The study also sought to determine if there was a significant difference between administrators' and teachers' perceptions of the relative existence, importance, and gaps of program characteristics to alternative high schools. The

prevalence of these program characteristics were also determined within sampled programs.

### Research Questions

This study attempted to determine the perceptions of administrators and teachers regarding the importance of program characteristics within alternative high schools as they related to the following research questions:

1. What program characteristics exist within alternative high schools in North Carolina?
2. What program characteristics will be identified by administrators from most to least important to alternative high schools?
3. What program characteristics will be identified by teachers from most to least important to alternative high schools?
4. Will there be a significant difference in administrators' perceptions and teachers' perceptions of program characteristic existence to alternative high schools?
5. Will there be a significant difference in administrators' perceptions and teachers' perceptions of program characteristic importance to alternative high schools?
6. Will there be a significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of program characteristics?

### Hypotheses

As a result of the review of literature, the following null hypotheses were formulated for this study.

Null Hypotheses 1-40: There is no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions about existence of program characteristics within alternative high schools.

Null Hypotheses 41-80: There is no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions about the importance of program characteristics within alternative high schools.

Null Hypotheses 81-120: There is no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions about the difference in importance of program characteristics within alternative high schools and the extent of their existence.



### Significance of the Problem

Exiting high school prior to graduation has long been viewed as a serious educational and social problem. Rumberger (1987) stated that by leaving high school prior to completion, most dropouts, who have an inadequate education, severely limit their economic and social well-being throughout their adult lives. The individual consequences lead to lost earning potential. Robledo (1986) found the economic cost of one year's graduating class of dropouts, nationwide, to represent a loss of \$228 billion in lifetime earning and \$68 billion in taxes. Robledo (1986) suggested that an investment equal to 10% of the money lost in earnings and taxes would address the problem. Based on the projected loss of \$228 billion per graduating class, a nationwide investment in dropout prevention of \$22.8 billion annually could retrieve a potential \$46 billion in taxes (Robledo, 1986). Dropouts often face a lifetime of difficulty finding secure, adequately paying jobs. Neumann (1991) estimated that the unemployment rate for high school dropouts was nearly 100% higher than the overall unemployment rate. High school dropouts are also more likely to engage in crime, receive welfare, have poorer health, and participate less in the political process (Neumann, 1991).

Rumberger (1987) stated that many students wanted to finish high school and could be helped through effective policy interventions. Without such interventions, the

dropout rate could easily increase due to the rising proportion of minorities in the school-age population and increased academic requirements for high school graduation. Rumberger (1987) suggested that a variety of programs designed for different types of dropouts with an appropriate mix of educational and noneducational services be provided by the public schools.

The first contribution of this study was the development of a list of program characteristics of alternative schools as perceived by administrators and teachers. The second contribution of this study was the overall description of the program characteristics of existing North Carolina alternative high schools.

#### Assumptions

The following assumptions were made from this study:

1. The information gathered from the participating school systems will provide accurate information of administrator and teacher perceptions of the importance of program characteristics of alternative high schools in North Carolina.
2. The information will reflect administrator and teacher perceptions on the extent of the presence of program characteristics of alternative high school programs in North Carolina.

### Limitations/Delimitations

To further clarify this study, certain delimitations should be recognized.

1. Only public alternative high schools in North Carolina will be represented in this study and, therefore, no generalizations may be inferred for alternative schools in other states.
2. This study will not compare alternative high schools in North Carolina.

### Definitions

To have a mutual point of reference, certain key words will be defined: (a) traditional/conventional high schools, (b) alternative high schools, (c) student success, (d) at-risk students, and (e) dropout.

Traditional/Conventional High Schools. A school in which emphasis is placed on academic training for higher education, productive work, and responsible citizenship (Hill, Foster, & Gender, 1990). The curriculum is controlled by graduation requirements and the Carnegie unit.

Alternative High School Program. A school program more flexible than conventional programs, providing more personal attention to meeting the needs of students who might otherwise become dropouts. These substitute programs usually differ from traditional programs in curriculum, teaching methods, and background of teachers (Hawes & Hawes, 1982).

Student Success. The ability of a student to successfully complete an alternative high school program, and receive a diploma.

At-risk Student. A student who has serious personal and/or academic problems that may prevent him or her from completing high school graduation requirements (Wehlage, 1986).

Dropout. A person who has quit attending school without having successfully completed requirements necessary for high school graduation, for reasons excluding death (Carey, 1992).

Dropout Rate. The percentage of students entering ninth grade who drop out before completing twelfth grade.

### Procedures

Procedures for this study were as follows:

1. Perceptions of Alternative School Programs Survey was developed by this researcher for the collection of data.
2. The population for this study was 21 public alternative high schools in North Carolina serving at-risk potential dropouts.
3. Names and addresses of administrators and educators in public alternative high schools were obtained from the 1995-1996 North Carolina Educational Directory.

4. A letter of introduction, cover letter, and questionnaire were mailed to all participants on January 30.
5. On February 6, a postcard was sent, serving as both a thank you to those who had responded and a reminder to those who had not.
6. On February 20, a follow-up letter and questionnaire were sent to all participants who had not yet responded.
7. On March 5, a third and final letter and questionnaire were mailed to all non-respondents.
8. Upon receiving the surveys, all data were scored and recorded. Means and t-tests were performed and the data were analyzed.
9. The results of the study were reported and summarized.

#### Overview of the Study

Chapter 1 includes the introduction, alternative school programs, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, hypothesis, significance of the problem, assumptions, limitations/delimitations, definition of terms, procedures, and an overview of the study.

A review of the related literature concerning alternative high school programs is found in Chapter 2. Found in this chapter are summaries of the recent research on North Carolina dropout rates, reasons for dropping out,

alternative schools as an attempt to curb the dropout rate, and characteristics of successful alternative schools. A summary follows showing the impact these have made on student success.

Chapter 3 consists of a description of the research design for this study, the population, instrumentation, procedures for collecting the data, and the methods used for analyzing the data.

An analysis of the data and presentation of the research findings are included in Chapter 4.

A summary of the study with conclusions and recommendations for further research has been presented in Chapter 5.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Serious concerns have arisen in today's public high schools. Schools are confronted with student attendance problems, disciplinary problems, teenage pregnancy, and dropouts, to mention a few. Keeping students in school is a major concern. As stated earlier, dropouts are visible and costly in terms of wasted potential and public expense (DeBlois, 1989). The following review of the literature includes a review of attempts to find solutions to dilemmas currently facing today's public high schools. The literature review included: a review of the extent of the significance of students leaving high school prior to graduation from North Carolina as well as the national perspective, reasons cited by students for leaving high school before graduation, the success of alternative schools concerning dropout prevention, and the various program characteristics found within alternative schools.

#### North Carolina Dropout Rates

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1990), 90% of American teenagers attended high school. Ninety-six percent of them received a high school diploma. The national dropout rate for 1992 was 13.6% (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1992).

North Carolina is still making progress in keeping students in school; even though higher enrollment is making the actual number of dropouts increase slightly. This section of the review of related literature will provide statistics for grades 7 through 12 for the years 1989-1994.

Etheridge (1993) reported that 17,639 students left North Carolina schools prior to graduating in 1992-93 in grades seven through twelve; which is up slightly from 1991-92 when 17,190 students dropped out. However, the 1992-93 school year saw an enrollment increase of over 5,000 students in those grades (Etheridge, 1993).

The dropout numbers are down substantially from 1988-89 when 24,559 students in grades seven through twelve dropped out of North Carolina schools, 1989-90 when 23,011 students dropped out, and 1990-91 with 19,417 dropouts. According to the federal dropout count, North Carolina's dropout rate in grades 7 through 12 for 1992-93 is 3.44 percent and 3.40 percent for 1993-94 (Etheridge, 1994).

Statistically, the dropout rate for North Carolina's public schools has steadily declined over the past six years. The statistics show a decrease of 1.45 percent during this period.

#### Reasons For Leaving School

Students note a variety of reasons for dropping out of public traditional schools. In a West Virginia study of dropouts, conducted by Toby and Armor (1992) during the



1987-1988 academic year, 21% said they left because they disliked school experiences and another 34% cited lack of interest or motivation. Eight percent said that academic difficulty led them to drop out, two percent left because of behavioral difficulty, and one percent dropped out for economic reasons.

Toby and Armor (1992) estimate that 50 to 60% of dropouts leave school because they do not find school work meaningful to them at that point in their lives. Another 10 to 15% leave because of pregnancy or marriage plans. Small percentages leave because of physical or mental illness or in order to pursue careers that do not require formal education. Finally, Toby and Armor (1992) estimate that some 10 to 15% of American dropouts leave because they are not capable of functioning in school, perhaps because of a complicated family situation but often because of problems of their own. Some, according to Toby and Armor (1992), are drug users, alcoholics, mentally disturbed, learning-disabled, or physically or neurologically impaired. Such problems interfere with their functioning in an ordinary public school, even one with special education services. They know that they are not doing well and that they are not learning as well as their classmates. Staying in school does not make sense to them.

Many dropouts do not make rational choices. They change the course of their lives, according to Toby and Armor (1992), by leaving school essentially on impulse: over some

trivial quarrel with a teacher, with a girlfriend, or with a parent. They soon realize that they made a mistake, but because of pride, they cannot admit it. Toby and Armor (1992) feel that dropouts' inability to control the impulse to leave suggests that they did not feel a deep stake in education. In other words, they may not have had an important reason to leave, but they obviously did not have an important reason to stay.

Of the 25% who drop out, about three out of five eventually complete high school, and two-thirds of those do so by taking the General Educational Development (GED) test rather than returning to school, as stated by Toby and Armor (1992).

DeBlois (1989) stated that students drop out because they feel they cannot get along in their specific school. This is evidenced by their high level of absenteeism and lack of participation in school activities. According to DeBlois (1989), these students feel alienated from the school, and see themselves as being on the other side of the fence from their teachers. Most of them do not consult with an adult at the school before leaving.

DeBlois (1989) reported that those most at risk can be identified by being behind in grade, having high absenteeism, and generally indicating alienation through their behaviors. According to DeBlois (1989), at-risk students are capable and would prefer to be shown their possibilities rather than their limitations.

Wehlage and Rutter (1986) note that it is fairly well-documented that poor academic achievement in school, as measured by grades, test scores, and grade retention, is associated with dropping out. Behavioral problems in school also have been associated with dropping out, including absenteeism, truancy, and discipline problems (Wehlage & Rutter, 1986).

Rumberger (1987) stated that most research on school-related factors has focused on students' behaviors and performance in school. Rumberger (1987) noted that little attention has been given to the influences of schools themselves - such as organization, leadership, and teachers - on students' decisions to drop out. Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, and Rock (1986) state that dropouts have lower levels of self-esteem and less sense of control over their lives than other students. Ekstrom, et al. (1986) further state that dropouts have poor attitudes about school and low educational and occupational aspirations.

Different kinds of students drop out for different reasons. Some are related to problems in school, such as a lack of interest or poor performance; others are related to factors outside of the school, such as the need to find work or having a child (Rumberger, 1987).

Etheridge (1992) gave the top 10 reasons for students dropping out of North Carolina public schools. Table 1 presents these reasons.

TABLE 1  
TOP TEN REASONS FOR STUDENTS LEAVING NORTH CAROLINA  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS PRIOR TO GRADUATION

Reason	Percentage
Absences/Lack of Attendance	30.85
Choice of Work over School	11.43
Unstable Home Environment	6.77
Academic Problems	5.95
Moved, No Records Requested	5.63
Discipline Problems	4.62
School Not Meeting Needs	4.10
Pregnancy	3.47
Expulsion	2.77
Employment Necessary	2.00

Note. From "Dropout Prevention and Students at Risk/Child Abuse Prevention by B. Etheridge 1992, 1990-91 Dropout Report, p. 16.

Throughout this section of the review of related literature, many reasons for students dropping out were identified. These were related to school experiences, problems in school, employment, and pregnancy.

### Alternative Schools As An Attempt To Curb The Dropout Rate

The demand for greater educational effectiveness in the 1980's generated numerous improvement plans for America's public schools. Many attempts to increase school effectiveness are under way. One attempt, according to Levine and Ornstein (1993), includes alternative schools. Raywid (1982) described the alternative school idea as "establishing a distinct, identifiable unit or entity with its own staff and students, and some degree of organizational coherence and separateness from other units... they are not alternatives on most definitions if they lack this organizational separateness" (p. 9). Alternative school programs and classes are intended to be better suited to the interests and/or learning styles of students who find regular academic classes irrelevant, lacking stimulation, or unrealistic in their expectations (Raywid, 1982). Alternative schools are designed to meet the needs of students who might otherwise become dropouts by providing individualized attention (Hawes & Hawes, 1982). This portion of the review of related literature will examine alternative school programs in general and specific alternative school programs targeted at keeping students in school.

### Alternative School Programs In General

Neumann (1994) determined that many of the ideas that influenced alternative educators in the 1960s are still

shaping programs at today's schools. Although there is no typical model of an alternative school, as stated by Neumann (1994), there appear to be some common structures and processes that contribute to the successes these schools have experienced.

The work of John Dewey and the ideas associated with progressive education in the 1930s are often cited as the nascence of what is loosely described as the alternative education movement today, but it was not until the late 1960s that the term "alternative school" became commonplace in American public education (Neumann, 1994).

Public alternative schools of the 1960s and 1970s were generally included in secondary education. According to Neumann (1994), many alternative schools during this period embodied concepts, theories, and ideas advanced by "humanistic" psychology. Neumann (1994) defined humanistic psychology as placing emphasis on the uniqueness of individuals and the dynamics of their intrinsic motivation for growth. This was interpreted by many alternative educators to mean that education should be tailored to students' needs and interests, as much as possible.

Ideas of openness and choice, which underlie another central theme of "humanistic" education - democracy - also influenced the organization and operation of many alternative schools, as stated by Neumann (1994). Students participated in school governance, developed their personal learning plans, and made curricular decisions. Faculty

members at many schools acted in the simultaneous roles of teachers, counselors, and administrators who as partners, collaborated in the development and operation of their school (Neumann, 1994).

Neumann (1994) also discussed the "fundamental" school, which was another type of alternative that experienced considerable growth during the late 1970s and the 1980s. These schools are often characterized by their formality, deference to authority, conventional curriculum, drill-and-recitation, instructional strategies, and rote learning. Although not specifically connected to progressive education of the 1930s or humanistic education of the 1960s fundamental schools, according to Neumann (1994), show an underlying principle of alternative education: diversification.

Neumann (1994) also mentioned some other common characteristics of alternative schools which include small school size, small class size, extended roles for teachers that include student counseling and guidance, cooperative roles for students, voluntary membership, student involvement in governance, and absence or minimization of tracking, ability grouping, and other forms of labeling.

Raywid (1983) stated that a considerable percentage of the alternative schools being started are inspired by the need to respond to problems such as student alienation and suggest that alternative schools often succeed with students who have psychically, if not physically, dropped out

(Raywid, 1983). In the late 1960's alternative schools began to appear as experimental projects in which a number of non-traditional instructional strategies and approaches were designed and implemented. Today, there are more than 15,000 alternative schools in operation.

Raywid (1983) reported that news from some of the early alternatives had been extremely positive, with impressive success, often from youngsters who had previously detested school. Therefore, through the seventies and into the eighties, as stated by Raywid (1983), alternative schools have been adopted as the prospective solution to a variety of the nation's ills. Both federal and state, as well as private initiatives, have sought to solve the following social problems through alternative schools: juvenile crime and delinquency; school violence and vandalism; the demands of inner-city minorities; anti-institutionalism; resentments against public bureaucracies; racial segregation; youth unemployment; declining school enrollments; and demographic changes in school population (Raywid, 1983).

According to Raywid (1983), alternative schools have enrolled far more than a normal share of the youngsters who were previously turned off, non-cooperative, truant, or otherwise problematic. Extensive improvement sometimes occurs, particularly among students who have previously been underachievers; among these and other students, attitudes toward school are sufficiently changed and many alternatives even send far higher numbers on to college than do other



schools in the same district (Raywid, 1983).

Raywid, (1983) reported that most studies have found significant increases in daily attendance rates.

Alternative school students and their parents report that these students genuinely like to come to school (Raywid, 1983).

According to Levine and Ornstein (1993), many efforts to improve and reform the public schools have involved the development of alternative schools. Alternative schools provide learning opportunities that are not included in the traditional schools (Levine & Ornstein, 1993). Studies of alternative schools indicate that they usually enroll students who have been unsuccessful in traditional schools or who have desired a different kind of educational environment.

Rumberger (1987) stated that alternative schools make schooling more relevant for certain kinds of students and thus increase their likelihood of staying in school. According to Rumberger (1987), almost one-half of all dropouts and more than half of white and black males cite school-related reasons for leaving school, such as disliking school or being expelled or suspended. Twenty percent of all dropouts, but almost 40% of Hispanic males, cite economic reasons for leaving school, and a third of all female dropouts report personal reasons for leaving school; such as pregnancy or marriage (Rumberger, 1987).

DeBlois (1989) found that to keep at-risk students in

school, the belief that these young people have the capacity to become more than minimally educated must pervade the school. Schools must be conceived as the primary place where this learning begins in earnest. Students must be given different ways in which to succeed and to demonstrate their multiple intelligences (Lee & Berman, 1987). DeBlois (1989) feels that educators must believe that at-risk students would prefer not to be ignorant, and that they care about their future. Believing this, recognizing that many of these students can be successful in alternative settings, DeBlois (1989) suggests that focus must be on those elements of structure and curriculum that provide the greatest opportunities for the success of at-risk students.

Kleinbard (1983) recommends that with low turnover due to declining enrollments and budgets, alternative programs may represent one of the best means to renew commitment and energy among aging staff. Kleinbard (1983) also gives a second important advantage offered by alternative schools entailing a sense of community among members of the school, including parents. When all participants choose to be part of the school, a commitment to it is generated. The groups are also small so that participants know one another and can respond to problems and needs directly. They are not bound within the three R's - roles, rules, and routines. Finally, Kleinbard (1983) reported that because alternative programs are often at the periphery of school systems and must prove themselves to survive, participants are challenged to work

together for a common goal.

Ryan (1982) reported that 80% of unwed teens who become pregnant fail to complete high school. A major deterrent for many of these girls is a lack of reasonably priced child-care facilities. Another deterrent is the existence of undeniable differences between the teen mother and her peers (Ryan, 1982).

The evidence collected from unwed pregnant teenagers indicates that 90% of them desire to continue their education. According to Ryan (1982), this is not surprising when one considers the dominant theme that educators and others recite: "Get an education if you want to get ahead." "Don't be a dropout." St. Pierre and St. Pierre (1980) advocate that alternative schools must truly address the very special needs of teenagers who become mothers. These schools would accommodate their clients before delivery, immediately after delivery, and on a continuing basis for three years or until the adolescent has completed high school.

Ryan (1982) mentioned some inherent advantages of school-based programs. One advantage is that the teen remains in an environment which is as normal as possible. The attendance of new mothers remains at a consistent level. Association with other teens who are dealing with the difficult roles of teenager, mother, and student provides a support group and lessens the likelihood of additional pregnancies. Thus, the teenage mother can finish school and

take her place in society at a level commensurate with her skills and intelligence (Ryan, 1982).

In 1981, the Project on Alternatives in Education (PAE) began nationally surveying alternative schools. This group discovered that graduates of the nontraditional programs equaled or outperformed traditional high school graduates in college (Raywid, 1983).

In 1982, PAE took a complete census of the public alternative secondary schools in the United States. Twelve hundred out of 2,500 alternative schools returned the questionnaires. According to Raywid (1983), the students appeared to like alternatives. Attendance rose 81% at the responding alternative schools.

Barr, Colston, and Parrett (1977) conducted a study of six widely disparate alternative public schools. The findings of their evaluation reflected program success in the areas of cognitive achievement, affective development, and the development and maintenance of positive student behavior. The program evaluations consistently found the attitudes of students toward the schools and themselves to be higher in the alternative setting. Students attending these programs assumed an increased level of interest in basic skills and overall curriculum development. Highly positive feelings toward teachers, peers, administrators, and the overall instructional philosophy also appeared to be nurturing (Barr, et al., 1977). Those programs reported an increased rate of school and classroom attendance.

Discipline problems were at a minimum, resulting in lowered rates of suspension. It would appear that higher attendance rates could be directly related to an increase in student interest and attitudes toward school, and minimal discipline problems.

Smith, Gregory, and Pugh (1981) state that meeting the needs of students is the purpose of schools. They developed an instrument called the Statements About Schools Inventory, using a definition of student needs from Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs. This inventory is designed to assess how well a school is satisfying the needs of its students as judged by both its students and teachers. This has enabled Smith, et al. (1981) to state with some confidence that alternative schools come closer to satisfying student needs, as defined by Maslow's hierarchy, than do conventional schools.

Smith, et al. (1981) findings with two schools (one alternative school and one conventional school), implicate that students in the alternative school were much more satisfied with how well their school was meeting their needs than were students in the conventional school. These authors, through the Statements About Schools Inventory, demonstrate that alternative school students and teachers report that their school is doing a better job of meeting the higher - level needs of their students. These authors feel that the most intriguing finding is the lack of significant differences between the two types of schools in

meeting security needs. Alternative schools have been accused many times of placing too little emphasis on order, control, and stability (Smith, et al., 1981). However, their data did not support this criticism.

Smith, et al. (1981) found one variable responsible for such differences from the Statements About Schools Inventory. That variable is free choice found in alternative schools. The ownership of and identification with these schools that seem to result from the simple act of choosing is the variable to which the large differences can be attributed (Smith, et al., 1981).

Catterall and Stern (1986) asked students about their participation in various programs and special classes through the High School and Beyond Survey. Many of these programs and classes are applicable to those interests or learning styles of students who find regular academic classes irrelevant, unstimulating, or impossible. The purpose of these alternative programs is to keep students in high school. These alternatives include alternative high schools, and special schools for pregnant girls or mothers.

Catterall and Stern (1986) found that those who participated in other alternatives dropped out less often than students who did not participate in these programs. They also found from the High School and Beyond Survey that their future dropouts were also less likely to have participated in other alternatives.

A study of an alternative school for dropout prevention

was conducted by Bechard (1988). A survey was given to the graduates of an alternative school. The personal assistance and concern of the staff was rated highly, as were the small classes, and the structured credit systems. Most of the former students indicated that they would choose the alternative school if they had to do it over again. They had fewer overall mean absences, fewer negative life experiences while at the alternative school, and more positive evaluations of the alternative program components. These results emphasize the importance of the alternative school as a strategy to provide opportunities for graduation.

### Specific Alternative School Programs

#### Second Chance Pilot Program

Neumann (1991) examined outcomes associated with the enactment of Colorado's Second Chance Pilot Program for dropouts. This legislation was intended to reduce the number of dropouts in Colorado by allowing them to return to a designated Second Chance Center. Those students who had left high school without graduating would be given an opportunity to complete requirements for a high school diploma or equivalent certificate.

On July 1, 1986, the Second Chance Pilot Program went into effect. Neumann (1991) stated that this statute provided that individuals classified as dropouts would be

allowed to attend a Second Chance Center of their choice, regardless of location, and mandated that school district funds accompany dropouts who attended a program outside their district of residence. Student eligibility required drop-out status, age 16 to 21, and recommendation for participation by the school district of residence, with concurrence of the child, his or her parents, and the receiving school district (Neumann, 1991).

Neumann (1991) reported that the Second Chance bill was the first in a series to propose the concept of "choice" as a strategy for improving Colorado's public education. The idea was that if dropouts were given a choice among a variety of educational programs, they would be more likely to locate a program suitable to their high school education (Neumann, 1991). By passing the Second Chance bill, according to Neumann (1991) the Colorado General Assembly had recognized the problem of children who do not succeed in the conventional education system and determined a necessity for establishing more alternatives.

Although Second Chance Centers differ in structures and processes of organization and operation, some common characteristics are present among them. All centers provide for self-paced learning, and most are equipped with computerized instructional systems. Some centers have both day and evening classes, and several provide day-care services for students with children. Many Second Chance Centers are managed along with a director or principal, and



several involve students in governance. Satisfaction with the Second Chance program appears to be very high.

According to Neumann (1991), a statewide survey of Second Chance students in 1989 (N=396) revealed that 86% were satisfied or very satisfied with their program. In a similar survey of Second Chance faculty (N=44), 93% of respondents reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied working at their centers.

#### Young Adult Education Program

According to Davis (1989), as standards for high school graduation increase, many school board members fear that students who cannot handle the stiffer requirements will drop out. This concern is legitimate, especially in the area of the school budget when it comes to designing dropout prevention programs.

The Young Adult Education Program (Y.A.E.P.), an evening school offering high school credit classes, serves at-risk students who have left the regular day school because of attendance or disciplinary problems. This program also serves day students who require additional credits to graduate, adults returning to complete high school, and girls who dropped out of school because of pregnancy (Davis, 1989). Through Y.A.E.P., these students, ranging in age of 16 to 21, can attend evening classes and earn credits to be applied toward graduation.

The purpose of the Y.A.E.P. is not for attaining a

General Education Development certificate. Rather, the students earn a diploma from the high school in their respective attendance area. According to Davis (1989), this approach serves an important need: Many students would rather continue learning academic subjects instead of having to spend time studying for the G.E.D. Also, as further stated by Davis (1989), students believe their chances of landing a job or getting into college are greater with a diploma, rather than a G.E.D. certificate.

Teachers treat students as adults, with the rights and responsibilities of adults. Students call their teachers by their first names and can bring food and drink to class. Teachers often substitute discussion for lectures and encourage students to talk about their opinions (Davis, 1989). But with adult rights come adult responsibilities, such as regularly attending class. Two absences are allowed per quarter from each class.

The Y.A.E.P. has graduated approximately 1,800 students in the past six years of operation. This program, according to Davis (1989), gives dropouts and at-risk students the second chance they need by offering them high school credit classes at night.

#### Parenthood Pilot Project

A school system in Austin, Texas developed a Parenthood Pilot Project with a number of programs with the best elements of each program being used as the basis for the

next generation of programs. The second generation of alternative schools in Austin reduced the drop-out rate by 75% (Levine, 1979). When the typical alternative school was extended and provided child care in a protected environment, only 15% of the girls ended up as drop-outs.

#### Seattle Middle College High School

Houston, Byers, and Danner (1992) examined Seattle Middle College High School (MCHS), a successful alternative to traditional education. These students at Seattle's MCHS are those who did not fare well in traditional public schools. Typical applicants are young persons between the ages of fifteen and twenty years who are not enrolled in high school, have failed at least two grade levels, and have a history of poor school attendance.

Byers (1991) reported on MCHS student progress at the end of its first semester and noted that 56% of the 120 charter students scored at or above the 3.0 grade point average. Over two-thirds of this 56% were inducted for the first time into the high school honor society. During its first semester of operation, MCHS maintained an 84% retention rate, graduating five students in June and three in August. Six of its graduates enrolled in the fall in local community colleges. By June 1992, the number of MCHS graduates had risen to 83, and students were graduating with academic scholarships and not only high school credits but also college transfer credits (Houston, Byers & Danner,

1992). Byers (1991) further reported that 94% of MCHS students indicated they would encourage others to attend MCHS. Students and teachers alike pointed to the curriculum and teaching methods as factors that make MCHS a better experience than the traditional high school for most of its students. According to Houston, Byers, and Danner (1992), Seattle's Middle College High School is a testament to the effectiveness of efforts to expand and strengthen second-chance opportunities for students who cannot follow the "traditional" path to a quality education.

### Middle College

Lieberman (1989) described an alternative school called Middle College. Students reason for dropping out of the traditional high school was that "nobody cared" or "nobody knew my name." These students come voluntarily and enter a combined high school-college program on the LaGuardia College site. The program includes ninth through twelfth grades, but depending on ability and motivation, the students progress at their own rate.

Lieberman (1989) stressed that the system that has been developed and refined for fifty years is no longer appropriate for the heterogenous population that is now to be serviced. The Middle College design is small in size with a maximum enrollment of 500 students, and a high teacher-to -student ratio, with a maximum of 20 students per class, and a heavy emphasis on guidance and counseling.

Teachers relate one-to-one, students can relate directly to each other and to teachers, groups are small, there is communication and individualized learning. Their motto is: "You can make a difference" (Lieberman, 1989). Small numbers promote personal group identity and support the alternative peer culture (Lieberman, 1989).

Flexibility exists since the high school is located on the college campus. Students can take college classes at age 16 or stay in Middle College, as long as they need to master the content. Students are not grouped according to grade level; progress is determined on a college-based system of acquiring credits toward a degree (Lieberman, 1989). When a student has the requisite number of credits and the mandated distribution, he may graduate.

Empowerment, small size, and flexibility, according to Lieberman (1989), reduce the rigidity of the traditional structure, and successfully address the problems of at-risk students. The structural reform in Middle College works, as believed by Lieberman (1989) because it accommodates to changing social needs and the reality of an adolescent's world. The design will smooth the transition and turns students into winners.

#### Type I and Type II Alternative Programs

Raywid (1994) defined alternative schools as those that represent the most definitive departure from the programmatic, organizational, and behavioral regularities

that inhibit school reform. She furthered stated that many of the reforms currently pursued in traditional schools - downsizing the high school, pursuing a focus or theme, student and teacher choice, making the school a community, empowering staff, active learner engagement, authentic assessment - are practices that alternative schools pioneered. Raywid (1994) advocated that from the beginning, alternative schools have been designed to respond to a group that appears not to be optimally served by the regular program, and that they have represented varying degrees of departure from standard school organization, programs, and environments.

Raywid (1994) identified two types of alternative programs. The Type I alternative program's mission is to make school challenging and fulfilling for all involved. This program reflects organizational and administrative departures from the traditional, as well as programmatic innovations. These are schools of choice and are usually popular. They resemble magnet schools. According to Raywid (1994), they are likely to reflect programmatic themes or emphasis pertaining to content or instructional strategy, or both. This Type I Alternative Program is also referred to as Popular Innovations.

The Type II, Last-Chance Alternative Programs, are those to which students are sentenced - usually as one last chance prior to expulsion (Raywid, 1994). These include in-school suspension programs, cool-out rooms, and longer term

placements for the accomplishment.

#### Gateway Program

Davis (1994) stressed that with serious discipline problems on the rise in schools, educators are facing tough challenges. The Gateway Program, a nonpunitive, therapeutic alternative to out-of-school suspension, is striving to provide a therapeutic alternative to current measures being used to intervene with disruptive students. The program's design includes academic study as well as daily group counseling, individual counseling, writing in a personal journal, and a system for earning privileges (Davis, 1994). The Gateway Program emphasizes academics but the students' emotional conflicts and behaviors take priority. The name "Gateway Program", according to Davis (1994), illustrates the project's purpose as a therapeutic threshold through which students may pass to future success.

#### Alternative Learning Program for the High School Age

Abbott (1994) viewed a Michigan alternative school program called ALPHA (Alternative Learning Program for the High School Age). This program was founded by four teachers whose mission was to produce an "out-of-the-box" program. The founders recognized that poor attendance stemmed from larger problems so they reflected this in their design. ALPHA student attendance improved dramatically because of these founders' efforts (Abbott, 1994). Under this program, the founders deemed it important to allow students more

independence and teachers more time to work closely with each student. Grades improve, according to Abbott (1994), students and teachers enjoy being in ALPHA, and they like and support one another. ALPHA has three times more applicants than can be enrolled, and once enrolled, students don't want to leave. Attendance is consistently above ninety percent, and ALPHA is credited with helping the district maintain a high graduation rate (97%).

This program is attended by both at-risk and volunteer students. ALPHA has entered its 23rd year. Abbott (1994) stated that this program has survived for so long in part because it offers learning opportunities tailored to each individual.

#### Oasis High School

Strathe and Hash (1979) reported that the concept of the alternative school has been advanced in recent years in response to the belief that under different school circumstances, students who are not succeeding in the traditional classroom can show progress. Meixner (1994) looked at students at Oasis High School who had difficulties in traditional schools and were at high risk of future unemployment or incarceration. Out of 150 students, ages 16-22, 96% had received no high school credit the previous semester, 39% were pregnant or teenage mothers or fathers, and 85% either exhibited high-risk drug behavior themselves or had family members who did. Also, approximately 35% had



been on probation, 10% had attempted suicide, and 80% were two to six years behind in reading.

But this story had a happy ending. According to Meixner (1994), Oasis High is a small, effective school that helped these children beat the odds. A May 1993 survey (with an 81% response rate) of their 1987-1992 graduates revealed that 36% were attending college, 5% were housewives at home with young children, 5% were in the armed services, and 51% were employed. Only 3% were unemployed. In June 1992, Oasis was one of two high schools in Michigan to receive the Middle Cities Excellence in Leadership Award. In April 1993, this school team was one of only 15 nationwide to receive the Reader's Digest "American Heroes in Education" award.

#### Career Intern Program

Gibboney and Langsdorf (1979) reported that in 1973 over ten percent of youth age 14 to 24 had left school before receiving a high school diploma. The percentages for blacks were higher than whites: among 18 and 19 year olds, 27.7% of black males and 23% of black females dropped out in 1973, in contrast to 14.1% of white males and 15.2% for white females. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, 20% of high school dropouts between the ages of 16 and 24 were unemployed in 1974, compared with 10% of the high school graduates.

However, a program developed by the Opportunities

Industrialization Corporations of America Inc., in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania is attempting to improve these statistics. This program, called Career Intern Program (CIP), is an alternative high school for 16-21 year olds who dropped out of school or are in serious risk of dropping out before graduation.

An experimental test of the program's effectiveness compared the retention and graduation rates of 286 students who entered CIP between January 1974 and September 1975 with a control group chosen at random from CIP applicants. By December 1975, 67% of the controls had graduated or were attending school. About 44% of the CIP interns had received high school diplomas and 23% were still at their studies, while only 7% of the control students had diplomas and only 6% were in school.

A follow-up in the fall of 1975 was conducted with 77 of the CIP graduates, after having been out for six months to a year. Of these, Gibboney and Langsdorf (1979) reported that 71% were employed or in college or technical school, compared to 39% of the controls. For the control group, not one had enrolled in college or technical school, in contrast to 29% of the interns. Thus, according to Gibboney and Langsdorf (1979) and these statistics, one of the biggest differences CIP made was to enable youth to continue their education.

### Alternative Programs For Disruptive Students In North Carolina's Public Schools

Hudgins (1992) conducted a study which examined the existing alternative programs for disruptive students in North Carolina's public schools. Hudgins (1992) found through her studies that the issue of disruptive students has affected every school system in North Carolina to some extent.

Disruptive students, as stated by Hudgins (1992), can cause fiscal problems in terms of special programs, repairs, and loss of instructional time. Of the programs studied by Hudgins (1992) in North Carolina District Six schools, it was determined that students in middle school through high school have been served on a part time basis by alternative education. However, in-school suspension was found to be the most common program used by the systems studied, although data indicated that in-school suspension was not effective.

Hudgins (1992) advocates that North Carolina must develop a system of diagnostic and support services to deal with disruptive youth. Individual learning programs should be based on accurate diagnosis. Hudgins (1992) suggests that North Carolina develop a variety of positive alternative programs.

### Missouri Alternative Secondary Schools

Carey (1992) studied alternative secondary schools

serving at-risk students in Missouri. Descriptive data were gathered on the educational mission and curricular focus, organizational structure and funding, methods of instruction, staff development, student performance, and program effectiveness. Representatives of the thirty-six alternative secondary prevention programs were sent a questionnaire to gather information.

Carey (1992) drew three conclusions based on the findings. First, the programs surveyed provide an alternative path of academics for the student to complete the secondary experience. Second, programs work to achieve the mission of the programs through a concentration on the individuality of the student. Thirdly, a prototypical model of currently operating secondary alternative dropout prevention programs exists in Missouri.

#### South Carolina Rural Alternative School

Fernandez and Shu (1988) stated that much attention is given to the topic of at-risk youth in urban areas as inner city poverty and homelessness increase. However, far less is written about the 60 million young people from rural areas who are also in great danger of dropping out of school (Bates, 1993). To provide insights to other rural educators who face the problem of at-risk students, Bates (1993) describes one successful alternative school.

The alternative school selected for Bates (1993) study began in 1986 attempting to stem the flow of dropouts from

the large local high school. Students in this South Carolina school had characteristics that place them at risk. Most of the students had experienced problems with prior school attendance and performance programs. Many were sexually active and some were pregnant. Some, both male and female, were already parents with financial and physical responsibilities for their own children. Others were suicidal. Many, from impoverished, dysfunctional backgrounds in terms of finances and life experiences, had been either physically, emotionally, or sexually abused. Some were extremely bright, but did not fit into systems. The majority, because of past experiences, did not trust adults or institutions.

Flexibility was evident at this alternative school. A program existed that aimed to help the students develop productive leisure activities that would be valuable for a lifetime. Bates (1993) discovered that a grant existed to aid students in attending a structured YMCA program with a curriculum designed especially for these at-risk young people. Students elected classes in nutrition and health, weight training, swimming, or lifesaving. They attended this YMCA program for 15 Fridays throughout the year. Those students who did not wish to participate attended regular academic classes where there are enrichment activities.

Another unique feature of this program took place on Friday. Each class period was shortened to 30 minutes. At 11:30, students were allowed to participate in team sports

and other activities of their choice. For those who had a productive week, the day ended after lunch. Others had detention until the end of the school day.

According to Bates (1993), these at-risk students enjoyed other activities which they likely would not experience in another type of high school. They attended field trips to the state museum, the state zoo, the Charleston naval base, and various cultural events and historic sites in cities such as Atlanta. Students received "Gotcha Cards" (got you being good) for outstanding performance in academics, attendance, and behavior. Students who received the incentives were taken for lunch at the school's expense.

From student interviews certain commonalities were identified. Bates (1993) found that the word care appeared in 10 of the 12 interviews and synonymous terms or phrases such as interested in me appeared in the other two. The theme that somebody in this school really knows me and cares about me as a person was strongly evident (Bates, 1993). Seven students or 58% described themselves as being poor students with poor attendance prior to attending this alternative school. All students reported that their performance has improved, and 67% said that their attendance was better (Bates, 1993). In addition when describing themselves and the program at the alternative school, Bates (1993) found that students liked small classes, a smaller school, and the family atmosphere.

### Jefferson County Alternative High School

Gross (1990) examined the Jefferson County Alternative High School in Louisville, Kentucky. The principal of this alternative high school uses a "come when you can" schedule, a promise of success, and a high school diploma rather than a General Education Development (G.E.D.) certificate to entice would-be dropouts to finish their education. These teachers are interested in placing students on a career track and in getting them into college (Gross, 1990). In the four years since this alternative high school opened, more than 5,000 former dropouts have enrolled and 1,100 have graduated. This program, according to Gross (1990), is so individualized that students can be accommodated wherever they are and whenever they begin. The school is open 12 months a year. Classes run from 8:00 a.m. until 9:30 p.m., allowing students to easily fit school into their home or work schedule.

### Shanti Alternative High School

Neumann (1994) worked at the Shanti Alternative High School, a public school of choice serving students from Hartford, Connecticut and surrounding school districts. This school was managed by faculty members and a director, who collaborated with equal authority on decisions regarding budget, curriculum, and other matters of school operation.

Student empowerment was also evident at this alternative high school. They formed a student "curriculum

task force." Neumann (1994) stated that the task force surveyed classmates' interests and reported the results to faculty members, who, depending on the extent of interest and faculty expertise, might include student-requested topics in an existing course, develop a separate course or seminar, or enlist a member of the community with special knowledge to conduct a minicourse under the supervision of a faculty member.

As for curriculum at Shanti High School, Neumann (1994) advocated that faculty members enjoyed considerable latitude in determining the content, methods, and materials for their courses, just as university professors develop and implement their own courses. Neumann (1994) described this school as one operating much like a university, with courses being offered two or three times a week as opposed to daily in a conventional, 50 minute period. Also, as with university graduate programs, students were able to arrange for an independent study.

Students were also free to leave campus when they were not attending classes. According to Neumann (1994), many were involved with learning experiences in the city - such as internships at businesses, government agencies, and public service organizations - which were incorporated into personalized educational programs that students developed with a faculty member. Students were not given letter grades. Instead, they accrued "points," according to Neumann (1994), toward graduation through coursework,



independent study, and internships or service-learning experiences.

### Aspects of Alternative High Schools

This section of the literature is devoted to the characteristics found to be prevalent within alternative schools. Included are climate and leadership, caring staff, student services, and teaching practices and curriculum.

#### School Climate

According to Raywid (1983), the alternatives idea holds that the key to educational effectiveness lies in providing different kinds of schools to serve different kinds of youngsters and families. What looms largest for those in schools has to do with what it feels like to spend time there - how one is treated; how one is made to feel about oneself and one's efforts, successes, and prospects (Raywid, 1983). These concerns relate to school climate, which receives a lot attention in alternative schools.

From the survey by the Project on Alternatives in Education, Raywid (1983) felt that the major reason for the attendance change is undoubtedly very different teacher/student relationships. Most responding schools identified the quality of teacher/student interaction as the feature making them most different from other schools in their district. There are grounds, according to Raywid (1983), for speculating that choice may be even more

important for teachers than for students: increased attendance correlates more strongly with teacher choice than with student.

Raywid (1992) reports that, when compared to traditional schools, alternative schools tend to have small size, high staff morale, high attendance, satisfied students, freedom from external control, and strong concern for noncognitive goals of education.

Membership is what makes students speak of alternative schools as caring places and liken their school to family. Teacher-student interaction is a common characteristic (Raywid, 1994).

Kershaw and Blank (1993) examined a descriptive case study comparing an alternative school with ten traditional schools in a large Tennessee school system. Findings showed that alternative school's smaller, supportive, more structured learning environment, and close faculty-student relationships are perceived as positively influencing student performance.

Conant (1992) stated that the special facilitative school climate offered by alternative schools can improve student self-esteem, reduce the dropout rate, and increase productivity. Self-esteem is considered an important component of many alternative schools (Conant, 1992). Teachers modeling appropriate and effective behaviors is another very important component of successful alternative schools (Conant, 1992).

Conant (1992) listed some strategies for keeping at-risk students in school and for enhancing their self-esteem and academic performance. These include: limiting class sizes, selecting teachers carefully, being flexible, and avoiding the conventional model of school in which rewards and penalties dominate the teacher-student relationship. Conant (1992) feels teachers in alternative high schools can positively impact at-risk students' self-esteem through facilitative environmental characteristics such as trust, respect, and cooperation.

#### Operations

According to Raywid (1994), the structures of an alternative school combine to sustain the membership orientation and the attraction of learning. Staff roles are broadened to include new responsibilities, crucial educational decisions are made within the school, schedules are changed, the school's social order becomes dependent on norms rather than on rules, and far more collaborative effort occurs among both students and staff than in other schools.

Abbott (1994) viewed a Michigan alternative school program called ALPHA (Alternative Learning Program for the High School Age). ALPHA's three teachers according to Abbott (1994), function as group leaders and counselors, while a supportive high school principal acts as administrator and liaison with other high school principals. He oversees the

program, although most decisions are entrusted to the teachers on site.

Bates (1993) examined an alternative school in South Carolina and found the principal of this alternative school to be one who recognizes the tremendous emotional and academic demands made upon the teachers and staff in this setting. The staff consists of six teachers, one counselor, two administrative assistants, and the principal.

Staff support is evident. According to Bates (1993), faculty members ask for help in specific areas, and the principal carefully plans staff development based upon individual and group needs. Faculty also are supported through many social and work sessions designed to build esprit de corps. This alternative school has the support of the district superintendent, administrative staff, and school board. The commitment is shown by the funding that this expensive program receives, primarily from operating funds.

#### Caring Staff

Throughout much of the literature a caring staff was related to the success of alternative schools. Meixner (1994) examined the characteristics that make Oasis High School effective. Those characteristics related to a caring atmosphere include: a "family" atmosphere, and a nontraditional school building with "open" classrooms without doors - the use of tables, chairs, and couches

instead of desks, and no bells. When an administrator from another state asked what Oasis High was all about, the answer was, "individualized love." The teachers involve themselves at an emotional level to nurture and strengthen their students' growth. They believe this willingness to give their students love, something many of them have been deprived of, is an essential ingredient in their success (Meixner, 1994).

Gibboney and Langsdorf (1979) examined an alternative high school called Career Intern Program (CIP). Students feel that one of the major reasons CIP worked for them was that the program fostered a "supportive" atmosphere. These students believed teachers and counselors cared for them (Gibboney & Langsdorf, 1979).

Cuban (1989) identified some essential conditions for improvement. Two conditions of major importance, as stressed by Cuban (1989) are:

1. a school culture that shares common values about mutual respect and intellectual achievement
2. site-based management with participation of the entire staff concerning curriculum, instruction, and school organization.

Cuban (1989) suggests four features of programs that coincide with practitioner wisdom about efficacy with at-risk students. These four elements are size, staff, school-as-a-community, and flexibility.

### Student Services

In his examination of Oasis Alternative High School, Meixner (1994) found that another key element to the success of an alternative school program is student services. A high level of counseling available for students, on-site daycare with an emphasis on good parenting skills, extensive use of partnerships with Central Michigan University (reading tutors, mentoring tutors, counseling groups, social work interns) and local community agencies are essential.

Bates (1993) examined a new program called HOSTS (Help One Student To Succeed). This program was added in the 1990 school year to the options at the alternative school. Representatives from business, industry, and the community come once each week to serve as mentors for each individual student. The mayor, college faculty, school board members, bankers, and executives from industry are the current mentors. This program's primary purpose is to help students with reading through individual tutoring sessions. Bates (1993) discovered that many of the mentors also get involved with the students outside of class. They take students out to eat or to special events. These mentors may also invite the students to work sites to learn about various career possibilities. Bates (1993) also found that many businessmen not only give their time as mentors, but also give financial support to this school.

### Teaching Practice and Curriculum

Careful development of such practices as community-based learning and involvement, action learning, shared decision-making, individualized instruction, and operational flexibility characterize alternative schools and programs (Parrett, 1982). When compared to traditional schools, alternative schools allow for greater individualization, more independent study, and more openness to the outside community (Raywid, 1992).

Raywid (1994) identified two types of alternative programs, and found some features that marked Type I and Type II. They include the following:

1. They were small.
2. Both the program and organization were designed by those who were going to operate them.
3. They took their character, theme, or emphasis from the strengths and interests of the teachers who conceived them.
4. Their teachers all chose to be part of the program, with subsequent teachers selected with the input of present staff.
5. Their students and families chose the program.

Raywid (1994) also discussed three sets of factors that appear to account for the success of alternative schools. First, according to Raywid (1994), these schools generate and sustain community within them. Second, they make learning engaging. And third, they provide organization

and structure needed for the school to sustain the first two.

ALPHA's (Alternative Learning Program for the High School Age) program, founded by four teachers, includes site-based management, student and teacher empowerment, community service, parental involvement, choice within public schools, individualized learning opportunities, reflective teaching and learning, teachers as staff developers, teachers as advisors, and grade elimination; which many educators are grappling with today. Effective living is the most essential component of ALPHA's program. The students learn about goal setting and achievement, effective communication, and problem solving while developing their interpersonal and leadership skills. Abbott (1994) said that ALPHA tells their students that while they won't learn math or science in the seminar, they will do better in math, in science, in relationships, and in all areas of their lives because of the skills they learn in ALPHA.

Meixner's (1994) examination of Oasis Alternative High School identified some teaching practices and curriculum characteristics that make this school effective. These include a well-equipped computer lab, a later start to the school day and added time on four days, while making the fifth day optional, a variety of teaching methods; individualized instruction, mastery learning, experiential learning, outdoor education, and cooperative learning



activities, use of authentic assessment tools, credit given in small pieces; no retention, full inclusion of special education students in regular classes, and emphasis on "whole person" learning, all-school interdisciplinary units and discussions using students' background knowledge; and all-school reading/writing workshops (Meixner, 1994).

In a study on alternative secondary schools serving at-risk students in Missouri, Carey (1992) gathered data pertaining to the educational mission and curricular focus, methods of instruction, student performance and program effectiveness. Key aspects of the prototypical model, as stated by Carey (1992), include:

1. achievement of student proficiency in basic skills
2. student achievement of state graduation requirements
3. focus on student needs
4. alternative site or vocational setting
5. low teacher-to-student ratio
6. one-to-one tutoring
7. individualized instruction
8. individualized expectations
9. emphasis on self-esteem

Bates (1993) looked at the teaching practices and curriculum of an alternative school in South Carolina. This school strongly emphasizes the development of emotional stability and a more positive self-concept. The major thrust is upon the development of fundamental educational

skills. According to Bates (1993), academic achievement receives the premier position in this school which established the curriculum around a traditional core of English, mathematics, history, science, reading, and music. Direct teaching is blended with cooperative learning, mini-lessons followed by use of math manipulatives, individualized instruction, thematic blending of art and music, games, and computers in every class to reinforce learning. Students who complete assignments move immediately to work on individualized projects on computers.

Bates (1993) recommends that if an alternative program is to succeed, it must provide content which will enable students to improve their educational levels and thus change their circumstances. Grannis (1991) also stated that student experience and student outcomes must be kept in the foreground of all restructuring, alternative plans.

Taff (1990) looked at the DeLaSalle Education Center in Kansas City, Missouri, which gives local at-risk youth the "last chance" they need to turn their lives around. Taff (1990) determined that this program is based on the premise that educational programs are more successful when the teacher and the student agree on the learning materials, how they are to be used, and the expected results. The student and teacher develop a series of contracts that lead to graduation.

Students in this program are able to increase their academic skills by four or five grade levels in one year.

There are measured gains of self-esteem. Students dramatically increase their ability to get jobs. Ninety percent of their graduates go on to post-secondary education, full-time employment, or child rearing. Once in the program, Taff (1990) found that an impressive number of these drop-out, push-out, and throw-away children complete the program and improve their prospects for successful lives.

Gross (1990) stressed that highly individualized and computer-assisted programs make the difference at the Jefferson County Alternative school. Gross (1990) also stated that students thrive under this system because it treats them as adults and allows them to determine their own schedules and to work at their own pace.

Brandt (1991) concludes that diversity is the big advantage in New York City's District Four schools. Students have choices about, and ownership of their learning. This coincides with Yates' (1979) suggestion that there are many ways to do things, and that schools be made to fit the child.

Gabel (1991) conducted a study of factors associated with graduation from an alternative school. The following factors were found to influence students' ability to persist in an alternative setting: curriculum relevance, instructional quality, individual freedom and responsibility, individuality of learning experiences, peer relationships, general and specific progress in learning,

the students' general liking of school, positive student-teacher relationships, amount of student input. In the individual interviews, most respondents stated that attending the school improved their self-esteem.

Terrell (1989) approached eight graduates from Dix Street Academy, an alternative high school, for interviews. They noted that Dix Street Academy had provided a positive educational environment, and had developed their academic and work skills, as well as their self confidence. They also commented on the caring attitude of the staff. They felt the Dix Street Academy was positive for them because of the esprit de corps and discipline, relevant curriculum, and positive teacher attitude.

An alternative school in Richmond, Indiana, designed to help potential dropouts to remain in school, operates a highly structured program in which students are expected to cooperate, learn, and respect the staff. The student's academic level is determined by a pretest, and then a self paced program is established (Hinkley, 1979).

Hinkley (1979) points out that an advantage of this approach is that the students do not usually feel the pressure of the other students because they are not competing to finish or learn the same material. The teacher can discover problems in a nonthreatening, individualized setting and can explain school work directly to the student.

Hinkley (1979) points out some achievements of this program. The suspension rate was cut in half. The number

of students doubled; from 18 to 36. Attendance increased 10%; from 75% to 85%. Student reading scores advanced 1.4 grade levels in three months. Student math scores advanced .6 grade levels in three months. The curriculum meets student needs. Discipline and respect of the student toward the staff improved. Also, parental support was present.

The goals of the Career Intern Program (CIP), as reported by Gibboney and Langsdorf (1979), are to enable these students to complete high school, acquire occupational knowledge, plan for a career and improve basic reading and mathematic skills.

The CIP has three phrases. The direction of Phase I is geared toward improving students' career awareness. Lasting 21 weeks, this phase included classes in English, mathematics, social studies, and science. Learning is geared to the world of work.

In Phase II, lasting anywhere from four months to a full year, students are exposed to from two to four "hands-on" job experiences and two more courses which fuse academic and career information. Individual instruction, independent study, and advanced courses in the academic subjects are stressed. Phase III concentrates on students' transition from school to work or to more advanced education.

### Summary

From the review of literature, it is evident that there are certain common elements within successful alternative secondary schools. Most responding schools from the literature identified the quality of teacher-student interaction as the feature making them most different from other schools in their district. Carey (1992), Raywid (1992), and Kershaw and Blank (1993) report that when compared to traditional schools, alternative schools allow for greater individualization, more independent study, and more openness to the outside community; they tend to have small class size, high staff morale, high attendance, satisfied students, freedom from external control, and strong concern for noncognitive goals of education.

Conant (1992) advocated that teachers in alternative schools can positively impact at-risk students' self-esteem through facilitative environmental characteristics such as trust, respect, and cooperation. Gabel (1991) found this to be true as one of the factors associated with graduation from an alternative school.

Cuban (1989) stressed the need for a school culture that shares common values about mutual respect and intellectual achievement. Bates (1993) found through interviews that many students, when referring to their teachers, mentioned the word "care." Lieberman (1989) reported the one reason students gave for dropping out of the traditional high school was that nobody cared or nobody knew their name.

Abbott (1994) found a school with a similar vision. The Alternative Learning Program for the High school Age (ALPHA) has students and teachers who enjoy being there, they like and support one another, students do not want to leave, attendance is consistently above 90%, and ALPHA is credited with helping the district maintain a high graduation rate (97%). If both teachers and students are happy, they support each-other, attendance improves and so will the graduation rate.

According to Hinkley (1979), one big advantage of alternative schools is individualized learning which gives the student a non-competitive situation, in which he can learn in a non-threatening environment, and the teacher is more sensitive to the learning needs of the particular individuals.

Gross (1990) examined an alternative school whose teachers have high expectations for their students. These teachers are interested in placing their students on a career track and getting them into college. Gross (1990) found that an impressive number of these at-risk students complete this program and graduate.

Kleinbard (1983) reported that because alternative programs are often at the periphery of school systems, and must prove themselves to survive, participants are challenged to work together for a common goal. All participants choosing to be a part of a school have a commitment to it. Thus, it would be safe to assume that

given a choice, there is commitment, and all are working toward a common goal for student success.

It can therefore be concluded from the research studies that six categories with key features of alternative high schools include:

1. Teacher perceptions about alternative schools - teacher choice of employment at an alternative school, caring staff of the students, and teacher's expectations of student achievement.
2. Student attitudes of alternative schools - student choice in attending an alternative school and student's general liking of the alternative school.
3. School Climate - positive student/teacher relationships, teacher/student interaction, and small class size.
4. Leadership - unity of the staff, site-based management with participation of the entire staff concerning curriculum, instruction, and school organization, and a supportive supervisor.
5. Student needs - focus on all student needs including curricular, instructional, and social, emphasis on positive self-concept of student, and non-graded alternative school classrooms.
6. Student services - student support services such as daycare, health services and individual guidance and counseling.

These features are popular attractions of students when



choosing an alternative program, which improves student attendance.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This chapter contains a description of the research design for this study, the population, instrumentation, procedures for collecting the data, and the methods used for analyzing the data.

This study is a descriptive study designed to collect data and consider characteristics of alternative high schools according to administrators' and teachers' perceptions of their importance and frequency of occurrence in alternative high schools. Descriptive studies are primarily concerned with finding out "what is" (Borg & Gall, 1989). Administrators and teachers within North Carolina public alternative high school programs were asked to respond to a survey designed to determine their perceptions regarding the importance of program characteristics within alternative high schools.

#### Population

The population for this study consisted of administrators and teachers in North Carolina public alternative high school programs. North Carolina currently has 42 public alternative high school programs for at-risk youth (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 1995). Representatives were selected from these alternative

high school programs to provide data for descriptive analysis.

### Sample

Linear systematic sampling was used to obtain a sample from the defined population. This technique can be used when all members in the defined population have already been placed on a list (Borg & Gall, 1989). In using linear systematic sampling, one must first divide the population by the number needed for the sample. Then a number smaller than the determined number is randomly selected. The desired sample for this study consisted of administrators and teachers from 21 of the 42 alternative high school programs in North Carolina. Forty-two was divided by 21 which equals two. The number one was the random number selected as the number smaller than two. To linear systematically sample, one was the first selection with every second program from a list of the population being selected.

### Design

Descriptive research involves the description, recording, analysis and interpretation of conditions that now exist (Borg & Gall, 1989). Therefore, the descriptive design was the most appropriate method for determining the characteristics of alternative high schools existing in North Carolina public alternative high school programs and

their level of importance as perceived by administrators and teachers. A mean gap was calculated to determine whether or not more resources should be devoted to any of the 40 characteristics. A t-test was used to determine if there was a significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions regarding the frequency of occurrence, relevancy, and gaps of program characteristics to alternative high schools.

### Instrumentation

The principle instrument, Perceptions of Alternative Schools in North Carolina was developed by this researcher. The perception survey contained 40 questions to be answered by administrators and teachers involved in the study. The questions attempted to determine administrators' and teachers' perceptions of the level of importance of program characteristics of alternative schools and extent of use within North Carolina public alternative high school programs. The characteristics were derived from the review of literature on alternative schools. Table 2 presents the characteristics and the studies in which they were found to exist within alternative schools.

Subject matter experts were used to check the content validity of the questions selected for gathering data. Three items appearing vague were restated.

The following criteria were used to serve as a guide in the development of items for the survey instrument and its

administration:

1. Items were constructed that address the program characteristics of alternative high schools.
2. Items were constructed with clarity and were interpreted the same way by all respondents.
3. Negative items were avoided.
4. Items with short and technical terms were avoided.
5. A sufficient number of items existed, providing an adequate collection of data for evaluation of research questions.

After receiving approval by the subject matter experts as to what items to include, the survey instrument was administered in written form on an individual basis to alternative high school educators in Marion, North Carolina to determine the reliability of the instrument. The reliability was checked for each individual item on the survey. The coefficient alpha ranged from .8645 to .8780. The reliability was also run for the entire survey items with a Cronbach's Alpha of .874304.

TABLE 2  
PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL  
PROGRAMS BASED ON REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Characteristic	Research Study
Teacher choice of employment	Abbot (1994), Kleinbard (1983), Raywid (1994)
Positive student/teacher relationships	Conant (1992), Gabel (1991), Kershaw & Blank (1993), Raywid (1983)
Teacher/student interaction	Raywid (1994)
Small class size	Bates (1993), Bechard (1988), Carey (1992), Conant (1992), Cuban (1989), Kershaw & Blank (1993), Kleinbard (1983), Lieberman (1989), Neumann (1994), Raywid (1992)
Caring staff of students	Bates (1993), Meixner (1994), Raywid (1992), Terrell (1989)
Student support services (daycare, health services, etc.)	Levine (1979), Meixner (1994), Ryan, (1982)
Focus on all student needs (curricular, instructional, and social)	Davis (1994)
Emphasis on positive self-concept of student	Barr, Colston, & Parrett (1977), Bates (1993), Carey (1992), Conant (1992), Gabel (1991), Kershaw & Blank (1993), Lieberman (1989)
Individual guidance and counseling	Bates (1993), Cuban (1989), Davis (1994), Meixner (1994), Neumann (1994)
Student's general liking of the alternative school	Abbot (1994), Bechard (1988), Gabel (1991)
	(table continues)

TABLE 2 (CONTINUED)  
PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL  
PROGRAMS BASED ON REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Characteristic	Research Study
Student choice in attending an alternative school	Abbot (1994), Kleinbard (1983), Lieberman (1989), Meixner (1994), Neumann (1994), Raywid (1994), Smith, Gregory & Pugh (1981)
Teacher's expectations of student achievement	DeBlois (1989), Raywid (1994)
Cooperation of the staff	Kleinbard (1983)
Site-based management with participation of the entire staff concerning curriculum, instruction, and school organization	Abbott (1994), Cuban (1989), Parrett (1982), Raywid (1994)
Supportive supervisor	Bates (1993)
Non-graded alternative classes	Abbot (1994), Lieberman (1989)

#### Pilot Study

A survey of administrators' and teachers' perceptions, of program characteristics of alternative schools, containing 40 items, was developed. The Perceptions of Alternative Schools required the respondent to mark the appropriate range on a Likert scale, according to his or her perception of each item's importance, and the presence of each characteristic in each administrator's and teacher's alternative school program. This survey also included an open-ended question, asking the participant to list other essential characteristics not included in the survey.

The pilot test was conducted during the spring of 1996 at a public alternative high school for at-risk/potential dropouts in Marion, North Carolina, to a sample of 10 educators. The purpose of administering the pilot test was to obtain information regarding the instruments' level of internal consistency.

### Pilot Test Validity

Content validity was assessed for purposes of this study. Borg and Gall (1989) define content validity as the degree to which the sample of test items represents the content that the test is designed to measure. The content validity was carefully evaluated by five subject matter experts for program characteristics of alternative schools. Dr. Daniel U. Levine is a professor of education at the University of Nebraska in Omaha. Dr. Janet E. Lieberman is special assistant to the President for Educational Collaboratives at LaGuardia Community College of the City University of New York. Dr. Richard A. Neumann is an assistant professor of education at San Diego State University. Dr. Allan C. Ornstein is a professor of education at Loyola University in Chicago. Dr. Mary Anne Raywid is a professor of education, administration, and policy studies at Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York. Through this analysis, the subject matter experts made recommendations regarding each item's clarity, worthiness and ability to contribute to the appropriate gathering of



data.

### Pilot Test Reliability

Reliability may be defined as the level of internal consistency or stability of a measuring device over time (Borg & Gall, 1989). In order to obtain the level of internal consistency, the pilot instrument was administered to 10 educators of a public alternative high school in Marion, North Carolina. Internal consistency was estimated through Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha.

The following statistical procedures were performed on the pilot data in an effort to assess the internal consistency of the pilot instrument:

1. Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha was used to compute internal consistency of the instrument and the individual questions from a single administration.
2. NCSS was used to compute the coefficient of internal consistency.
3. Analysis of the individual test items was conducted to determine the coefficients.
4. After refining the survey instrument, approval was determined by the doctoral committee.

### Data Collection Procedures

To obtain the data for this study, the researcher requested the cooperation of the administrators and teachers of 21 public alternative high schools in North Carolina

serving at-risk/ potential dropouts. All participants were assured of complete anonymity regarding their responses. Code numbers were used for purposes of following up on the respondents. The first contact with each administrator and teacher was through a letter of introduction from the researcher (See Appendix B).

One week from the original mailing, a postcard reminder was sent to all participants (See Appendix C). This served as both a thank you for those who had responded and a reminder to those who had not.

Three weeks from the original mailing, a follow-up letter and another copy of the questionnaire were mailed to those individuals who had not yet responded (See Appendix D). After an additional two weeks, the researcher sent a final letter and questionnaire by certified mail to all individuals who had not yet responded at that time, stressing the importance of the study and requesting their participation (See Appendix E).

#### Time Line

The following time line was used by this researcher in the completion of this research study.

1. January 30 - Letter of introduction, cover letter, and questionnaire mailed to all participants, as defined earlier in this study.
2. February 6 - Postcard sent to all participants.

3. February 20 - Follow-up letter and questionnaire sent to all participants who have not yet responded.
4. March 5 - Third and final letter and questionnaire mailed to all non-respondents.
5. March 5 - March 19 - Data Analysis and report preparation.

#### Data Analysis Rationale and Procedures

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. Summary measures included mean and percentage. To determine the level of importance, a mean was calculated for each characteristic. This allowed for creation of a list of most important characteristics of alternative schools, as perceived by administrators and teachers. A mean was also calculated for each characteristic to determine the level of existence in North Carolina alternative high school programs. A mean gap was calculated to determine whether or not more resources should be devoted to any of the 40 characteristics. Data was displayed in the form of tables relating to the 12 categories. A t-test was computed for every item in each category to determine if there was a significant difference between the perceptions of administrators and teachers regarding the frequency of occurrence, relevancy, and gaps of program characteristics to alternative high schools.

### Summary

Chapter 3 provided an overview of the research design, population, measurement method and instrument used, pilot study, validity, reliability, data collection procedures, time line, and data analysis, rationale, and procedures. The results of the analysis of the data will be discussed in Chapter 4.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS

#### Introduction

The results are reported based on 12 categories of program characteristics surrounding alternative schools. The categories, based on the literature regarding alternative schools, include the following: (1) teacher perceptions about alternative schools, (2) administrator perceptions about alternative schools, (3) teacher perceptions about student attitudes of alternative schools, (4) administrator perceptions about student attitudes of alternative schools, (5) teacher perceptions about school climate, (6) administrator perceptions about school climate, (7) teacher perceptions about leadership, (8) administrator perceptions about leadership, (9) teacher perceptions about student needs, (10) administrator perceptions about student needs, (11) teacher perceptions about students, and (12) administrator perceptions about student services.

Administrators and teachers were contacted. From a sample of 21 of the 42 public North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk/potential dropouts they were asked to identify the level of importance of 40 characteristics within the alternative program. They also identified their actual existence within public North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk/potential dropouts.

The research sample included 21 administrators and 107 teachers. Respondents were asked to evaluate the extent to which each item exists within their alternative school using the Likert scale, with five representing consistently exists and one signifying that it does not exist. Survey respondents were also asked to rate each item, using a Likert scale with five being highly important and one not important, according to its importance to the respondents' alternative school. All 21 administrators and 107 teachers in the sample responded. A mean was calculated for each item characteristic to determine the level of importance according to administrators and teachers. A mean was also calculated for each characteristic to determine the level of existence within North Carolina alternative school programs. A mean gap was calculated by subtracting the mean of existence from the mean of importance for each item for both administrators and teachers. A positive mean gap implied a perception that more resources (e.g., time, money) should be devoted to that item in administrators' and teachers' view. Items having a negative mean gap suggested that fewer resources be devoted to that item. A t-test was computed for each program characteristic to determine if there was a significant difference between administrators' and teachers' perceptions of the existence, importance, and gaps of program characteristics at the .05 level. Respondents were asked to list any other components they felt were essential to alternative schools.

Reliability was checked for each individual item. The coefficient alpha ranged from .8988 to .9559. The reliability was also derived for the entire survey with a Cronbach's Alpha of .928422.

### Data Report

#### Teacher Perceptions About Alternative Schools

The purpose of the items regarding teacher perceptions within alternative schools was to identify teachers' beliefs about student achievement and the alternative school program for at-risk youth. Results of the items related to this category are presented in Table 3.

Respondents were asked to indicate the level of importance and existence of teacher choice of employment at an alternative school. The first item about teachers choice in working within the alternative program was regarded as important, with teachers rating it with a mean of 4.62. The mean for teachers of this characteristic's existence within alternative high schools for at-risk youth in North Carolina was 4.28. The mean gap was 0.34, signifying that more resources should be devoted to this characteristic. There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth, as denoted by the significance of t-value of .7095 (See Table 4). The significance of t-value, .6634, indicated that there was no significant difference in

administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this program characteristic to alternative high schools (See Table 5). There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of this program characteristic, as signified by the significance of t-value, 1.000 (See Table 6).

Survey respondents were asked in each of three items to identify the level of importance and existence of a caring staff of the students to alternative schools. Teachers felt item number two, teachers meet regularly with students to provide academic help and support to be important, as its mean yielded 4.62. Teachers rated this characteristic with a mean of 4.36 level of existence within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth. The mean gap, 0.26, indicated that more resources should be devoted to this characteristic. There was a significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions regarding existence of this program characteristic in North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth as indicated by its significance of t-value, .0044 (See Table 4). The significance of t-value, .6290, denoted that there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this program characteristic to alternative high schools (See Table 5). There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of this program characteristic as signified by its significance of t-value, .2054 (See Table 6).



Responses indicated a high mean of importance for item number 21, teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to students, at 4.57. Teacher responses indicated a high level of existence of this characteristic within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth with a mean of 4.33. More resources should be devoted to this characteristic as implied by the mean gap of .24. There was a significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions regarding existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth as implied by its significance of t-value, .0326 (See Table 4). The significance of t-value yielded .0123 (See Table 5). Therefore, there was a significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this program characteristic in alternative high schools. There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of this program characteristic as denoted by its significance of t-value, .1758 (See Table 6).

For item number 39, teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to parents, teachers found this to be important as its mean was 4.62. This item yielded a mean of existence at 4.17 within North Carolina alternative schools for at-risk youth. The mean gap, .45 signified, that more resources should be devoted to this characteristic. The significance of t-value, .7088, indicated that there was no significant difference in

administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth (See Table 4). There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this program characteristic to alternative schools, as the significance of t-value was .5142 (See Table 5). The significance of t-value, .8287, implied that there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of this program characteristic (See Table 6).

In determining the level of importance and existence of teachers' expectations of student achievement, the respondents were asked to respond to two items. For item number three, teachers believe students can achieve, the responses revealed a high mean of importance for teachers at 4.68. This characteristic was found to have a high level of existence within North Carolina alternative schools for at-risk youth, as its mean was 4.38. This items' mean gap was .30. Therefore, more resources should be devoted to this characteristic. There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth, as denoted by its significance of t-value, .2927 (See Table 4). The significance of t-value, .9322, signified that there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this program characteristic to

alternative high schools (See Table 5). There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps as indicated by its significance of t-value, .5284 (See Table 6).

Teachers regarded item number 37, teachers provide opportunities in which students will succeed, as important rating it with a mean of 4.73. The results revealed that this characteristic had a high level of existence within these schools as its mean was 4.52. More resources should be devoted to this characteristic as suggested by the mean gap of .21. There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth, as signified by its significance of t-value, .1367. The significance of t-value, .2261, did not allow rejection of the null hypothesis (See Table 5). Therefore, there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this program characteristic to alternative high schools. There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps as denoted by the significance of t-value, .3407 (See Table 6).

TABLE 3  
TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

Item No. and Response Item	Mean Importance	Mean Degree of Existence	Mean Gap
1. Teachers choose to work within the alternative program.	4.62	4.28	.34
2. Teachers meet regularly with students to provide academic help and support.	4.62	4.36	.26
21. Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to students.	4.57	4.33	.24
39. Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to parents.	4.62	4.17	.45
3. Teachers believe students can achieve.	4.68	4.38	.30
37. Teachers provide opportunities in which students will succeed.	4.73	4.52	.21

TABLE 4  
ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT EXISTENCE  
OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

Item No. and Response Item	Teacher Mean Existence	Administrator Mean Existence	Significance of t-value
1. Teachers choose to work within the alternative program.	4.28	4.38	.7095
2. Teachers meet regularly with students to provide academic help and support.	4.36	4.76	.0044*
21. Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to students.	4.33	4.67	.0326*
39. Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to parents.	4.17	4.24	.7088
3. Teachers believe students can achieve.	4.38	4.62	.2927
37. Teachers provide opportunities in which students will succeed.	4.52	4.71	.1367

Note: \* Indicates significant difference at the .05 level.

TABLE 5  
ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT IMPORTANCE  
OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

Item No. and Response Item	Teacher Mean Importance	Administrator Mean Importance	Significance of t-value
1. Teachers choose to work within the alternative program.	4.62	4.52	.6634
2. Teachers meet regularly with students to provide academic help and support.	4.62	4.71	.6290
21. Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to students.	4.57	4.86	.0123*
39. Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to parents.	4.62	4.71	.5142
3. Teachers believe students can achieve.	4.68	4.67	.9322
37. Teachers provide opportunities in which students will succeed.	4.73	4.86	.2261

Note: \* Indicates significant difference at the .05 level.

TABLE 6  
ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER MEAN GAPS OF PROGRAM  
CHARACTERISTICS OF ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

Item No. and Response Item	Teacher Mean Gap	Administrator Mean Gap	Significance of t-value
1. Teachers choose to work within the alternative program.	0.34	0.14	1.000
2. Teachers meet regularly with students to provide academic help and support.	0.26	-0.05	.2054
21. Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to students.	0.24	0.19	.1758
39. Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to parents.	0.45	0.47	.8287
3. Teachers believe students can achieve.	0.30	0.05	.5284
37. Teachers provide opportunities in which students will succeed.	0.21	0.15	.3407

### Administrator Perceptions About Alternative Schools

Items regarding administrator perceptions within alternative schools were included to determine administrators' beliefs about student achievement and the alternative school program for at-risk youth. The results appear in Table 7.

Administrators were asked to rate the level of importance and existence of teacher choice of employment at an alternative school. Administrators considered the first item, concerning teacher choice in working within the alternative program, to be important as they rated it with a mean of 4.52. They indicated that this characteristic existed within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth as its mean yielded 4.38. The mean gap was .14, indicating that more resources should be devoted to this characteristic.

Administrators were asked to respond to three items relating to a caring staff of the students. Administrators found the second item concerning teachers providing academic help and support to students as important, as its mean equaled 4.71. Administrators indicated that this item existed within North Carolina schools for at-risk youth, as they rated this with a mean of 4.76. The mean gap, -.05, signified that too much time was devoted to this characteristic.

Item number 21, teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to students, was important to



administrators as its mean was 4.86. This item received a mean of 4.67 as administrators indicated its presence within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth. Its mean gap was .19. Therefore, more resources should be devoted to this characteristic.

Responses indicated that administrators deemed item number 39, teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to parents, as important with a mean of 4.71. This existed within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth according to administrators as they rated it with a mean of 4.24. There should be more resources devoted to this characteristic as denoted by the mean gap, .47.

Administrators were asked to respond to two items regarding teachers' expectations of student achievement. The third item concerning teachers' beliefs about student achievement was regarded as important with administrators rating it with a mean of 4.67. Administrators suggested this item existed within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth, rating it with a mean of 4.62. The mean gap of .05 indicated that more resources should be devoted to this characteristic.

Survey responses implied that administrators found item number 37, teachers provide opportunities in which students will succeed, to be important as its mean yielded 4.86. Administrators considered this item to exist within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth, rating it with a mean of 4.71. Its mean gap, .15, implied that

more resources should be devoted to this characteristic.

TABLE 7  
ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS ABOUT ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

Item No. and Response Item	Mean Importance	Mean Degree of Existence	Mean Gap
1. Teachers choose to work within the alternative program.	4.52	4.38	.14
2. Teachers meet regularly with students to provide academic help and support.	4.71	4.76	-.05
21. Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to students.	4.86	4.67	.19
39. Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to parents.	4.71	4.24	.47
3. Teachers believe students can achieve.	4.67	4.62	.05
37. Teachers provide opportunities in which students will succeed.	4.86	4.71	.15

Teacher Perceptions About  
Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools

Teacher respondents were asked to respond to items about student attitudes of alternative schools. Table 8 presents results concerning student choice in attending and general liking of the alternative school.

Two items were included focusing on the level of importance and existence of student choice in attending an alternative school. Teachers regarded item number four, students can choose to attend either a traditional or alternative school, as important as the mean was 4.05. The mean level of existence for this item within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth was 3.64. Its mean gap, .41, implied that more resources should be devoted to this characteristic. There was no significant difference between administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth, as suggested by its significance of t-value, .2068 (See Table 9). The significance of t-value, .0737, indicated that there is no significant difference between administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this characteristic to alternative high schools (See Table 10). There was no significant difference between administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of this program characteristic as denoted by its significance of t-value, .2036 (See Table 11).

Teachers felt item number 29, the alternative school

has become the step between the traditional school and dropping out or suspension, to be important to alternative schools, rating this with a mean of 4.28. Teachers rated this item with a high mean level of existence at 4.28 within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth. Its mean gap was zero, indicating that the appropriate amount of resources is being devoted to this characteristic. The significance of t-value, .1727, indicated that there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth (See Table 9). There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this characteristic to alternative high schools, as denoted by the significance of t-value, .8462 (See Table 10). The significance of t-value, .2790, suggested that there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of this program characteristic (See Table 11).

Survey respondents were asked to indicate in two items the level of importance and existence of students' general liking of the alternative school. Number five, students attend the alternative school regularly, had a mean of 4.52 as teachers regarded this to be important to alternative schools. This characteristic's level of existence within of North Carolina alternative schools for at-risk youth was lower, receiving a mean score from teachers of 3.52. The mean gap, 1.00, suggested that more resources should be

devoted to this characteristic. There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth, as denoted by its' significance of t-value, .2374 (See Table 9). The significance of t-value for importance was .0043 (See Table 10). Therefore, there is a significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this characteristic to alternative high schools. There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of this program characteristic as indicated by the significance of t-value, .6809 (See Table 11).

Teachers found item number 33, students speak positively about the alternative school, to be important, as they rated it with a mean of 4.45. The mean level of existence indicated by teachers of this program characteristic within North Carolina alternative schools for at-risk youth, was 3.80. More resources should be devoted to the objective of this characteristic as signified by its mean gap of .65. There was a significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth, as signified by the significance of t-value, .0374 (See Table 9). The significance of t-value, .5598, denoted that there is no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this characteristic to

alternative high schools (See Table 10). There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of this program characteristic as suggested by the significance of t-value, .5227 (See Table 11).

TABLE 8  
TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT STUDENT  
ATTITUDES OF ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

Item No. and Response Item	Mean Importance	Mean Degree of Existence	Mean Gap
4. Students can choose to attend either a traditional or alternative school.	4.05	3.64	.41
29. The alternative school has become the step between the traditional school and dropping out or suspension.	4.28	4.28	0
5. Students attend the alternative school regularly.	4.52	3.52	1.00
33. Students speak positively about the alternative school.	4.45	3.80	.65

TABLE 9  
ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT  
EXISTENCE OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF  
STUDENT ATTITUDES OF ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

Item No. and Response Item	Teacher Mean Existence	Administrator Mean Existence	Significance of t-value
4. Students can choose to attend either a traditional or alternative school.	3.64	3.19	.2068
29. The alternative school has become the step between the traditional school and dropping out or suspension.	4.28	4.52	.1727
5. Students attend the alternative school regularly.	3.52	3.86	.2374
33. Students speak positively about the alternative school.	3.80	4.24	.0374*
<u>Note:</u> * Indicates significant difference at the .05 level.			

TABLE 10  
ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT  
IMPORTANCE OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF  
STUDENT ATTITUDES OF ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

Item No. and Response Item	Teacher Mean Importance	Administrator Mean Importance	Significance of t-value
4. Students can choose to attend either a traditional or alternative school.	4.05	3.52	.0737
29. The alternative school has become the step between the traditional school and dropping out or suspension.	4.28	4.33	.8462
5. Students attend the alternative school regularly.	4.52	4.86	.0043*
33. Students speak positively about the alternative school.	4.45	4.57	.5598

Note: \* Indicates significant difference at the .05 level.



TABLE 11  
ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER MEAN GAPS OF PROGRAM  
CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENT ATTITUDES OF ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

Item No. and Response Item	Teacher Mean Gap	Administrator Mean Gap	Significance of t-value
4. Students can choose to attend either a traditional or alternative school.	0.41	0.33	.2036
29. The alternative school has become the step between the traditional school and dropping out or suspension.	0.00	-0.19	.2790
5. Students attend the alternative school regularly.	1.00	1.00	.6809
33. Students speak positively about alternative school.	0.65	0.33	.5227

Administrators' Perceptions About  
Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools

Administrators were asked to respond to items about student attitudes of alternative schools. The results are presented in Table 12.

Administrators were asked to rate two items focusing on the level of importance and existence of student choice in attending an alternative school. Item number four about student choice in attending either a traditional or alternative school was somewhat important with administrators, rating this with a mean of 3.52. Administrators indicated that this item somewhat existed within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth, rating this with a mean of 3.19. More resources should be devoted to this characteristic as signified by its mean gap of .33.

The results for item number 29, the alternative school has become the step between the traditional school and dropping out or suspension, suggested that administrators regarded this as important, as they rated it with a mean of 4.33. Its level of existence within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth had a higher mean of 4.52. The mean gap, -.19, suggested that less time should be devoted to this item.

Two items focused on students' general liking of the alternative school. Administrators regarded the fifth item about student attendance at the alternative school to be

important, rating this with a mean of 4.86. This item existed somewhat within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth according to administrators rating it with a mean of 3.86. More resources should be devoted to this characteristic as signified by its mean gap, 1.0.

Item number 33, students speak positively about the alternative school, was considered important to administrators as it received a mean of 4.57. This item existed within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth as denoted by administrators mean of 4.24. Its mean gap was .33, implying that more resources should be devoted to this characteristic.

TABLE 12  
ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS ABOUT STUDENT  
ATTITUDES OF ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

Item No. and Response Item	Mean Importance	Mean Degree of Existence	Mean Gap
4. Students can choose to attend either a traditional or alternative school.	3.52	3.19	.33
29. The alternative school has become the step between the traditional school and dropping out or suspension.	4.33	4.52	-.19
5. Students attend the alternative school regularly.	4.86	3.86	1.00
33. Students speak positively about alternative school.	4.57	4.24	.33

Teachers' Perceptions  
About School Climate

Items regarding student/teacher relationships, teacher/student interaction, and class size provide indicators of teachers perceptions about alternative school climate. The results appear in Table 13.

Respondents were asked in each of two items to identify the level of importance and existence of positive student/teacher relationships. Item number six, there is trust between students and teachers, had a mean of 4.70, as teachers found this to be important. Teachers rated its mean level of existence within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth at 4.07. The mean gap of this item was .63, indicating that more resources should be devoted to this characteristic. There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth, as indicated by the significance of t-value, .1174 (See Table 14). The significance of t-value for this characteristic for importance was .6178 (See Table 15). Therefore, there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this program characteristic to alternative high schools. There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of this program characteristic, as denoted by the significance of t-value, .6649 (See Table 16).

Teachers indicated in response to item number 22, that students and teachers have mutual respect was important as the mean importance score was 4.68. Teacher responses implied that this exists somewhat within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth, rating this with a mean of 3.97. More resources should be devoted to this characteristic as denoted by its mean gap of .71. The significance of t-value for existence was .0686. Therefore, there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth (See Table 14). There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this program characteristic to alternative high schools since the significance of t-value was .4427 (See Table 15). The significance of t-value for the mean gaps was .6252, indicating that there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of this program characteristic (See Table 16).

Under teacher/student interaction, three items were used to determine the level of importance and existence. Teachers' regarded item number seven, teachers and students speak freely to each other, as important as the mean was 4.60. This characteristic had a mean level of existence at 4.23 within of North Carolina alternative schools for at-risk youth. Its mean gap, .37, suggested that more resources should be devoted to this characteristic. The

significance of t-value for existence, .0191, suggested that there was a significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth (See Table 14). There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this program characteristic to alternative high schools, as the significance of t-value equals .7092 (See Table 15). The significance of t-value for the mean gap, .3431, implied that there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of this program characteristic (See Table 16).

The results show the teachers' mean importance was 4.49 for item number 23, teachers are responsive to students' academic and social needs as they regarded this as important. The mean level of existence of this characteristic was 4.12 within North Carolina alternative schools for at-risk youth. More resources should be devoted to this characteristic as suggested by its mean gap, .37. There was a significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth, as indicated by the significance of t-value, .0000 (See Table 14). The significance of t-value for importance was .2519 (See Table 15). Therefore, there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this program

characteristic to alternative high schools. There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps, as suggested by the significance of t-value, .1478 (See Table 16).

For item number 34, students willingly share their ideas with faculty and staff, 4.24 was the mean importance for teachers. This characteristic existed somewhat within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth, as denoted by its mean of 3.74. Its mean gap, .50, signified that more resources should be devoted to this characteristic. The significance of t-value for existence, .0993, signified that there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth (See Table 14). There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this program characteristic to alternative high schools, as the significance of t-value was .3024 (See Table 15). The significance of t-value, .4180, implied that there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of this program characteristic (See Table 16).

In order to identify the level of importance and existence of small class size, survey respondents were asked to respond to one item, number eight, class size is maintained at 12 or fewer students per adult. This item was important to teachers as they rated it with a mean of 4.71.



Teacher responses implied that this item existed somewhat within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth, as its mean yielded 3.84. This item had a mean gap of .87. Therefore, more resources should be devoted to this characteristic. There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth, as the significance of t-value was .4861 (See Table 14). The significance of t-value, .8367, signified that there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this program characteristic to alternative high schools (See Table 15). There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of this program characteristic, as denoted by the significance of t-value, .8882 (See Table 16).

TABLE 13  
TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT SCHOOL CLIMATE

Item No. and Response Item	Mean Importance	Mean Degree of Existence	Mean Gap
6. There is trust between students and teachers.	4.70	4.07	.63
22. Students and teachers have mutual respect.	4.68	3.97	.71
7. Teachers and students speak freely to each other.	4.60	4.23	.37
23. Teachers are responsive to students' academic and social needs.	4.49	4.12	.37
34. Students willingly share their ideas with faculty and staff.	4.24	3.74	.50
8. Class size is maintained at 12 or fewer students per adult.	4.71	3.84	.87

TABLE 14  
ADMINISTRATORS' AND TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT EXISTENCE  
OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF SCHOOL CLIMATE

Item No. and Response Item	Teacher Mean Existence	Administrator Mean Existence	Significance of t-value
6. There is trust between students and teachers.	4.07	4.38	.1174
22. Students and teachers have mutual respect.	3.97	4.33	.0686
7. Teachers and students speak freely to each other.	4.23	4.62	.0190*
23. Teachers are responsive to students' academic and social needs.	4.12	4.76	.0000*
34. Students willingly share their ideas with faculty and staff.	3.74	4.14	.0993
8. Class size is maintained at 12 or fewer students per adult.	3.84	4.05	.4861

Note: \* Indicates significant difference at the .05 level.

TABLE 15  
ADMINISTRATORS' AND TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT IMPORTANCE  
OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF SCHOOL CLIMATE

Item No. and Response Item	Teacher Mean Importance	Administrator Mean Importance	Significance of t-value
6. There is trust between students and teachers.	4.70	4.76	.6178
22. Students and teachers have mutual respect.	4.68	4.81	.4427
7. Teachers and students speak freely to each other.	4.60	4.67	.7092
23. Teachers are responsive to students' academic and social needs.	4.49	4.71	.2519
34. Students willingly share their ideas with faculty and staff.	4.24	4.43	.3024
8. Class size is maintained at 12 or fewer students per adult.	4.71	4.67	.8367

TABLE 16  
ADMINISTRATORS' AND TEACHERS' MEAN GAPS OF SCHOOL CLIMATE

Item No. and Response Item	Teacher Mean Gap	Administrator Mean Gap	Significance of t-value
6. There is trust between students and teachers.	0.63	0.38	.6649
22. Students and teachers have mutual respect.	0.71	0.48	.6252
7. Teachers and students speak freely to each other.	0.37	0.05	.3431
23. Teachers are responsive to students' academic and social needs.	0.37	-0.05	.1478
34. Students willingly share their ideas with faculty and staff.	0.50	0.29	.4180
8. Class size is maintained at 12 or fewer students per adult.	0.87	0.62	.8882

Administrators' Perceptions About  
School Climate

Items considering student/teacher relationships, interaction, and class size provide indicators of administrators' perceptions about the alternative school climate. Table 17 presents the results.

Respondents were asked to rate the level of importance and existence of two items focusing on student/teacher relationships. Administrators regarded item number six about trust between students and teachers to be important, rating it with a mean of 4.76. This item existed within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth as indicated by the mean of administrators at 4.38. More resources should be devoted to this characteristic as denoted by the mean gap, .38.

Item number 22, focusing on mutual respect of students and teachers, was considered to be important to administrators as denoted by its mean of 4.81. Administrators found this item to exist within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth, according to its mean of 4.33. The mean, .48, implied that more resources should be devoted to this characteristic.

The mean of 4.67 indicated that administrators considered the seventh item regarding teacher/student communication to be important. Administrators felt this item existed within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth as signified by its mean of 4.62. More

resources should be devoted to this characteristic as denoted by its mean gap of .05.

Item number 23, teachers are responsive to students' academic and social needs, was important to administrators as indicated by its mean , 4.71. This item had a higher mean level of existence within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth at 4.76. Its mean gap, -0.05, suggested that less time should be devoted to this item.

The results for item number 34 about students' sharing their ideas with faculty and staff was important to administrators, as implied by its mean of 4.43. This item existed within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth according to administrators' mean of 4.14. More resources should be devoted to this characteristic as indicated by its mean gap of .29.

Administrators found the eighth item regarding class size to be important with a mean of 4.67. This item was present within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth as denoted by its mean of 4.05. Its mean gap, .62, suggested that more resources should be devoted to this item.

TABLE 17  
ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT SCHOOL CLIMATE

Item No. and Response Item	Mean Importance	Mean Degree of Existence	Mean Gap
6. There is trust between students and teachers.	4.76	4.38	.38
22. Students and teachers have mutual respect.	4.81	4.33	.48
7. Teachers and students speak freely to each other.	4.67	4.62	.05
23. Teachers are responsive to students' academic and social needs.	4.71	4.76	-.05
34. Students willingly share their ideas with faculty and staff.	4.43	4.14	.29
8. Class size is maintained at 12 or fewer students per adult.	4.67	4.05	.62



## Teacher Perceptions

### About Leadership

The respondents were asked to respond to items concerning the leadership of the alternative school program. Table 12 presents the findings from the data accumulated.

Respondents were asked in three items to identify the importance and extent of presence of the unity of the staff. For item number nine, faculty and staff share school goals and visions, teachers, finding this to be important, rated it with a 4.71. Responses revealed this items' mean level of existence at 4.12 within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth. The mean gap of this item was .59, implying that more resources should be devoted to this characteristic. The significance of t-value for existence, .5371, indicated that there was a significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth (See Table 19). There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this program characteristic to alternative schools, as the significance of t-value was .1740 (See Table 20). The significance of t-value, .7341, signified that there was not a significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of this program characteristic (See Table 21).

The teachers' mean importance for item number 24, faculty work in teams to plan instruction, equaled 3.88.

There are faculty planning instruction in teams somewhat within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth as indicated by the mean, 3.07. This item had a mean gap of .81 denoting that more resources should be devoted to it. There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth, as the significance of t-value was .3815 (See Table 19). The significance of t-value for importance was .0509 (See Table 20). Therefore, there is a significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this program characteristic to alternative high schools. There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of this program characteristic, as the significance of t-value was .3418 (See Table 21).

In item 40, faculty share resources, ideas, and strategies with each other, the responses showed teachers to find this to be important as it received a mean of 4.57. Teachers found this item to exist within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth, as it received a mean of 4.07. Its mean gap, .50, implied that more resources should be devoted to this characteristic. The significance of t-value for existence, .2680, indicated that there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools

for at-risk youth (See Table 19). There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this program characteristic to alternative high schools; as the significance of t-value was .9948 (See Table 20). The significance of t-value, .8661, suggested that there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of this program characteristic (See Table 21).

The level of importance and existence were indicated by teachers as they were asked to respond to three items regarding site-based management with participation of the entire staff concerning curriculum, instruction, and social organization. The mean among teachers was 4.07 for item number 35, there was a school-wide effort to develop curriculum for the alternative school program, as they regarded this as important. This characteristic was found to rarely exist within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth as teachers rated it with a mean of 2.94. More resources should be devoted to this characteristic as denoted by its mean gap of 1.13. There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth as the significance of t-value was .9824 (See Table 19). The significance t-value for importance of this item was .6819 (See Table 20). Therefore, there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers'

perceptions of importance of this program characteristic to alternative high schools. There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps as the significance of t-value was .9485 (See Table 21).

For item number 10, teachers have the freedom to make instructional decisions, teachers' found this to be important as they gave it a mean of 4.78. The results implied that teachers within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth are allowed to make instructional decisions as signified by its mean of 4.57. Its mean gap, .21, suggested that more resources should be devoted to this characteristic. The significance of t-value, .5797, indicated that there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth (See Table 19). There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this program characteristic to alternative high schools' as the significance of t-value was .6247 (See Table 20). The significance of t-value, .9013, signified that there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of this program characteristic (See Table 21).

In regard to item number 25, the alternative school program was organized based on faculty and staff input, the mean of teachers was 4.30 as they regarded this as important. This item was shown to exist somewhat within

North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth as its mean yielded 3.50. The mean gap was .80. Therefore, more resources should be devoted to this characteristic. There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth, as denoted by the significance of t-value, .3952 (See Table 19). The significance of t-value, .9566, indicated that there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this program characteristic to alternative high schools (See Table 20). There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of this program characteristic as the significance of t-value was .7783 (See Table 21).

Respondents were asked in four items, referring to a supportive supervisor, to identify the level of importance and actual existence within their alternative school. Responses indicated a mean importance of 4.88 for item number 11, the supervisor/principal believes in the ability of his/her staff as teachers regarded this to be important.

North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth exhibited this characteristic as its mean was 4.64 among teachers. The mean gap, .24, denoted that more resources should be devoted to this characteristic. There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to

North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth, as the t-value was .7324 (See Table 19). The significance of t-value for importance was .8252 (See Table 20). Therefore, there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this program characteristic to alternative high schools. There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps as implied by the significance of t-value, .8473 (See Table 21).

In item number 26, the supervisor/principal provides teachers with materials they need to teach effectively, responses revealed teachers to find this as important, rating it with a mean of 4.58. Teacher responses showed that this item existed somewhat within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth rating it with a mean of 3.92. The mean gap was .66 for this item. Therefore, more resources should be devoted to this characteristic. There was a significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth as the significance of t-value was .0127 (See Table 19). The significance of t-value, .3020, indicated that there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this program characteristic to alternative high schools (See Table 20). There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of

this program characteristic as the significance of t-value was .4662 (See Table 21).

In response to item number 36, the supervisor/principal sets a climate that supports teaching and learning, the results denoted that this is important to teachers as its mean was 4.76. Results from the responses signified that North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth exhibit this characteristic as 4.56 was the mean level of existence according to teachers. Its mean gap, .20, signified that more resources should be devoted to this characteristic. The significance of t-value, .8459, indicated that there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth (See Table 19). There was a significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this program characteristic to alternative high schools, as the significance of t-value equals .0193 (See Table 20). There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of this program characteristic as the significance of t-value was .7817 (See Table 21).

For item number 38, there is communication between teachers and supervisor/principal regarding student progress, teacher respondents indicated this to be important, rating it with a mean of 4.61. It was shown that this characteristic exists within North Carolina alternative

high schools for at-risk youth as its mean yielded 4.38. Its mean gap was .23. Therefore, more resources should be devoted to this characteristic. There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth as the significance of t-value was .9921 (See Table 21). The significance of t-value, .1507, signified that there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this program characteristic to alternative high schools (See Table 20). There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of this program characteristic as the significance of t-value was .7215 (See Table 21).



TABLE 18  
TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT LEADERSHIP

Item No. and Response Item	Mean Importance	Mean Degree of Existence	Mean Gap
9. Faculty and staff share school goals and visions.	4.71	4.12	.59
24. Faculty work in teams to plan instruction.	3.88	3.07	.81
40. Faculty share resources, ideas, and strategies with each other.	4.57	4.07	.50
35. There was a school-wide effort to develop curri- culum for the alternative school program.	4.07	2.94	1.13
10. Teachers have the freedom to make instructional decisions.	4.78	4.57	.21
25. The alternative program was organized based on faculty and staff input.	4.30	3.50	.80

(table continues)

TABLE 18 (CONTINUED)  
TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT LEADERSHIP

Item No. and Response Item	Mean Importance	Mean Degree of Existence	Mean Gap
11. The supervisor/ principal believes in the ability of his/ her staff.	4.88	4.64	.24
26. The supervisor/ principal provides teachers with materials they need in order to teach effectively.	4.58	3.92	.66
36. The supervisor/ principal sets a climate that supports teaching and learning.	4.76	4.56	.20
38. There is communication between teachers and supervisor/ principal regarding student progress.	4.61	4.38	.23

TABLE 19  
ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT EXISTENCE  
OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF LEADERSHIP

Item No. and Response Item	Teacher Mean Existence	Administrator Mean Existence	Significance of t-value
9. Faculty and staff share school goals and visions.	4.12	4.29	.5371
24. Faculty work in teams to plan instruction.	3.07	3.38	.3815
40. Faculty share resources, ideas, and strategies with each other.	4.07	4.19	.2680
35. There was a school-wide effort to develop curri- culum for the alternative school program.	2.94	2.95	.9824
10. Teachers have the freedom to make instructional decisions.	4.57	4.67	.5797
25. The alternative program was organized based on faculty and staff input.	3.50	3.81	.3952

(table continues)

TABLE 19 (CONTINUED)  
ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT EXISTENCE  
OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF LEADERSHIP

Item No. and Response Item	Teacher Mean Existence	Administrator Mean Existence	Significance of t-value
11. The supervisor/ principal believes in the ability of his/ her staff.	4.64	4.71	.7324
26. The supervisor/ principal provides teachers with materials they need in order to teach effectively.	3.92	4.43	.0127*
36. The supervisor/ principal sets a climate that supports teaching and learning.	4.56	4.52	.8459
38. There is communication between teachers and supervisor/ principal regarding student progress.	4.38	4.24	.9921
<u>Note:</u> * Indicates significant difference at the .05 level.			

TABLE 20  
ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT IMPORTANCE  
OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF LEADERSHIP

Item No. and Response Item	Teacher Mean Importance	Administrator Mean Importance	Significance of t-value
9. Faculty and staff share school goals and visions.	4.71	4.86	.1740
24. Faculty work in teams to plan instruction.	3.88	4.33	.0509*
40. Faculty share resources, ideas, and strategies with each other.	4.57	4.57	.9948
35. There was a school-wide effort to develop curri- culum for the alternative school program.	4.07	3.95	.6819
10. Teachers have the freedom to make instructional decisions.	4.78	4.71	.6247
25. The alternative program was organized based on faculty and staff input.	4.30	4.29	.9566

(table continues)

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Note: \* Indicates significant difference at the .05 level.

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TABLE 20 (CONTINUED)  
ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT IMPORTANCE  
OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF LEADERSHIP

Item No. and Response Item	Teacher Mean Importance	Administrator Mean Importance	Significance of t-value
11. The supervisor/ principal believes in the ability of his/ her staff.	4.88	4.86	.8252
26. The supervisor/ principal provides teachers with materials they need in order to teach effectively.	4.58	4.71	.3020
36. The supervisor/ principal sets a climate that supports teaching and learning.	4.76	4.95	.0198*
38. There is communication between teachers and supervisor/ principal regarding student progress.	4.61	4.81	.1507
<u>Note:</u> * Indicates significant difference at the .05 level.			

TABLE 21  
ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER MEAN GAPS OF PROGRAM  
CHARACTERISTICS OF LEADERSHIP

Item No. and Response Item	Teacher Mean Gap	Administrator Mean Gap	Significance of t-value
9. Faculty and staff share school goals and visions.	0.59	0.57	.7341
24. Faculty work in teams to plan instruction.	0.81	0.95	.3418
40. Faculty share resources, ideas, and strategies with each other.	0.50	0.38	.8661
35. There was a school-wide effort to develop curri- culum for the alternative school program.	1.13	1.00	.9485
10. Teachers have the freedom to make instructional decisions.	0.21	0.04	.9013
25. The alternative program was organized based on faculty and staff input.	0.80	0.48	.7783

(table continues)

TABLE 21 (CONTINUED)  
ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER MEAN GAPS OF PROGRAM  
CHARACTERISTICS OF LEADERSHIP

Item No. and Response Item	Teacher Mean Gap	Administrator Mean Gap	Significance of t-value
11. The supervisor/ principal believes in the ability of his/ her staff.	0.24	0.15	.8473
26. The supervisor/ principal provides teachers with materials they need in order to teach effectively.	0.66	0.28	.4662
36. The supervisor/ principal sets a climate that supports teaching and learning.	0.20	0.43	.7817
38. There is communication between teachers and supervisor/ principal regarding student progress.	0.23	0.57	.7215



### Administrator Perceptions About Leadership

Administrators were asked to respond to items regarding leadership of the alternative school program. The results are presented in Table 22.

Respondents were asked to respond to three items concerning the unity of the staff. The ninth item about school goals and visions was considered important to administrators, rating it with a mean of 4.86. The presence of this item within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth was indicated by its mean of 4.29. The mean gap, .57, suggests that more resources should be devoted to this characteristic.

Administrators implied that item number 24, about faculty teams planning instruction was important with a mean of 4.33. This item existed somewhat within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth as signified by its mean of 3.38. More resources should be devoted to this characteristic, as denoted by the mean gap of .95.

Item number 40, concerning faculty sharing resources, ideas, and strategies, was important to administrators as suggested by its mean of 4.57. The mean, 4.19, indicated that this item was present within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth. The mean gap, .38, suggested that more resources should be devoted to this characteristic.

Respondents were asked to respond to three items of site-based management with participation of the entire staff

concerning curriculum, instruction, and school organization. Administrators felt item number 35, about a school-wide effort to develop curriculum for the alternative program, to be important, rating this with a mean of 3.95. This item was found to exist very little within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth as signified by its mean, 2.95. More resources should be devoted to this characteristic as implied by the mean gap of 1.00.

The tenth item, about teachers making instructional decisions, was important to administrators, rating this with a mean of 4.71. This existed within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth as implied by its mean, 4.67. The mean gap, .04, denoted that more resources should be devoted to this characteristic.

Item number 25 about the organization of the alternative program was important to administrators according its mean of 4.29. This item existed somewhat within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth as implied by its mean, 3.81. The mean gap, .48, denoted that more resources should be devoted to this characteristic.

Administrators were asked to respond to four items relating to a supportive supervisor. The eleventh item about the supervisors belief in the ability of his staff, was considered important to administrators, with a mean of 4.86. This item existed within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth as signified by its mean of

4.71. More resources should be devoted to this item as implied by its mean gap of .15.

Administrators felt item number 26, concerning teacher materials, to be important with a mean of 4.71. This item was shown to be present within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth, according to its mean of 4.43. Its mean gap, .28, signified that more resources should be devoted to this characteristic.

Item number 36, the supervisor/principal sets a climate that supports teaching and learning, was important to administrators, as it received a mean of 4.95. The mean, 4.52, indicated that this item existed within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth. More resources should be devoted to this characteristic as denoted by its mean gap, .43.

Administrators regarded item number 38, about communication between teachers and supervisor on student progress, to be important rating it with a mean of 4.81. This item was present within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth as implied by its mean, 4.24. More resources should be devoted to this item as indicated by its mean gap of .57.

TABLE 22  
ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS ABOUT LEADERSHIP

Item No. and Response Item	Mean Importance	Mean Degree of Existence	Mean Gap
9. Faculty and staff share school goals and visions.	4.86	4.29	.57
24. Faculty work in teams to plan instruction.	4.33	3.38	.95
40. Faculty share resources, ideas, and strategies with each other.	4.57	4.19	.38
35. There was a school-wide effort to develop curri- culum for the alternative school program.	3.95	2.95	1.00
10. Teachers have the freedom to make instructional decisions.	4.71	4.67	.04
25. The alternative program was organized based on faculty and staff input.	4.29	3.81	.48

(table continues)

TABLE 22 (CONTINUED)  
ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS ABOUT LEADERSHIP

Item No. and Response Item	Mean Importance	Mean Degree of Existence	Mean Gap
11. The supervisor/ principal believes in the ability of his/ her staff.	4.86	4.71	.15
26. The supervisor/ principal provides teachers with materials they need in order to teach effectively.	4.71	4.43	.28
36. The supervisor/ principal sets a climate that supports teaching and learning.	4.95	4.52	.43
38. There is communication between teachers and supervisor/ principal regarding student progress.	4.81	4.24	.57

Teacher PerceptionsAbout Student Needs

Teacher respondents were asked to respond to items concerning student needs. The results appear in Table 23.

Through six items, respondents were asked to identify the level of importance and existence within their alternative school, relating to a focus on all student needs including curricular, instructional, and social. The responses revealed 4.65 as the teachers' mean of importance in regards to item number 12, the curriculum provides students with skills they will need to be productive members of society. The results indicated that this characteristic is known to exist somewhat within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth as it received a 3.89 mean level of existence by teachers. Its mean gap, .76, denoted that more resources should be devoted to this characteristic. The significance of t-value, .0420, indicated that there was a significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth (See Table 24). There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this program characteristic to alternative high schools, as implied by its' significance of t-value, .0659 (See Table 25). The significance of t-value, .6256, suggested that there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of this program

characteristic (See Table 26).

Survey responses to item number 27, curriculum is individualized for each student, showed a mean of 4.06 among teachers as they regarded this important. Teacher results suggested that this characteristic is found somewhat within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth as its mean was 3.64. More resources should be devoted to this characteristic as denoted to its mean gap of .42. There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth, as the significance of t-value was .6951 (See Table 24). The significance of t-value, .3106, denoted that there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this particular program characteristic to alternative high schools (See Table 25). There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of this program characteristic, as the significance of t-value was .6478 (See Table 26).

In analyzing the data for item number 13, teachers accommodate students individual learning styles, it was determined that teachers consider this as important as its mean was 4.55. Results also revealed that this characteristic is present somewhat within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth as its mean was 3.99. There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program

characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth, as the significance of t-value was .5139 (See Table 24). The significance of t-value, .7264, indicated that there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this program characteristic to alternative high schools (See Table 25). There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of this characteristic as implied by the significance of t-value, .9140 (See Table 26).

Responses indicated a teachers' mean importance to be 3.38 for item number 28, students with like ability are grouped together for instruction. The results from the teacher respondents indicated that North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth rarely group students with like ability for instruction as its mean was 2.67. The mean gap, .71, signified that more resources should be devoted to this characteristic. There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic in North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth as the significance of t-value was .3242 (See Table 24). The significance of t-value .0762, allowed no rejection of the null hypothesis (See Table 25). There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this program characteristic to alternative high schools. There was no significant difference in



administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of this program characteristic as suggested by the significance of t-value, .5272 (See Table 26).

For item number 14, peer group counseling sessions are scheduled regularly, the responses showed a mean importance of 3.95 among teachers, indicating that they felt this to be somewhat important. Very few North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth exhibit this characteristic according to teachers who rated this with a mean of 2.46. The significance of t-value for existence, .0046, implied that there was a significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth (See Table 24). There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of regularly scheduled peer group counseling sessions to alternative high schools, as indicated by the significance of t-value, .7885 (See Table 25). The significance of t-value for mean gaps, .6707, suggested that there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of this program characteristic (See Table 26).

Teacher respondents denoted a mean of 2.91 in regard to item number 30, the alternative school provides extracurricular activities as they found this to be somewhat not important. The responses indicated that very few North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth provide

extracurricular activities as the mean here was 1.99. The significance of t-value, .5487, indicated that there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth (See Table 24). There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this program characteristic to alternative high schools, as the significance of t-value was .7130 (See Table 25). The significance of t-value, .8125, signified that there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of this program characteristic (See Table 26).

Emphasis on positive self-concept of students included one item characteristic. Respondents were asked to rate the level of importance and existence of these two items to alternative schools. A teachers' mean of importance for item number 15, teachers provide positive reinforcement to students, was 4.71 as they deemed this important. The results from responses showed this characteristic to be found within most North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth as teachers rated its existence with a mean of 4.27. More resources should be devoted to this characteristic as implied by its mean gap of .44. The significance of t-value for existence was .2233 (See Table 24). Therefore, there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative

high schools for at-risk youth. There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this program characteristic in alternative high schools as denoted from the significance of t-value, .8062 (See Table 25). The significance of t-value, .6435, indicated that there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of this program characteristic (See Table 26).

Two items focused on non-graded alternative school classrooms. Results for item number 16, students are grouped according to instructional needs rather than by grade level, yielded a mean of importance for teachers at 4.20. It was also determined that teachers felt this characteristic to be present within of North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth rating it with a mean of 3.48. The mean gap here was .72. Therefore, there should be more resources devoted to this characteristic. The significance of t-value, .0631, indicated that there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth (See Table 24). There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this program characteristic to alternative high schools, as implied by the significance of t-value, .9839 (See Table 25). The significance of t-value, .4628, suggested that there was no significant difference in administrators' and

teachers' mean gaps of this program characteristic (See Table 26).

The responses indicated a mean of importance of 3.45 among teachers in item number 31, school policies and procedures support non-graded multi-age classes as they deemed this to be somewhat important. The respondents indicated that very few North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth support such policies and procedures as its mean yielded 2.86. There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth as the significance of t-value was .6244 (See Table 24). The significance of t-value, .6311, denoted that there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this program characteristic to alternative high schools (See Table 25). There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of this program characteristic as denoted by the significance of t-value, .7134 (See Table 26).

TABLE 23  
TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT STUDENT NEEDS

Item No. and Response Item	Mean Importance	Mean Degree of Existence	Mean Gap
12. The curriculum provides students with skills they will need to be productive members of society.	4.65	3.89	.76
27. Curriculum is individualized for each student.	4.06	3.64	.42
13. Teachers accommodate students individual learning styles.	4.55	3.99	.56
28. Students with like ability are grouped together for instruction.	3.38	2.67	.71
14. Peer group counseling sessions are scheduled regularly.	3.95	2.46	1.49
30. The alternative school provides extracurricular activities.	2.91	1.99	.92

(table continues)

TABLE 23 (CONTINUED)  
TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT STUDENT NEEDS

Item No. and Response Item	Mean Importance	Mean Degree of Existence	Mean Gap
15. Teachers provide positive rein- forcement to students.	4.71	4.27	.44
16. Students are grouped according to instructional needs rather than by grade level.	4.20	3.48	.72
31. School policies and procedures support non- graded multi- age classes.	3.45	2.86	.59

TABLE 24  
ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT EXISTENCE  
OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENT NEEDS

Item No. and Response Item	Teacher Mean Existence	Administrator Mean Existence	Significance of t-value
12. The curriculum provides students with skills they will need to be productive members of society.	3.89	4.24	.0420*
27. Curriculum is individualized for each student.	3.64	3.76	.6951
13. Teachers accommodate students individual learning styles.	3.99	4.14	.5139
28. Students with like ability are grouped together for instruction.	2.67	3.00	.3242
14. Peer group counseling sessions are scheduled regularly.	2.46	3.33	.0046*
30. The alternative school provides extracurricular activities.	1.99	2.19	.5487

(table continues)

TABLE 24 (CONTINUED)  
ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT EXISTENCE  
OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENT NEEDS

Item No. and Response Item	Teacher Mean Existence	Administrator Mean Existence	Significance of t-value
15. Teachers provide positive rein- forcement to students.	4.27	4.52	.2233
16. Students are grouped according to instructional needs rather than by grade level.	3.48	4.14	.0631
31. School policies and procedures support non- graded multi- age classes.	2.86	3.05	.6244

Note: \* Indicates significant difference at the .05 level.



TABLE 25  
ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT IMPORTANCE  
OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENT NEEDS

Item No. and Response Item	Teacher Mean Importance	Administrator Mean Importance	Significance of t-value
12. The curriculum provides students with skills they will need to be productive members of society.	4.65	4.86	.0659
27. Curriculum is individualized for each student.	4.06	4.33	.3106
13. Teachers accommodate students individual learning styles.	4.55	4.48	.7264
28. Students with like ability are grouped together for instruction.	3.38	3.95	.0762
14. Peer group counseling sessions are scheduled regularly.	3.95	3.86	.7885
30. The alternative school provides extracurricular activities.	2.91	3.05	.7130

(table continues)

TABLE 25 (CONTINUED)  
ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT IMPORTANCE  
OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENT NEEDS

Item No. and Response Item	Teacher Mean Importance	Administrator Mean Importance	Significance of t-value
15. Teachers provide positive rein- forcement to students.	4.71	4.76	.8062
16. Students are grouped according to instructional needs rather than by grade level.	4.20	4.19	.9839
31. School policies and procedures support non- graded multi- age classes.	3.45	3.62	.6311

TABLE 26  
ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER MEAN GAPS OF STUDENT NEEDS

Item No. and Response Item	Teacher Mean Gap	Administrator Mean Gap	Significance of t-value
12. The curriculum provides students with skills they will need to be productive members of society.	0.76	0.62	.6256
27. Curriculum is individualized for each student.	0.42	0.57	.6478
13. Teachers accommodate students individual learning styles.	0.56	0.34	.9140
28. Students with like ability are grouped together for instruction.	0.71	0.95	.5272
14. Peer group counseling sessions are scheduled regularly.	1.49	0.53	.6707
30. The alternative school provides extracurricular activities.	0.92	0.86	.8125

(table continues)

TABLE 26 (CONTINUED)  
ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER MEAN GAPS OF STUDENT NEEDS

Item No. and Response Item	Teacher Mean Gap	Administrator Mean Gap	Significance of t-value
15. Teachers provide positive rein- forcement to students.	0.44	0.24	.6435
16. Students are grouped according to instructional needs rather than by grade level.	0.72	0.05	.4628
31. School policies and procedures support non- graded multi- age classes.	0.59	0.57	.7134

### Administrators' Perceptions

#### About Student Needs

Administrators were asked to respond to items focusing on student needs. The results are found in Table 27.

Administrator respondents were asked to identify the level of importance and existence of six items, relating to student needs including curricular, instructional, and social. Administrators found item number 12, the curriculum provides students with skills they will need to be productive members of society, to be very important as its mean was 4.86. This characteristic existed within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth as it received a mean of 4.24 among administrators. Its mean gap was .62. Therefore more resources should be devoted to this characteristic.

The mean of item number 27, concerning an individualized curriculum was 4.33 as administrators deemed this to be important. The mean level of existence of this characteristic was 3.76 as administrators found this to exist somewhat within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth. More resources should be devoted to this characteristic as denoted by its mean gap of .57.

Responses indicated that administrators reckoned item number 13, teachers accommodate students individual learning styles, to be important as they rated this with a mean of 4.48. According to administrators, this characteristic is present within North Carolina alternative high schools for

at-risk youth as its mean yielded 4.14. Its mean gap, .34, denoted that more resources should be devoted to this characteristic.

In analyzing the data for item number 28, about grouping students with like ability for instruction, it was determined that administrators considered this somewhat important rating it with a mean of 3.95. This characteristic exists somewhat within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth as its mean among administrators was 3.00. More resources should be devoted to this characteristic as signified by its mean gap, .95.

Administrators rated item 14 relating to regular peer group counseling with a mean of 3.86, considering this somewhat important. This item was found to exist somewhat within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth as its mean equaled 3.33. Its mean gap was .53. Therefore, more resources should be devoted to this characteristic.

Administrators denoted a mean of 3.05 for item number 30, the alternative school provides extracurricular activities, regarding this as somewhat important. This item, yielding a mean of 2.19, rarely existed within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth. More resources should be devoted to this characteristic as suggested by the mean gap of .86.

Administrators reckoned item number 15, teachers provide positive reinforcement to students, as important

rating it with a mean of 4.76. This item was found among administrators to exist within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth as its mean equaled 4.52. Its mean gap, .24, denoted that more resources should be devoted to this characteristic.

Item number 16, students are grouped according to instructional needs rather than by grade level, was important to administrators as its mean yielded 4.19. It was determined by administrators that this characteristic existed within North Carolina alternative schools for at-risk youth as its mean was 4.14. More resources should be devoted to this characteristic as implied by its mean gap of .05.

Administrators deemed item number 31, school policies and procedures support non-graded multi-age classes to be somewhat important, rating this with a mean of 3.62. This item was somewhat present within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth as it received a mean of 3.05 among administrators. The mean gap, .57, signified that more resources should be devoted to this characteristic.

TABLE 27  
ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS ABOUT STUDENT NEEDS

Item No. and Response Item	Mean Importance	Mean Degree of Existence	Mean Gap
12. The curriculum provides students with skills they will need to be productive members of society.	4.86	4.24	.62
27. Curriculum is individualized for each student.	4.33	3.76	.57
13. Teachers accommodate students individual learning styles.	4.48	4.14	.34
28. Students with like ability are grouped together for instruction.	3.95	3.00	.95
14. Peer group counseling sessions are scheduled regularly.	3.86	3.33	.53
30. The alternative school provides extracurricular activities.	3.05	2.19	.86

(table continues)



TABLE 27 (CONTINUED)  
ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS ABOUT STUDENT NEEDS

Item No. and Response Item	Mean Importance	Mean Degree of Existence	Mean Gap
15. Teachers provide positive rein- forcement to students.	4.76	4.52	.24
16. Students are grouped according to instructional needs rather than by grade level.	4.19	4.14	.05
31. School policies and procedures support non- graded multi- age classes.	3.62	3.05	.57

Teacher Perceptions  
About Student Services

The literature suggest that there are certain services provided to students of alternative schools. The data gathered from teachers' perceptions regarding these services is provided in Table 28.

Survey respondents were asked to identify the level of importance and existence of two items related to student support services within their alternative school. Responses to item number 17, daycare is provided for children of students, yielded a teachers' mean of 3.25, as they considered this to be somewhat important. The results showed that very few North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth provide such a service as implied by its mean of 1.75. Its mean gap, 1.5, suggested that more resources should be devoted to this characteristic. The significance of t-value for existence was .0709 (See Table 29). Therefore, there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth. There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this program characteristic to alternative high schools, as signified from the significance of t-value, .1076 (See Table 30). The significance of t-value, .6606, indicated that there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of this

characteristic (See Table 31).

For item number 32, flexible scheduling is available to students, responses showed that teachers find this important, rating it with a 3.94. Responses yielded a mean of 3.13, indicating that this characteristic was somewhat present within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth. More resources should be devoted to this characteristic as denoted by its mean gap of .81. There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative schools for at-risk youth as the significance of t-value was .0665 (See Table 29). The significance of t-value, .4102, denoted that there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this particular program characteristic to alternative high schools (See Table 30). There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of this program characteristic as signified by the significance of t-value, .4078 (See Table 31).

Respondents were asked to rate the level of importance and existence of health care within their alternative school. In regards to item number 18, there is ongoing availability of medical health care for students, teachers considered this to be somewhat important, rating it with a mean of 3.39. Results implied that very few North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth provide this

health care as its mean was 2.07. The significance of t-value, .1192, indicated that there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth (See Table 29). There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of medical health care for students to alternative high schools, as signified by the significance of t-value, .6260 (See Table 30). The significance of t-value, .6951, implied that there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of this program characteristic (See Table 31).

Survey respondents were asked to indicate the level of importance and existence for item number 19, students receive individualized guidance on a regular basis, within their alternative school. Responses yielded a teachers' mean of 4.29 as teachers deemed this as important. It was also determined that North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth provide this service somewhat as 3.36 was its mean. The mean gap of this item, .93, denoted that more resources should be devoted to this characteristic. There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth as the significance of t-value was .0566 (See Table 29). The significance of t-value, .7275, indicated that there was no significant difference in

administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of individualized guidance on a regular basis to alternative high schools (See Table 30). There was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps as the significance of t-value was .5430 (See Table 31).

To determine the level of importance and existence of counseling within alternative high schools, respondents were asked to respond to one item. The mean for teachers was 4.53 regarding item number 20, individual counseling is available as needed, as they deemed this important. The results indicated that somewhat of North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth provide this service as the mean was 3.79. More resources should be devoted to this characteristic as implied by the mean gap, .74. The significance of t-value, .0000, indicated that there was a significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of this program characteristic to North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth (See Table 29). There was a significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of this program characteristic to alternative high schools, as denoted by the significance of t-value, .0286 (See Table 30). The significance of t-value, .2493, suggested that there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of this program characteristic (See Table 31).

TABLE 28  
TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT STUDENT SERVICES

Item No. and Response Item	Mean Importance	Mean Degree of Existence	Mean Gap
17. Daycare is provided for children of students.	3.25	1.75	1.50
32. Flexible scheduling is available to students.	3.94	3.13	.81
18. There is ongoing availability of medical health care for students.	3.39	2.07	1.32
19. Students receive individualized guidance on a regular basis.	4.29	3.36	.93
20. Individual counseling is scheduled regularly.	4.53	3.79	.74

TABLE 29  
ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT EXISTENCE  
OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENT SERVICES

Item No. and Response Item	Teacher Mean Existence	Administrator Mean Existence	Significance of t-value
17. Daycare is provided for children of students.	1.75	1.29	.0709
32. Flexible scheduling is available to students.	3.13	3.81	.0665
18. There is ongoing availability of medical health care for students.	2.07	2.62	.1192
19. Students receive individualized guidance on a regular basis.	3.36	4.00	.0566
20. Individual counseling is scheduled regularly.	3.79	4.71	.0000*

Note: \* Indicates significant difference at the .05 level.

TABLE 30  
ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT IMPORTANCE  
OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENT SERVICES

Item No. and Response Item	Teacher Mean Importance	Administrator Mean Importance	Significance of t-value
17. Daycare is provided for children of students.	3.25	2.67	.1076
32. Flexible scheduling is available to students.	3.94	4.19	.4102
18. There is ongoing availability of medical health care for students.	3.39	3.57	.6260
19. Students receive individualized guidance on a regular basis.	4.29	4.38	.7275
20. Individual counseling is scheduled regularly.	4.53	4.81	.0286*

Note: \* Indicates significant difference at the .05 level.



TABLE 31  
ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER MEAN GAPS OF PROGRAM  
CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENT SERVICES

Item No. and Response Item	Teacher Mean Gap	Administrator Mean Gap	Significance of t-value
17. Daycare is provided for children of students.	1.50	1.38	.6606
32. Flexible scheduling is available to students.	0.81	0.38	.4078
18. There is ongoing availability of medical health care for students.	1.32	0.95	.6951
19. Students receive individualized guidance on a regular basis.	0.93	0.38	.5430
20. Individual counseling is scheduled regularly.	0.74	0.10	.2493

### Administrators' Perceptions

#### About Student Services

Certain services provided to students were mentioned throughout the literature. Table 32 presents the results gathered from administrators' perceptions pertaining to these services. Respondents were asked to respond to two items regarding student support services. Administrators considered item number 17 relating to daycare not to be very important, rating this with a mean of 2.67. This item had a low mean level of existence, 1.29, within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth. More resources should be devoted to this characteristic as implied by its mean gap of 1.38.

Item number 32 concerning flexible scheduling received a mean of 4.19, as administrators felt this to be important. This item exists somewhat within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth according to its mean of 3.81. The mean gap, .38, suggested that more resources should be devoted to this characteristic.

Administrators felt item number 18, regarding medical health care, to be somewhat important, rating this with a mean of 3.57. This item, according to its mean of 2.62, rarely existed within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth. More resources should be devoted to this characteristic as suggested by its mean gap of .95.

Item number 19 about individual guidance was important to administrators as denoted by its mean of 4.38. This item

existed within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth according to its mean of 4.00. The mean gap, .38, implied that more resources should be devoted to this characteristic.

Administrators believed item number 20 concerning counseling to be important as its mean equaled 4.81. Its mean of 4.71 implied that this item existed within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth. More resources should be devoted to this characteristic as denoted from its mean gap of .10.

TABLE 32  
ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS ABOUT STUDENT SERVICES

Item No. and Response Item	Mean Importance	Mean Degree of Existence	Mean Gap
17. Daycare is provided for children of students.	2.67	1.29	1.38
32. Flexible scheduling is available to students.	4.19	3.81	.38
18. There is ongoing availability of medical health care for students.	3.57	2.62	.95
19. Students receive individualized guidance on a regular basis.	4.38	4.00	.38
20. Individual counseling is scheduled regularly.	4.81	4.71	.10

Administrator Rankings of  
Program Characteristic Existence

Administrators of programs surveyed provided a description of the program characteristics of existing North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth. Table 33 presents these program characteristics from highest to lowest mean of their existence as perceived by administrators and the category in which they fall.

Administrators found item number two, teachers meet regularly with students to provide academic help and support, to be most prevalent within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth, as its rating received a mean of 4.76. The category of this item was perceptions about alternative schools. From viewing the top ten means, four items falling under this category existed, two each for school climate and leadership, and one for students services and student needs. The student attitudes of alternative schools category had no items to exist within the top ten.

In reviewing the least ten means, the student needs category contained the most items, as they were five. The student services category consisted of three items and both student attitudes of alternative schools and leadership each had one. Item number 17 concerning daycare yielded the lowest mean of existence at 1.29. Teachers also found this item to yield the lowest mean of existence. The categories of perceptions about alternative schools and school climate

had no items present within the lowest ten.

Administrators perceived 27 of these program characteristics to exist within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth with a mean from 4.00 to 4.76. Nine of the remaining 13 items received a mean from 3.00 to 3.86.

TABLE 33  
ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS ABOUT LEVEL OF EXISTENCE  
OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH CAROLINA  
ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item Number and Item	Mean of Existence	Category
2. Teachers meet regularly with students to provide academic help and support.	4.76	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
23. Teachers are responsive to students' academic and social needs.	4.76	School Climate
11. The supervisor/principal believes in the ability of his/her staff.	4.71	Leadership
20. Individual counseling is available as needed.	4.71	Student Services
37. Teachers provide opportunities in which students will succeed.	4.71	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
10. Teachers have the freedom to make instructional decisions.	4.67	Leadership
21. Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to students.	4.67	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
3. Teachers believe students can achieve.	4.62	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
7. Teachers and students speak freely to each other.	4.62	School Climate
15. Teachers provide positive reinforcement to students.	4.52	Student Needs
(table continues)		

TABLE 33 (CONTINUED)  
ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS ABOUT LEVEL OF EXISTENCE  
OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH CAROLINA  
ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item Number and Item	Mean of Existence	Category
29. The alternative school has become the step between the traditional school and dropping out or suspension.	4.52	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
36. The supervisor/principal sets a climate that supports teaching and learning.	4.52	Leadership
26. The supervisor/principal provides teachers with materials they need in order to teach effectively.	4.43	Leadership
1. Teachers choose to work within the alternative program.	4.38	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
6. There is trust between students and teachers.	4.38	School Climate
38. There is communication between teachers and supervisor/principal regarding student progress.	4.38	Leadership
22. Students and teachers have mutual respect.	4.33	School Climate
9. Faculty and staff share school goals and visions.	4.29	Leadership
12. The curriculum provides students with skills they will need to be productive members of society.	4.24	Student Needs
33. Students speak positively about the alternative school.	4.24	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
(table continues)		



TABLE 33 (CONTINUED)  
ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS ABOUT LEVEL OF EXISTENCE  
OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH CAROLINA  
ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item Number and Item	Mean of Existence	Category
39. Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to parents.	4.24	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
40. Faculty share resources, ideas, and strategies with each other.	4.19	Leadership
13. Teachers accommodate students individual learning styles.	4.14	Student Needs
16. Students are grouped according to instructional needs rather than by grade level.	4.14	Student Needs
34. Students willingly share their ideas with faculty and staff.	4.14	School Climate
8. Class size is maintained at 12 or fewer students per adult.	4.05	School Climate
19. Students receive individualized guidance on a regular basis.	4.00	Student Services
5. Student attendance at the alternative school is regular.	3.86	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
24. Faculty work in teams to plan instruction.	3.81	Leadership
25. The alternative school program was organized based on faculty and staff input.	3.81	Leadership
(table continues)		

TABLE 33 (CONTINUED)  
ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS ABOUT LEVEL OF EXISTENCE  
OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH CAROLINA  
ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item Number and Number	Mean of Existence	Category
32. Flexible scheduling is available to students.	3.81	Student Services
27. Curriculum is individualized for each student.	3.76	Student Needs
14. Peer group counseling sessions are scheduled regularly.	3.33	Student Needs
4. Students can choose to attend either a traditional or alternative school.	3.19	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
31. School policies and procedures support non-graded multi-age classes.	3.04	Student Needs
28. Students with like ability are grouped together for instruction.	3.00	Student Needs
35. There was a school-wide effort to develop curriculum for the alternative school program.	2.95	Leadership
18. There is ongoing availability of medical health care for students.	2.62	Student Services
30. The alternative school provides extracurricular activities.	2.19	Student Needs
17. Daycare is provided for children of students.	1.29	Student Services

Teacher Rankings of  
Program Characteristic Existence

Teachers in programs surveyed provided responses that generated a description of the program characteristics of existing North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth. Table 34 presents these program characteristics from highest to lowest mean of their existence as perceived by teachers and the category in which they fall.

Teachers found item number 11, the supervisor/principal believes in the ability of his/her staff, to be most prevalent within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth, rating this with a mean of 4.64. Leadership was the category of this item. In reviewing the top ten indicators for existence of program characteristics, four of these fell under leadership, five under perceptions about alternative schools, and one concerning student attitudes of alternative schools. No items in the categories of school climate, student needs, or student services existed within the top ten.

Conversely, the categories of student needs and services each contained four items among the ten lowest means of existence. Leadership contained the remaining two items. Item number 17 concerning daycare yielded the lowest mean level of existence at 1.75. No items in the categories of perceptions about alternative schools, student attitudes of alternative schools, or school climate existed among the lowest ten.

Teachers perceived 17 of these program characteristics to exist within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth with a mean from 4.07 to 4.64. Of the remaining items, responses showed that 16 program characteristics existed within these schools with a mean from 3.07 to 3.99.

TABLE 34  
TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT LEVEL OF EXISTENCE OF  
PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH CAROLINA  
ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item Number and Item	Mean of Existence	Category
11. The supervisor/principal believes in the ability of his/her staff.	4.64	Leadership
10. Teachers have the freedom to make instructional decisions.	4.57	Leadership
36. The supervisor/principal sets a climate that supports teaching and learning.	4.56	Leadership
37. Teachers provides opportunities in which students will succeed.	4.52	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
3. Teachers believe students can achieve.	4.38	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
38. There is communication between teachers and supervisor/principal regarding student progress.	4.38	Leadership
2. Teachers meet regularly with students to provide academic help and support.	4.36	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
21. Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to students.	4.33	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
29. The alternative school has become the step between the traditional school and dropping out or suspension.	4.29	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
1. Teachers choose to work within the alternative program.	4.28	Perceptions About Alternative School
(table continues)		

TABLE 34 (CONTINUED)  
TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT LEVEL OF EXISTENCE OF  
PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH CAROLINA  
ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item Number and Item	Mean of Existence	Category
15. Teachers provide positive reinforcement to students.	4.27	Student Needs
7. Teachers and students speak freely to each other.	4.23	School Climate
39. Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to parents.	4.17	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
9. Faculty and staff share school goals and visions.	4.12	Leadership
23. Teachers are responsive to students' academic and social needs.	4.12	School Climate
6. There is trust between students and teachers.	4.07	School Climate
40. Faculty and staff share resources, ideas, and strategies with each other.	4.07	Leadership
13. Teachers accommodate students individual learning styles.	3.99	Student Needs
22. Students and teachers have mutual respect.	3.97	School Climate
26. The supervisor/principal provides teachers with materials they need in order to teach effectively.	3.92	Leadership
(table continues)		

TABLE 34 (CONTINUED)  
TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT LEVEL OF EXISTENCE OF  
PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH CAROLINA  
ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item Number and Item	Mean of Existence	Category
12. The curriculum provides students with skills they will need to be productive members of society.	3.89	Student Needs
8. Class size is maintained at 12 or fewer students per adult.	3.84	School Climate
33. Students speak positively about the alternative school.	3.80	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
20. Individual counseling is available as needed.	3.79	Student Services
34. Students willingly share their ideas with faculty and staff.	3.74	School Climate
4. Students can choose to attend either a traditional or alternative school.	3.64	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
27. Curriculum is individualized for each student.	3.64	Student Needs
5. Student attendance at the alternative school is regular.	3.53	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
25. The alternative school program was organized based on faculty and staff input.	3.50	Leadership
16. Students are grouped according to instructional needs rather than by grade level.	3.48	Student Needs
(table continues)		

TABLE 34 (CONTINUED)  
TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT LEVEL OF EXISTENCE OF  
PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH CAROLINA  
ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item Number and Item	Mean of Existence	Category
19. Students receive individualized guidance on a regular basis.	3.36	Student Services
32. Flexible scheduling is available to students.	3.13	Student Services
24. Faculty work in teams to plan instruction.	3.07	Leadership
35. There was a school-wide effort to develop curriculum for the alternative program.	2.94	Leadership
31. School policies and procedures support non-graded multi-age classes.	2.86	Student Needs
28. Students with like ability are grouped together for instruction.	2.67	Student Needs
14. Peer group counseling sessions are scheduled regularly.	2.46	Student Needs
18. There is ongoing availability of medical health care for students.	2.06	Student Services
30. The alternative school provides extracurricular activities.	1.99	Student Needs
17. Daycare is provided for children of students.	1.75	Student Services



Administrator and Teacher Rankings of  
Program Characteristic Existence

The administrators and teachers of programs surveyed provided a description of the program characteristics of existing North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth. The means of both teachers and administrators were averaged to derive a total mean of their existence. Table 35 presents these program characteristics from highest to lowest mean of their existence and the category in which they fall.

The program characteristic most prevalent within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth was item number 11, the supervisor/principal believes in the ability of his/her staff, with a mean of 4.68. This item is included in the category of leadership. In looking at the top ten means, three of these fell under leadership, four under teacher attitudes of alternative schools, two under school climate, and one concerning student attitudes of alternative schools. No items in the categories of student needs and services were found to exist among the top ten.

On the other hand, the lowest 10 means were more common within the category of student needs, where there were four of these items. The student services category consisted of three items with lower percentages; with item number 17, daycare is provided for children of students, yielding the lowest mean of existence at 1.52. The category of leadership had two items within the lowest 10 means of

existence; while only one item was present focusing on student attitudes of alternative schools. No items focusing on teacher attitudes of alternative schools or school climate were found within the lowest 10 means of existence within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth.

North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth contained 23 of the 40 program characteristics at a mean level from 4.02 to 4.68 during the 1995-1996 school year. Seven items had a mean level of existence from 3.65 to 3.95 within these schools.

TABLE 35  
LEVEL OF EXISTENCE OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS IN NORTH  
CAROLINA ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item and (Item Number)	Mean of Existence	Category
11. The supervisor/principal believes in the ability of his/her staff.	4.68	Leadership
10. Teachers have the freedom to make instructional decisions.	4.62	Leadership
37. Teachers provide opportunities in which students will succeed.	4.62	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
2. Teachers meet regularly with students to provide academic help and support.	4.55	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
36. The supervisor/principal sets a climate that supports teaching and learning.	4.90	Leadership
3. Teachers believe students can achieve.	4.50	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
21. Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to students.	4.50	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
23. Teachers are responsive to students' academic and social needs.	4.44	School Climate
7. Teachers and students speak freely to each other.	4.43	School Climate
29. The alternative school has become the step between the traditional school and dropping out or suspension.	4.41	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
(table continues)		

TABLE 35 (CONTINUED)  
LEVEL OF EXISTENCE OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS IN NORTH  
CAROLINA ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item and (Item Number)	Mean of Existence	Category
15. Teachers provide positive reinforcement to students.	4.39	Student Needs
38. There is communication between teachers and supervisor/principal regarding student progress.	4.38	Leadership
1. Teachers choose to work within the alternative program.	4.33	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
20. Individual counseling is available as needed.	4.25	Student Services
6. There is trust between students and teachers.	4.23	School Climate
9. Faculty and staff share school goals and visions.	4.21	Leadership
39. Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to parents.	4.21	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
26. The supervisor/principal provides teachers with materials they need in order to teach effectively.	4.18	Leadership
22. Students and teachers have mutual respect.	4.15	School Climate
40. Faculty share resources, ideas, and other strategies with each other.	4.13	Leadership
(table continues)		

TABLE 35 (CONTINUED)  
LEVEL OF EXISTENCE OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS IN NORTH  
CAROLINA ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item and (Item Number)	Mean of Existence	Category
12. The curriculum provides students with skills they will need to be productive members of society.	4.07	Student Needs
13. Teachers accommodate students individual learning styles.	4.07	Student Needs
33. Students speak positively about the alternative school.	4.02	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
8. Class size is maintained at 12 or fewer students per adult.	3.95	School Climate
34. Students willingly share their ideas with faculty and staff.	3.94	School Climate
16. Students are grouped according to instructional needs rather than by grade level.	3.81	Student Needs
5. Student attendance at the alternative school is regular.	3.70	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
27. Curriculum is individualized for each student.	3.70	Student Needs
19. Students receive individualized guidance on a regular basis.	3.68	Student Services
25. The alternative school program was organized based on faculty and staff input.	3.65	Leadership
(table continues)		

TABLE 35 (CONTINUED)  
LEVEL OF EXISTENCE OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS IN NORTH  
CAROLINA ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item and (Item Number)	Mean of Existence	Category
32. Flexible Scheduling is available to students.	3.47	Student Services
4. Students can choose to attend either a traditional or alternative school.	3.42	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
24. Faculty work in teams to plan instruction.	3.23	Leadership
31. School policies and procedures support non-graded multi-age classes.	2.96	Student Needs
35. There was a school-wide effort to develop curriculum for the alternative school program.	2.95	Leadership
14. Peer group counseling sessions are scheduled regularly.	2.90	Student Needs
28. Students with like ability are grouped together for instruction.	2.84	Student Needs
18. There is ongoing availability of medical health care for students.	2.35	Student Services
30. The alternative school provides extracurricular activities.	2.09	Student Needs
17. Daycare is provided for children of students.	1.52	Student Services

### Administrator Rankings of Program

#### Characteristic Importance

A list of program characteristics of alternative schools, from most to least important, was developed from the responses of administrators surveyed in this study. Table 36 presents these characteristics from most to least important to alternative schools as perceived by administrators and the category in which each falls.

The item receiving the highest mean of importance among administrators was number 36, the supervisor/principal sets a climate that supports teaching and learning, at 4.95. This along with three other items within the category of leadership were in the top ten most important to administrators. The categories of perceptions about alternative schools had two, and one item existed for each of student attitudes of alternative schools, student needs, student services, and school climate among the list of the top ten.

Conversely, item number 17, about daycare being provided for children of students, was rated as the least important with a mean of 2.67. The category here was student services with two other items within the list of least important. There were five items concerning student needs, and one each within leadership and student attitudes of alternative schools among this list. No items focusing of perceptions about alternative schools and school climate were among the list of least important to alternative

schools.

Administrators rated the importance of 32 of the 40 program characteristics with a 4.19 to 4.95. The remaining eight characteristics received a mean among administrators of 2.67 to 3.95.



TABLE 36  
ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS ABOUT LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE  
OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH CAROLINA  
ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item Number and Item	Mean of Importance	Category
36. The supervisor/principal sets a climate that supports teaching and learning.	4.95	Leadership
5. Student attendance at the alternative school is regular.	4.86	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
9. Faculty and staff share school goals and visions.	4.86	Leadership
11. The supervisor/principal believes in the ability of his/her staff.	4.86	Leadership
12. The curriculum provides students with the skills they will need to be productive members of society.	4.86	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
21. Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to students.	4.86	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
37. Teachers provide opportunities in which students will succeed.	4.86	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
20. Individual counseling is available as needed.	4.81	Student Services
22. Students and teachers have mutual respect.	4.81	School Climate
38. There is communication between teachers and supervisor/principal regarding student progress.	4.81	Leadership
(table continues)		

TABLE 36 (CONTINUED)  
ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS ABOUT LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE  
OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH CAROLINA  
ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item Number and Item	Mean of Importance	Category
6. There is trust between students and teachers.	4.76	School Climate
15. Teachers provide positive reinforcement to students.	4.76	Student Needs
2. Teachers meet regularly with students to provide academic help and support.	4.71	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
10. Teachers have the freedom to make instructional decisions.	4.71	Leadership
23. Teachers are responsive to students' academic and social needs.	4.71	School Climate
26. The supervisor/principal provides teachers with materials they need in order to teach effectively.	4.71	Leadership
39. Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to parents.	4.71	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
3. Teachers believe students can achieve.	4.67	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
7. Teachers and students speak freely to each other.	4.67	School Climate
8. Class size is maintained at 12 or fewer students per adult.	4.67	School Climate
(table continues)		

TABLE 36 (CONTINUED)  
ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS ABOUT LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE  
OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH CAROLINA  
ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item Number and Item	Mean of Importance	Category
33. Students speak positively about the alternative school.	4.57	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
40. Faculty share resources, ideas, and strategies with each other.	4.57	Leadership
1. Teachers choose to work within the alternative program.	4.52	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
13. Teachers accommodate students individual learning styles.	4.48	Student Needs
34. Students willingly share their ideas with faculty and staff.	4.42	School Climate
19. Students receive individualized guidance on a regular basis.	4.38	Student Services
24. Faculty work in teams to plan instruction.	4.33	Leadership
27. Curriculum is individualized for each student.	4.33	Student Needs
29. The alternative school has become the step between the traditional school and dropping out or suspension.	4.33	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
25. The alternative school program was organized based on faculty and staff input.	4.29	Leadership
(table continues)		

TABLE 36 (CONTINUED)  
ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS ABOUT LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE  
OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH CAROLINA  
ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item Number and Item	Mean of Importance	Category
16. Students are grouped according to instructional needs rather than by grade level.	4.19	Student Needs
32. Flexible scheduling is available to students.	4.19	Student Services
28. Students with like ability are grouped together for instruction.	3.95	Student Needs
35. There was a school-wide effort to develop curriculum for the alternative school program.	3.95	Leadership
14. Peer group counseling sessions are scheduled regularly.	3.86	Student Needs
31. School policies and procedures support non-graded multi-age classes.	3.62	Student Needs
18. There is ongoing availability of medical health care for students.	3.57	Student Services
4. Students can choose to attend either a traditional or alternative school.	3.52	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
30. The alternative school provides extracurricular activities.	3.05	Student Needs
17. Daycare is provided for children of students.	2.67	Student Services

### Teacher Rankings of Program

#### Characteristic Importance

A list of program characteristics of alternative schools, from most to least important, was developed from the responses of teachers surveyed in this study. Table 37 presents these characteristics from most to least important to alternative schools as denoted by the means of teachers.

The highest mean of importance among teachers was item number 11, the supervisor/principal believes in the ability of his/her staff, at 4.87. This item along with one other within the category of leadership were found within the 10 most important program characteristics of alternative schools. The categories of perceptions about alternative schools and school climate each had two items and student needs had one among the top 10. There were no items in the categories of student attitudes of alternative schools and student services within the top ten most important program characteristics.

Teachers rated item number 30 regarding extracurricular activities as the least important to alternative schools with a mean of 2.91. This item dealt with the category of student needs. From the 10 least important items, five were included from this category, three under student services, and one in each of student attitudes of alternative schools and leadership. No items under the categories of perceptions of alternative schools and school climate were

found to exist among the least 10 important program characteristics of alternative schools.

Teachers regarded 32 of these items as important as their mean ratings ranged from 4.05 to 4.87. The mean ratings of the remaining eight items had a range from 2.91 to 3.95.

TABLE 37  
TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE  
OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH CAROLINA  
ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item Number and Item	Mean of Importance	Category
11. The supervisor/principal believes in the ability of his/her staff.	4.87	Leadership
10. Teachers have the freedom to make instructional decisions.	4.78	Leadership
36. The supervisor/principal sets a climate that supports teaching and learning.	4.76	Leadership
37. Teachers provide opportunities in which students will succeed.	4.73	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
15. Teachers provide positive reinforcement to students.	4.73	Student Needs
8. Class size is maintained at 12 or fewer students per adult.	4.71	School Climate
9. Faculty and staff share school goals and visions.	4.71	Leadership
6. There is trust between students and teachers.	4.70	School Climate
3. Teachers believe students can achieve.	4.68	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
22. Students and teachers have mutual respect.	4.68	School Climate
(table continues)		

TABLE 37 (CONTINUED)  
TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE  
OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH CAROLINA  
ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item Number and Item	Mean of Importance	Category
12. The curriculum provides students with skills they will need to be productive members of society.	4.65	Student Needs
1. Teachers choose to work within the alternative program.	4.62	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
2. Teachers meet regularly with students to provide academic help and support.	4.62	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
39. Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to parents.	4.62	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
38. There is communication between teachers and supervisor/principal regarding student progress.	4.61	Leadership
7. Teachers and students speak freely to each other.	4.60	School Climate
26. The supervisor/principal provides teachers with materials they need in order to teach effectively.	4.58	Leadership
21. Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to students.	4.57	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
40. Faculty share resources, ideas, and strategies with each other.	4.57	Leadership
13. Teachers accommodate students individual learning styles.	4.55	Student Needs
(table Continues)		



TABLE 37 (CONTINUED)  
TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE  
OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH CAROLINA  
ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item Number and Item	Mean of Importance	Category
20. Individual counseling is available as needed.	4.53	Student Services
5. Student attendance at the alternative school is regular.	4.52	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
23. Teachers are responsive to students' academic and social needs.	4.49	School Climate
33. Students speak positively about the alternative school.	4.45	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
25. The alternative school program was organized based on faculty and staff input.	4.30	Leadership
19. Students receive individualized guidance on a regular basis.	4.29	Student Services
29. The alternative school has become the step between the traditional school and dropping out or suspension.	4.28	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
34. Students willingly share their ideas with faculty and staff.	4.24	School Climate
16. Students are grouped according to instructional needs rather than by grade level.	4.20	Student Needs
35. There was a school-wide effort to develop curriculum for the alternative program.	4.07	Leadership
(table continues)		

TABLE 37 (CONTINUED)  
TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE  
OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH CAROLINA  
ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item Number and Item	Mean of Importance	Category
27. Curriculum is individualized for each student.	4.07	Student Needs
4. Students can choose to attend either a traditional or alternative school.	4.05	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
14. Peer group counseling sessions are scheduled regularly.	3.95	Student Needs
32. Flexible scheduling is available to students.	3.94	Student Services
24. Faculty work in teams to plan instruction.	3.88	Leadership
31. School policies and procedures support non-graded multi-ages classes.	3.45	Student Needs
18. There is ongoing availability of medical health care for students.	3.39	Student Services
28. Students with like ability are grouped together for instruction.	3.38	Student Needs
17. Daycare is provided for children of students.	3.25	Student Services
30. The alternative school provides extracurricular activities.	2.91	Student Needs

Administrator and Teacher Rankings of  
Program Characteristic Importance

A list of program characteristics of alternative schools, from most to least important, was developed from the responses of administrators and teachers surveyed in this study. Table 38 presents these characteristics from most to least important to alternative schools as denoted by both administrators and teachers.

The item receiving the highest mean of importance was number 11, the supervisor/principal believes in the ability of his/her staff, at 4.87. This item falls under the category of leadership. This category was most prevalent, including four items within the 10 most important program characteristics. The categories of student needs, school climate, and teacher attitudes of alternative schools each had two items within the 10 most important program characteristics. However, no items in the categories of student attitudes of alternative schools and student services were found to be within the top 10 most important program characteristics.

The least important item was number 30, the alternative school provides extracurricular activities, at 2.98. Of the five categories with items rated as the 10 least important, there were four items of student needs, three items dealing with student services, two items focusing on leadership, and one item in student attitudes of alternative schools. There were, however, no items focusing on teacher attitudes of

alternative schools and school climate present within the ten least important to alternative schools.

Through analysis of the level of importance of the 40 program characteristics, the results denoted a higher mean of importance among administrators within 75% of these characteristics. Conversely, only 10 program characteristics received a higher mean of importance by teachers.

Administrators and teachers rated the importance of 33 of the 40 program characteristics with a mean of 4.01 to 4.87. The remaining seven program characteristics received a mean of importance from 2.98 to 3.9. Six of these items were within the categories of student needs and services. These dealt with ability grouping, providing daycare, extracurricular activities, medical health care, multi-age classes, and peer group counseling. The seventh item in the category of student attitudes of alternative schools dealt with student choice in attending a traditional or alternative school.

TABLE 38  
LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH  
CAROLINA ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item and Item Number	Mean of Importance	Category
11. The supervisor/principal believes in the ability of his/her staff.	4.87	Leadership
36. The supervisor/principal sets a climate that supports teaching and learning.	4.86	Leadership
37. Teachers provide opportunities in which students will succeed.	4.80	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
9. Faculty and staff share school goals and visions.	4.79	Leadership
12. The curriculum provides students with skills they will need to be productive members of society.	4.76	Student Needs
10. Teachers have the freedom to make instructional decisions.	4.75	Leadership
22. Students and teachers have mutual respect.	4.75	School Climate
15. Teachers provide positive reinforcement to students.	4.74	Student Needs
6. There is trust between students and teachers.	4.73	School Climate
21. Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress progress to students.	4.72	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
(table continues)		

TABLE 38 (CONTINUED)  
LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH  
CAROLINA ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item and Item Number	Mean of Importance	Category
38. There is communication between teachers and supervisor/principal regarding student progress.	4.71	Leadership
5. Students attendance at the alternative school is regular.	4.69	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
3. Teachers believe students can achieve.	4.68	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
2. Teachers meet regularly with students to provide academic help and support.	4.67	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
20. Individual counseling is available as needed.	4.67	Student Services
39. Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to parents.	4.67	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
8. Class size is maintained at 12 or fewer students per adult.	4.65	School Climate
26. The supervisor/principal provides teachers with materials they need in order to teach effectively.	4.65	Leadership
7. Teachers and students speak freely to each other.	4.64	School Climate
23. Teachers are responsive to students' academic and social needs.	4.60	School Climate

(table continues)

TABLE 38 (CONTINUED)  
LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH  
CAROLINA ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item and Item Number	Mean of Importance	Category
1. Teachers choose to work within the alternative program.	4.57	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
40. Faculty share resources, ideas, and strategies with each other.	4.57	Leadership
13. Teachers accommodate students individual learning styles.	4.52	Student Needs
33. Students speak positively about the alternative school.	4.51	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
19. Students receive individualized guidance on a regular basis.	4.34	Student Services
34. Students willingly share their ideas with faculty and staff.	4.34	School Climate
29. The alternative school has become the step between the traditional school and dropping out or suspension.	4.31	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
25. The alternative school program was organized based on faculty and staff input.	4.30	Leadership
16. Students are grouped according to instructional needs rather than by grade level.	4.20	Student Needs
27. Curriculum is individualized for each student.	4.19	Student Needs
(table continues)		

TABLE 38 (CONTINUED)  
LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH  
CAROLINA ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item and Item Number	Mean of Importance	Category
24. Faculty work in teams to plan instruction.	4.12	Leadership
32. Flexible scheduling is available to students.	4.07	Student Services
35. There was a school-wide effort to develop curriculum for the alternative school program.	4.01	Leadership
14. Peer group counseling sessions are scheduled regularly.	3.91	Student Needs
4. Students can choose to attend either a traditional or alternative school.	3.79	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
28. Students with like ability are grouped together for instruction.	3.67	Student Needs
31. School Policies and procedures support non-graded multi-age classes.	3.54	Student Needs
18. There is ongoing availability of medical health care for students.	3.48	Student Services
17. Daycare is provided for children of students.	2.96	Student Services
30. The alternative school provides extracurricular activities.	2.98	Student Needs



Administrator Rankings of Mean Gaps  
of Program Characteristics

A list of the mean gaps for each characteristic of alternative schools, from highest to lowest, was developed from the responses of administrators surveyed in this study. This list of the mean gaps are reported in Table 39.

Administrator responses revealed that the highest mean gap was in number 17 concerning daycare at 1.38. This item was within the category of student services. This also received the highest mean gap among teachers. In analyzing the top 10 highest mean gaps, student needs and leadership each contained three items, two existed under student services, and one for each of student attitudes of alternative schools and school climate.

The item receiving the lowest mean gap was number 29, the alternative school has become the step between the traditional school and dropping out or suspension, at -.19. The category for this item was student attitudes of alternative schools. This item also received the lowest mean gap among teachers. Other categories with items among the lowest 10 mean gaps were perceptions of alternative schools with four items, two items under school climate, and one item in each of student services, student needs, and leadership.

The responses from administrators revealed that three items received a negative mean gap denoting that too much time and resources had been devoted to these

characteristics. The mean gaps for the other 33 items indicated that more resources should be devoted to these characteristics.

TABLE 39  
ADMINISTRATOR MEAN GAPS OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH  
CAROLINA ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item Number and Item	Mean Gap	Category
17. Daycare is provided for children of students.	1.38	Student Services
5. Student attendance is regular at the alternative school.	1.00	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
35. There was a school-wide effort to develop curriculum for the alternative school program.	1.00	Leadership
18. There is ongoing availability of medical health care for students.	.95	Student Services
24. Faculty work in teams to plan instruction.	.95	Leadership
28. Students with like ability are grouped together for instruction.	.95	Student Needs
30. The alternative school provides extracurricular activities.	.86	Student Needs
8. Class size is maintained at 12 or fewer students per adult.	.62	School climate
12. The curriculum provides students with skills they will need to be productive members of society.	.62	Student Needs
9. Faculty and staff share school goals and visions.	.57	Leadership
(table continues)		

TABLE 39 (CONTINUED)  
ADMINISTRATOR MEAN GAPS OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH  
CAROLINA ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item Number and Item	Mean Gap	Category
27. Curriculum is individualized for each student.	.57	Student Needs
31. School policies and procedures support non-graded multi-age classes.	.57	Student Needs
38. There is communication between teachers and supervisor/principal regarding student progress.	.57	Leadership
14. Peer group counseling sessions are scheduled regularly.	.53	Student Needs
22. Students and teachers have mutual respect.	.48	School climate
25. The alternative school program was organized based on faculty and staff input.	.48	Leadership
39. Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to parents.	.47	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
36. The supervisor/principal sets a climate that supports teaching and learning.	.43	Leadership
6. There is trust between students and teachers.	.38	School Climate
19. Students receive individualized guidance on a regular basis.	.38	Student Services
(table continues)		

TABLE 39 (CONTINUED)  
ADMINISTRATOR MEAN GAPS OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH  
CAROLINA ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item Number and Item	Mean Gap	Category
32. Flexible scheduling is available to students.	.38	Student Services
40. Faculty share resources, ideas, and strategies with each other.	.38	Leadership
13. Teachers accommodate students individual learning styles.	.34	Student Needs
4. Students can choose to attend either a traditional or alternative school.	.33	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
33. Students speak positively about the alternative school.	.33	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
34. Students willingly share ideas with faculty and staff.	.29	School Climate
26. The supervisor/principal provides teachers with materials they need in order to teach effectively.	.28	Leadership
15. Teachers provide positive reinforcement to students.	.24	Student Needs
21. Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to students.	.19	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
11. The supervisor/principal believes in the ability of his/her staff.	.15	Leadership
(table continues)		

TABLE 39 (CONTINUED)  
ADMINISTRATOR MEAN GAPS OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH  
CAROLINA ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item Number and Item	Mean Gap	Category
37. Teachers provide opportunities in which students will succeed.	.15	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
1. Teachers choose to work within the alternative program.	.14	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
20. Individual counseling is available as needed.	.10	Student Services
3. Teachers believe students can achieve.	.05	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
7. Teachers and students speak freely to each other.	.05	School Climate
16. Students are grouped according to instructional needs rather than by grade level.	.05	Student Needs
10. Teachers have the freedom to make instructional decisions.	.04	Leadership
2. Teachers meet regularly with students to provide academic help and support.	-.05	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
23. Teachers are responsive to students' academic and social needs.	-.05	School climate
29. The alternative school has become the step between the traditional school and dropping out or suspension.	-.19	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools

Teacher Rankings of Mean Gaps  
of Program Characteristics

A list of the mean gaps for each characteristic of alternative schools, from highest to lowest, was developed from the responses of teachers surveyed in this study. Table 40 presents these mean gaps from highest to lowest regarding teacher perceptions.

In determining the mean gap, the difference was derived between the mean of importance and mean of existence for each item. A positive sum indicated that more resources should be devoted to that particular characteristic. Conversely, a negative sum denoted that too much time and resources had been devoted to that characteristic.

Item number 17 concerning daycare received the highest mean gap among teachers at 1.50. This item along with three others in the category of student services, two each in student needs and leadership, and one each in student attitudes of alternative schools and school climate were among the highest ten mean gaps.

The item with the lowest mean gap was number 29, the alternative school has become the step between the traditional school and dropping out or suspension, at 0. This item was concerned with student attitudes of alternative schools and was the only one to receive a mean gap of 0. The remaining 39 items received mean gaps denoting that more resources should be devoted to them. The category containing the most items within the lowest 10

mean gaps was perceptions of alternative schools, with five items. Leadership had four items among this list.



TABLE 40  
TEACHER MEAN GAPS OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH  
CAROLINA ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item Number and Item	Mean Gap	Category
17. Daycare is provided for children of students.	1.50	Student Services
14. Peer group counseling sessions are scheduled regularly.	1.49	Student Needs
18. There is ongoing availability of medical health care for students.	1.32	Student Services
35. There was a school-wide effort to develop curriculum for the alternative school program.	1.13	Leadership
5. Student attendance at the alternative school is regular.	1.00	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
19. Students receive individualized guidance on a regular basis.	.93	Student Services
30. The alternative school provides extracurricular activities.	.92	Student Needs
8. Class size is maintained at 12 or fewer students per adult.	.87	School Climate
24. Faculty work in teams to plan instruction.	.81	Leadership
32. Flexible scheduling is available to students.	.81	Student Services
(table continues)		

TABLE 40 (CONTINUED)  
TEACHER MEAN GAPS OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH  
CAROLINA ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item Number and Item	Mean Gap	Category
25. The alternative school program was organized based on faculty and staff input.	.80	Leadership
12. The curriculum provides students with skills they will need to be productive members of society.	.76	Student Needs
20. Individual counseling is available as needed.	.74	Student Services
16. Students are grouped according to instructional needs rather than by grade level.	.72	Student Needs
22. Students and teachers have mutual respect.	.71	School Climate
28. Students with like ability are grouped for instruction.	.71	Student Needs
26. The supervisor/principal provides teachers with materials they need in order to teach effectively.	.66	Leadership
33. Students speak positively about the alternative school.	.65	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
6. There is trust between students and teachers.	.63	School Climate
9. Faculty and staff share school goals and visions.	.59	Leadership
(table continues)		

TABLE 40 (CONTINUED)  
TEACHER MEAN GAPS OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH  
CAROLINA ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item Number and Item	Mean Gap	Category
31. School policies and procedures support non-graded multi-age classes.	.59	Student Needs
13. Teachers accommodate students individual learning styles.	.56	Student Needs
34. Students willingly share their ideas with faculty and staff.	.50	School Climate
40. Faculty share resources, ideas, and strategies with each other.	.50	Leadership
39. Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to parents.	.45	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
15. Teachers provide positive reinforcement to students.	.44	Student Needs
27. Curriculum is individualized for each student.	.42	Student Needs
4. Students can choose to attend either a traditional or alternative school.	.41	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
7. Teachers and students speak freely to each other.	.37	School Climate
23. Teachers are responsive to students' academic and social needs.	.37	School Climate
(table continues)		

TABLE 40 (CONTINUED)  
TEACHER MEAN GAPS OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH  
CAROLINA ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item Number and Item	Mean Gap	Category
1. Teachers choose to work within the alternative program.	.34	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
3. Teachers believe students can achieve.	.30	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
2. Teachers meet regularly with students to provide academic help and support.	.26	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
11. The supervisor/principal believes in the ability of his/her staff.	.24	Leadership
21. Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to students.	.24	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
38. There is communication between teachers and supervisor/principal regarding student progress.	.23	Leadership
10. Teachers have the freedom to make instructional decisions.	.21	Leadership
37. Teachers provide opportunities in which students will succeed.	.21	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
36. The supervisor/principal sets a climate that supports teaching and learning.	.20	Leadership
29. The alternative school has become the step between the traditional school and dropping out or suspension.	0	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools

Significance of t-Value For Administrator And Teacher  
Perceptions Regarding Existence of Program Characteristics

A t-test was computed for each item determining that there was a significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of level of existence of nine program characteristics of North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth (See Table 41). These nine items having a t-value less than the .05 level of significance, allowing rejection of the null hypothesis, received a much higher mean of existence among administrators than by teachers surveyed. These items were within all the categories.

TABLE 41  
ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS REGARDING EXISTENCE  
OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH CAROLINA  
ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item and Item Number	Significance	Category
38. There is communication between teachers and supervisor/principal regarding student progress.	.9921	Leadership
35. There was a school-wide effort to develop curriculum for the alternative program.	.9824	Leadership
36. The supervisor/principal sets a climate that supports teaching and learning.	.8459	Leadership
11. The supervisor/principal believes in the ability of his/her staff.	.7324	Leadership
1. Teachers choose to work within the alternative program.	.7095	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
39. Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to parents.	.7088	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
27. Curriculum is individualized for each student.	.6951	Student Needs
31. School policies and procedures support non-graded multi-age classes.	.6244	Student Needs
10. Teachers have the freedom to make instructional decisions.	.5797	Leadership
30. The alternative school provides extracurricular activities.	.5487	Student Needs
(table continues)		

TABLE 41 (CONTINUED)  
ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS REGARDING EXISTENCE  
OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH CAROLINA  
ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item and Item Number	Significance	Category
9. Faculty and staff share school goals and visions.	.5371	Leadership
13. Teachers accommodate students individual learning styles.	.5139	Student Needs
8. Class size is maintained at 12 or fewer students per adult.	.4861	School Climate
25. The alternative school program was organized based on faculty and staff input.	.3952	Leadership
24. Faculty work in teams to plan instruction.	.3815	Leadership
28. Students with like ability are grouped together for instruction.	.3242	Student Needs
3. Teachers believe students can achieve.	.2927	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
40. Faculty share resources, ideas, and strategies with each other.	.2680	Leadership
5. Student attendance at the alternative school is regular.	.2374	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
15. Teachers provide positive reinforcement to students.	.2233	Student Needs
(table continues)		

TABLE 41 (CONTINUED)  
ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS REGARDING EXISTENCE  
OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH CAROLINA  
ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item and Item Number	Significance	Category
4. Students can choose to attend either a traditional or alternative school.	.2068	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
29. The alternative school has become the step between the traditional school and dropping out or suspension.	.1727	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
37. Teachers provides opportunities in which students will succeed.	.1367	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
18. There is ongoing availability of medical health care for students.	.1192	Student Services
6. There is trust between students and teachers.	.1174	School Climate
34. Students willingly share their ideas with faculty and staff.	.0993	School Climate
17. Daycare is provided for children of students.	.0709	Student Services
22. Students and teachers have mutual respect.	.0686	School Climate
32. Flexible scheduling is available to students.	.0665	Student Services
16. Students are grouped according to instructional needs rather than by grade level.	.0631	Student Needs

(table continues)



TABLE 41 (CONTINUED)  
ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS REGARDING EXISTENCE  
OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH CAROLINA  
ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item and Item Number	Significance	Category
19. Students receive individualized guidance on a regular basis.	.0566	Student Services
21. Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to students.	.0326*	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
33. Students speak positively about the alternative school.	.0374*	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
7. Teachers and students speak freely to each other.	.0190*	School Climate
26. The supervisor/principal provides teachers with materials they need in order to teach effectively.	.0127*	Leadership
14. Peer group counseling sessions are scheduled regularly.	.0046*	Student Needs
2. Teachers meet regularly with students to provide academic help and support.	.0044*	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
12. The curriculum provides students with skills they will need to be productive members of society.	.0420*	Student Needs
20. Individual counseling is available as needed.	.0000*	Student Services
23. Teachers are responsive to students' academic and social needs.	.0000*	School Climate

Note: \* Indicates significant difference at the .05 level.

Significance of t-Value For Administrator And Teacher  
Perceptions Regarding Importance of Program Characteristics

A t-test was computed for each item determining that there was a significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of importance of five program characteristics of alternative high schools (See Table 42). These five items having a t-value less than the .05 level of significance, allowing rejection of the null hypothesis, received a much higher mean of importance among administrators than by teachers surveyed. These items were within the categories of perceptions about alternative schools, student attitudes of alternative schools, leadership, and student services.

TABLE 42  
ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS REGARDING IMPORTANCE  
OF CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH CAROLINA ALTERNATIVE  
HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item and Item Number	Significance	Category
40. Faculty share resources, ideas, and strategies with each other.	.9948	Leadership
16. Students are grouped according to instructional needs rather than by grade level.	.9839	Student Needs
25. The alternative school program was organized based on faculty and staff input.	.9566	Leadership
3. Teachers believe students can achieve.	.9322	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
29. The alternative school has become the step between the traditional school and dropping out or suspension.	.8462	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
8. Class size is maintained at 12 or fewer students per adult.	.8367	School Climate
11. The supervisor/principal believes in the ability of his/her staff.	.8252	Leadership
15. Teachers provide positive reinforcement to students.	.8062	Student Needs
14. Peer group counseling sessions are scheduled regularly.	.7885	Student Needs
13. Teachers accommodate students individual learning styles.	.7264	Student Needs
(table continues)		

TABLE 42 (CONTINUED)  
ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS REGARDING IMPORTANCE  
OF CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH CAROLINA ALTERNATIVE  
HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item and Item Number	Significance	Category
19. Students receive individualized guidance on a regular basis.	.7275	Student Services
30. The alternative school provides extracurricular activities.	.7130	Student Needs
7. Teachers and students speak freely to each other.	.7092	School Climate
35. There was a school-wide effort to develop curriculum for the alternative program.	.6819	Leadership
1. Teachers choose to work within the alternative program.	.6634	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
31. School policies and procedures support non-graded multi-age classes.	.6311	Student Needs
2. Teachers meet regularly with students to provide academic help and support.	.6290	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
18. There is ongoing availability of medical health care for students.	.6260	Student Services
10. Teachers have the freedom to make instructional decisions.	.6247	Leadership
6. There is trust between students and teachers.	.6178	School Climate
(table continues)		

TABLE 42 (CONTINUED)  
ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS REGARDING IMPORTANCE  
OF CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH CAROLINA ALTERNATIVE  
HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item and Item Number	Significance	Category
33. Students speak positively about the alternative school.	.5598	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
39. Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to parents.	.5142	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
22. Students and teachers have mutual respect.	.4427	School Climate
32. Flexible scheduling is available to students.	.4102	Student Services
27. Curriculum is individualized for each student.	.3106	Student Needs
34. Students willingly share their ideas with faculty and staff.	.3024	School Climate
26. The supervisor/principal provides teachers with materials they need in order to teach effectively.	.3020	Leadership
23. Teachers are responsive to students' academic and social needs.	.2519	School Climate
37. Teachers provides opportunities in which students will succeed.	.2261	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
9. Faculty and staff share school goals and visions.	.1740	Leadership
(table continues)		

TABLE 42 (CONTINUED)  
ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS REGARDING IMPORTANCE  
OF CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH CAROLINA ALTERNATIVE  
HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item and Item Number	Significance	Category
38. There is communication between teachers and supervisor/principal regarding student progress.	.1507	Leadership
17. Daycare is provided for children of students.	.1076	Student Services
28. Students with like ability are grouped together for instruction.	.0762	Student Needs
4. Students can choose to attend either a traditional or alternative school.	.0737	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
12. The curriculum provides students with skills they will need to be productive members of society.	.0659	Student Needs
24. Faculty work in teams to plan instruction.	.0509*	Leadership
20. Individual counseling is available as needed.	.0286*	Student Services
36. The supervisor/principal sets a climate that supports teaching and learning.	.0198*	Leadership
21. Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to students.	.0123*	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
5. Student attendance at the alternative school is regular.	.0043*	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools

Note: \* Indicates significant difference at the .05 level.

Significance of t-Value For Administrators' and Teachers'  
Mean Gaps of Program Characteristics

A t-test was computed for each item determining that there was no significant difference in administrators' and teachers' mean gaps of any of the 40 program characteristics of alternative schools (See Table 43).

TABLE 43  
ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER MEAN GAPS OF PROGRAM  
CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH CAROLINA ALTERNATIVE  
HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item and Item Number	Significance	Category
1. Teachers choose to work within the alternative program.	1.0000	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
35. There was a school-wide effort to develop curriculum for the alternative program.	.9485	Leadership
13. Teachers accommodate students individual learning styles.	.9140	Student Needs
10. Teachers have the freedom to make instructional decisions.	.9013	Leadership
8. Class size is maintained at 12 or fewer students per adult.	.8882	School Climate
40. Faculty share resources, ideas, and strategies with each other.	.8661	Leadership
11. The supervisor/principal believes in the ability of his/her staff.	.8473	Leadership
39. Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to parents.	.8287	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
30. The alternative school provides extracurricular activities.	.8125	Student Needs
36. The supervisor/principal sets a climate that supports teaching and learning.	.7817	Leadership

(table continues)



TABLE 43 (CONTINUED)  
ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER MEAN GAPS OF PROGRAM  
CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH CAROLINA ALTERNATIVE  
HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item and Item Number	Significance	Category
25. The alternative school program was organized based on faculty and staff input.	.7783	Leadership
9. Faculty and staff share school goals and visions.	.7341	Leadership
38. There is communication between teachers and supervisor/principal regarding student progress.	.7215	Leadership
31. School policies and procedures support non-graded multi-age classes.	.7134	Student Needs
18. There is ongoing availability of medical health care for students.	.6951	Student Services
5. Student attendance at the alternative school is regular.	.6809	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
14. Peer group counseling sessions are scheduled regularly.	.6707	Student Needs
6. There is trust between students and teachers.	.6649	School Climate
17. Daycare is provided for children of students.	.6606	Student Services
27. Curriculum is individualized for each student.	.6478	Student Needs
(table continues)		

TABLE 43 (CONTINUED)  
ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER MEAN GAPS OF PROGRAM  
CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH CAROLINA ALTERNATIVE  
HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item and Item Number	Significance	Category
15. Teachers provide positive reinforcement to students.	.6435	Student Needs
12. The curriculum provides students with skills they will need to be productive members of society.	.6256	Student Needs
22. Students and teachers have mutual respect.	.6252	School Climate
19. Students receive individualized guidance on a regular basis.	.5430	Student Services
3. Teachers believe students can achieve.	.5284	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
28. Students with like ability are grouped together for instruction.	.5272	Student Needs
33. Students speak positively about the alternative school.	.5227	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
26. The supervisor/principal provides teachers with materials they need in order to teach effectively.	.4662	Leadership
16. Students are grouped according to instructional needs rather than by grade level.	.4628	Student Needs
34. Students willingly share their ideas with faculty and staff.	.4180	School Climate
(table continues)		

TABLE 43 (CONTINUED)  
ADMINISTRATOR AND TEACHER MEAN GAPS OF PROGRAM  
CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH CAROLINA ALTERNATIVE  
HIGH SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Item and Item Number	Significance	Category
32. Flexible scheduling is available to students.	.4078	Student Services
7. Teachers and students speak freely to each other.	.3431	School Climate
24. Faculty work in teams to plan instruction.	.3418	Leadership
37. Teachers provides opportunities in which students will succeed.	.3407	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
29. The alternative school has become the step between the traditional school and dropping out or suspension.	.2790	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
20. Individual counseling is available as needed.	.2493	Student Services
2. Teachers meet regularly with students to provide academic help and support.	.2054	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
4. Students can choose to attend either a traditional or alternative school.	.2036	Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools
21. Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to students.	.1758	Perceptions About Alternative Schools
23. Teachers are responsive to students' academic and social needs.	.1478	School Climate

### Kendall's Tau Coefficient

Responses of teachers' and administrators' perceptions of existence of program characteristics were ranked. A Kendall's Tau Coefficient was calculated to determine if there was a significant difference in rank order between teachers' and administrators' perceptions of importance. Kendall based his statistic on the number of inversions in the rankings (Howell, 1992). Tau equaled .7692 for these rankings. The standard normal deviant, 6.993 was significant at the .05 level.

Responses of teachers' and administrators' perceptions of importance of program characteristics were ranked in order to determine the Kendall's Tau Coefficient. The Tau for this ranking equaled .70. The standard normal deviant, 6.36, was significant at the .05 level.

The mean gaps of teachers' and administrators' perceptions of program characteristics were also ranked to obtain the Kendall's Tau Coefficient that was equal to .6231. The standard normal deviant, 5.665, was significant at the .05 level.

### Open-ended Section

Respondents were asked to list any other components they feel are essential to alternative schools. Responses included support of parents, community and school system, adequate funding time for staff planning, staff development, computer assisted learning, experiential learning, a

separate facility, employment opportunities, a vocational component, and character development. Table 44 presents these components and the number of respondents who perceived them to be essential to alternative schools.

TABLE 44  
ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

Analysis Component	Number of Responses
character development	30
school system support	27
community support	21
parental support	12
staff development	12
staff planning	9
adequate funding	9
experiential learning	9
vocational component	9
separate facility	6
computer assisted learning	3
employment opportunities	3

### Summary

North Carolina had 42 alternative public alternative high school programs for at-risk youth operating during the 1995-1996 school year. Survey questionnaire data from 21 administrators and 107 teachers of 21 of these programs were presented in this chapter to describe the importance and extent of presence of characteristics of alternative high school programs in North Carolina. A mean gap was calculated to determine if more resources should or should not be devoted to any item. A t-test was computed to determine if there was a significant difference in administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence, importance, and gaps of program characteristics to alternative high schools. An open-ended section was included, asking the respondent to list any other components he or she felt are essential to alternative schools.

## Chapter 5

### FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

#### Introduction to Study

Educators within randomly selected public alternative high schools for at-risk youth in North Carolina were surveyed regarding the importance and extent of specific program characteristics. Responses of high school administrators' and teachers' responses to questionnaire items helped to describe what program characteristics they felt were important. The extent to which they exist within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth was also determined. These findings provide baseline data regarding administrator and teacher perceptions about alternative school program characteristics.

Respondents from 21 public alternative high school programs for at-risk youth in North Carolina were asked to rate the importance of program characteristics and the extent of presence within their alternative school program. An open-ended section was provided for respondents to list other characteristics they felt were essential for alternative schools. Educators in all 21 programs participated by providing information necessary to accomplish the following objectives:

1. Identify which characteristics of exemplary alternative schools exist in North Carolina

alternative high schools for at-risk/potential dropouts.

2. Determine the degree of importance with which North Carolina alternative high school administrators and teachers perceive each characteristic.
3. Determine if there is a significant difference between administrators' and teachers' perceptions regarding the frequency of occurrence of program characteristics within alternative high schools.
4. Determine if there is a significant difference between administrators' and teachers' perceptions regarding the relevancy of program characteristics to alternative high schools.
5. Determine if there is a significant difference between administrators' and teachers' perceptions about the importance of program characteristics within alternative high schools and the extent to which they exist.

Data from 128 returned questionnaires form the basis of the findings and conclusions in this chapter.

Implications for further research are also discussed.

### Results

The results are based on the tabulation of the responses to the survey instrument (see Chapter IV). The 12 categories with key features are used to organize the



results.

### Administrator and Teacher Perceptions About Alternative Schools

Six items within the survey composed the construct surrounding perceptions about alternative schools (See Table 3, page 84 and Table 7, page 91). While both teachers and administrators find all six survey items dealing with perceptions toward alternative schools to be important, rating each with a 4.52 and above within a five point scale, the item identified as most important by teachers and administrators dealt with opportunities for students to be successful. Administrators also rated teachers routinely monitoring and reporting student progress as equally important with teachers ranking it the lowest.

All six items within this construct were shown to exist within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth. Opportunities for students to find success was the concept teachers identified as most commonly present in these schools. Administrators rated the item "teachers meeting regularly with students to provide academic help and support" as existing most commonly. Monitoring and reporting student progress to parents existed least often according to teachers' and administrators' ratings.

A significant difference was found between administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of two program characteristics. Administrators felt that

teachers meet more regularly with students to provide academic help and that teachers more routinely monitor and report student progress to students than teachers perceive that these events occur.

When considering differences between administrators' and teachers' perceptions regarding the importance of items within this construct, only one item emerged as significant. Administrators viewed teachers routinely monitoring and reporting student progress to students as significantly more important than teachers.

#### Administrator and Teacher Perceptions About Student Attitudes of Alternative Schools

Four items within the survey composed the construct encompassing student attitudes of alternative schools (See Table 8, page 96 and Table 12, page 102). While all four items are found to be important to both teachers and administrators, rating each with a mean of 3.52 and above on a five point scale, the item identified as most important by teachers and administrators focused on student attendance at the alternative school. Teachers and administrators found the item dealing with student choice in attending a traditional or alternative school to be least important.

All four items within this construct were shown to exist within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth. The alternative school as the step between the traditional school and dropping out or suspension is the

item teachers and administrators recognized as most commonly present in these schools. Teachers rated the item concerning student attendance as existing least often. Student choice in attending either a traditional or alternative school existed least often according to administrators' ratings.

A significant difference was found between administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of one program characteristic regarding this construct. Administrators viewed that students' speaking more positively about the alternative school occurred more often than teachers perceive that it occurred.

When considering differences between administrators' and teachers' perceptions regarding importance of items within this construct, only one item resulted as significant. Administrators felt that students attend the alternative school more regularly than teachers perceive that they attend.

### Administrator and Teacher Perceptions

#### About School Climate

Six items within the survey composed the construct surrounding school climate (See Table 13, page 108 and Table 17, page 114). While all six items were found to be important to both teachers and administrators, rating each with a mean of 4.24 and above within a five point scale, the item most important to teachers dealt with class size.

Administrators perceived students and teachers having mutual respect to be most important. Students willingly share their ideas with faculty and staff was rated least important for both teachers and administrators.

All six items were shown to exist within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth. Teachers and students speaking freely to each other was identified by teachers as most commonly present in these schools. Administrators perceived teachers being responsive to students' academic and social needs as existing most commonly. Students willingly sharing their ideas with faculty and staff was found to exist least often among teachers. Administrators found the item focusing on class size to exist least often.

A significant difference was found between administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of two program characteristics within this construct. Administrators perceived teachers and students to speak more freely to each other and teachers are more responsive to students' academic and social needs than did teachers.

#### Administrator and Teacher Perceptions

##### About Leadership

Ten items within the survey composed the construct encompassing leadership. While both teachers and administrators found all ten items to be important, rating each with a 3.88 and above within a five point scale, the

item dealing with the supervisor/principal believing in the ability of his/her staff was deemed most important by teachers. While administrators felt that the supervisor/principal setting a climate that supports teaching and learning was most important. Faculty work in teams to plan instruction was rated as least important according to teachers. A school-wide effort to develop curriculum for the alternative school program was identified by administrators as least important.

All 10 items within this construct were shown to exist within North Carolina alternative schools for at-risk youth. Positive working relationships between teachers and administrator were strongly evident because both teachers and administrators identified the supervisor/principal believes in the ability of his/her staff as the item most commonly present. The item identified by both teachers and administrators as existing least often dealt with the development of curriculum for the alternative school program.

A significant difference was found between administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of one program characteristic. Administrators felt that the supervisor/principal provides teachers with materials they need in order to teach more effectively more often than teachers felt that this occurred.

When considering differences between administrators' and teachers' perceptions regarding the importance of items

within this construct, two items emerged as significant. Administrators felt that the supervisor/principal sets a climate that supports teaching and learning and faculty work in teams to plan instruction more important than did teachers.

### Administrator and Teacher Perceptions

#### About Student Needs

Nine items within the survey composed the construct surrounding student needs (See Table 23, page 143 and Table 27, page 154). While both teachers and administrators felt that all nine items were important, rating each with a 2.91 and above within a five point scale, the item focusing on teachers providing positive reinforcement to students was identified as most important among teachers. Curriculum providing students with skills they will need to be productive members of society was deemed most important according to administrators. The item found to be least important for both teachers and administrators dealt with extracurricular activities.

All nine items within this construct were found to exist within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth. Teachers provide positive reinforcement to students was identified as most commonly present in these schools according to both teachers and administrators. Both teachers and administrators identified the item dealing with extracurricular activities to exist least often.

A significant difference was found between administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of one program characteristic. Administrators felt that more peer group counseling sessions are scheduled regularly than did teachers.

#### Administrator and Teacher Perceptions

##### About Student Services

Five items within the survey composed the construct encompassing student services ( See Table 28, page 160 and Table 32, page 166). While both teachers administrators rate all five items to be important, 2.67 and above within a five point scale, individualized counseling scheduled regularly was regarded as most important to both teachers and administrators. Teachers and administrators found the item dealing with daycare to be least important.

All five items within this construct were shown to exist within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth. Regularly scheduled individualized counseling was perceived to exist most often according to both teachers and administrators. Daycare is provided for children of students was shown to exist least often for both teachers and administrators.

A significant difference was found between administrators' and teachers' perceptions of existence of one program characteristic. Administrators felt that individual counseling is scheduled more regularly than

teachers perceive that it occurs.

When considering differences between administrators' and teachers' perceptions regarding the importance of items within this construct, one item emerged as significant. Administrators viewed individual counseling as being scheduled regularly as more important than teachers.

### Conclusions

#### Conclusion Number One

Administrators' perceptions were higher than teachers' perceptions about existence of program characteristics within alternative schools. Each of the 40 program characteristics received a higher mean level of existence from administrators surveyed. Therefore, administrators found each of the 40 program characteristics to exist to a greater degree than did teachers in North Carolina alternative schools for at-risk youth.

#### Conclusion Number Two

Administrators and teachers differed significantly in their perceptions of existence of nine of the 40 program characteristics of alternative schools. These nine items span all six categories.

#### Conclusion Number Three

Administrators' perceptions were higher than teachers' perceptions about the importance of program characteristics



within alternative schools. Each of the 40 program characteristics received a higher mean level of importance from administrators surveyed. Therefore, administrators found each of the 40 program characteristics to be more important than did teachers.

#### Conclusion Number Four

Administrators and teachers differed significantly in their perceptions of importance of five of the 40 program characteristics within alternative schools. These five items were within the categories of perceptions about alternative schools, student attitudes of alternative schools, leadership, and student services. Administrators and teachers did not differ significantly in their perceptions of importance among any of the items within the categories of school climate and student needs.

#### Conclusion Number Five

The categories of student needs and services consistently ranked at the bottom of the lists for both levels of existence and importance among administrators and teachers. Administrators and teachers do not find these to be as important as the categories of leadership, perceptions about alternative schools, school climate, and student attitudes of alternative schools.

Conclusion Number Six

Teacher mean gaps, differences between the importance of program characteristics within alternative high schools and the extent of their existence, indicated that more resources ( e.g., time, money) should be devoted to 39 of the 40 program characteristics. However, administrator mean gaps revealed that too many resources are being devoted to three of the 40 program characteristics.

Item number 29, the alternative school has become the step between the traditional school and dropping out or suspension, was at the bottom of the list of mean gaps for both administrators and teachers. Teachers felt this item to have received adequate attention, as the mean gap here equaled 0. Conversely, administrator mean gap of  $-.19$  signified that alternative school programs should give the least amount of attention to this item as it had the lowest mean gap among administrators. Obviously, administrators do not consider this to be a big concern.

Item number 17, daycare is provided for children, was found to be at or near the bottom of all rankings of importance. However, this service was perceived to be somewhat important, although it received the lowest level of existence among administrators and teachers; thus yielding the highest mean gap. Therefore, alternative school programs should identify whether daycare within the school is an existing need and may then require more resources to provide this student service.

### Conclusion Number Seven

Results of the use of Kendall's Tau Coefficient demonstrated substantial similarities in the perceptions of administrators and teachers regarding the degrees of existence, importance, and mean gaps between selected characteristics of alternative schools.

### Conclusion Number Eight

North Carolina alternative schools for at-risk youth are to be commended for exhibiting to some degree all of the 40 program characteristics present in the literature as important in exemplary programs. Primary deficiencies exist in categories of student needs and services, such as extracurricular activities, peer group counseling, daycare for children of students, and medical health care.

### Conclusion Number Nine

Administrators and teachers surveyed exhibit commitment to their alternative school and are anxious to participate in research on alternative schools. This was indicated by all 21 administrators and 107 teachers selected for this study responding to the survey and by the time and thought evident in answers given to open-ended questions.

### Implications For Further Research

Forty program characteristics of alternative schools were shown to be important to students throughout the literature review. This study confirmed that they are also

important to teachers and administrators from the data gathered. Survey respondents provided data regarding the level of existence and importance of program characteristics within North Carolina alternative high schools for at-risk youth.

Further research should be conducted to determine if a significant difference exists in the level of importance and existence of these program characteristics to alternative high schools as perceived by teachers. A similar study should also be conducted among administrators about their perceptions. More studies should examine those items where North Carolina alternative high school administrators' and teachers' perceptions of level of existence and importance were significantly different. A need also exists for a national comparative study to determine if teachers and administrators in other states and geographic areas hold similar views.

More research should be conducted among students of alternative high school programs to determine their perceptions of the importance and level of existence of program characteristics. Further research is needed to determine if a significant difference exists among perceptions of administrators, teachers, and students regarding level of importance, existence, and differences between the importance of program characteristics and extent of existence (gaps) regarding program characteristics of alternative schools. A similar study should also be

conducted among parents about their perceptions.

More research concerning components, added to the survey by administrators and teachers participating in this study, should be conducted. Specifically, these components included support from the school system, parents, and community, funding, staff planning and development, types of instruction, the facility, employment opportunities, and character development.

More studies should examine specific outcomes of alternative schools. One survey respondent stated that "good visions have become so fragrant that they have lost their substance." Those features that create student success in alternative school programs deserve examination. However, no suggestions of new approaches should be implemented without further research.

### Summary

An analysis of the data collected and computed from 21 administrators and 107 teachers was presented, based on appropriate categories. Findings, conclusions, and implications for further research were reported, based on the data gathered from 128 survey respondents.

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## APPENDICES



APPENDIX A  
Survey Instrument

Perceptions of Alternative Schools

Based on your perception, please rate the following items according to their importance to your alternative school (5 being highly important and 1 not important). Next, rate to what extent each item exists in your alternative school (5 consistently exists and 1 does not exist). Circle your choices.

	<u>Importance</u>	<u>Existence in your alternative program</u>
1. Teachers choose to work within the alternative program.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
2. Teachers meet regularly with students to provide academic help and support.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
3. Teachers believe students can achieve.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
4. Students can choose to attend either a traditional or alternative school.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
5. Students attendance at the alternative school is regular.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
6. There is trust between students and teachers.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
7. Teachers and students speak freely to each other.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
8. Class size is maintained at 12 or fewer students per adult.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
9. Faculty and staff share school goals and visions.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
10. Teachers have the freedom to make instructional decisions.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
11. The supervisor/principal believes in the ability of his/her staff.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

- |     |  |           |           |
|-----|--|-----------|-----------|
| 12. | The curriculum provides students with skills they will need to be productive members of society.   | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 13. | Teachers accommodate students individual learning styles.  | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 14. | Peer group counseling sessions are scheduled regularly.  | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 15. | Teachers provide positive reinforcement to students.   | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 16. | Students are grouped according to instructional needs rather than by grade level.                  | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 17. | Daycare is provided for children of students.  | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 18. | There is ongoing availability of medical health care for students.                                 | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 19. | Students receive individualized guidance on a regular basis.                                       | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 20. | Individual counseling is available as needed.  | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 21. | Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to students.                                | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 22. | Students and teachers have mutual respect.   | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 23. | Teachers are responsive to students' academic and social needs.                                    | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 24. | Faculty work in teams to plan instruction.   | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 25. | The alternative school program was organized based on faculty and staff input.                     | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 26. | The supervisor/principal provides teachers with materials they need in order to teach effectively. | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |

- |   |           |           |
|---|-----------|-----------|
| 27. Curriculum is individualized for each student.  | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 28. Students with like ability are grouped together for instruction.  | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 29. The alternative school has become the step between the traditional school and dropping out or suspension. | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 30. The alternative school provides extracurricular activities.   | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 31. School policies and procedures support non-graded multi-age classes.                                      | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 32. Flexible scheduling is available to students.   | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 33. Students speak positively about the alternative school.   | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 34. Students willingly share their ideas with faculty and staff.  | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 35. There was a school-wide effort to develop curriculum for the alternative school program.                  | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 36. The supervisor/principal sets a climate that supports teaching and learning.                              | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 37. Teachers provide opportunities in which students will succeed.  | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 38. There is communication between teachers and supervisor/principal regarding student progress.              | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 39. Teachers routinely monitor and report student progress to parents.  | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 40. Faculty share resources, ideas, and strategies with each other.   | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |

Please list any other components you feel are essential to alternative schools.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

APPENDIX B  
Survey Cover Letter

Route 3 Box 228  
Spruce Pine, NC 28777  
January 30, 1996

Dear Administrator/Educator,

I am an educator in Spruce Pine, North Carolina. I am currently involved in the research and writing of my dissertation for a doctorate at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, Tennessee. I am conducting a study pertaining to alternative high schools in North Carolina. I am surveying high school administrators and educators concerning their perceptions regarding the relevancy and degree of occurrence of program characteristics of alternative high schools.

I am requesting that you respond to the enclosed survey. As a teacher myself, I am aware of the demands of your work load and appreciate your taking time to complete the enclosed questionnaire. Please return it within ten days using the postage-paid, pre-addressed envelope.

Your input is vital to the study and these data will be analyzed and presented in summary form. I will guarantee confidentiality of individual responses. If you have any questions, please call me at (704) 765-6683. Thank you in advance for your time and assistance with this survey.

Participation in this research project is strictly voluntary.

Respectfully,

Deborah D. Wiseman  
Doctoral Candidate  
Enclosures

APPENDIX C  
Postcard Reminder



Route 3 Box 228  
Spruce Pine, NC 28777  
February 6, 1996

## Postcard

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Recently I sent you a survey concerning the perceptions of administrators and teachers of alternative schools. I appreciate your participation in this survey. If you have mailed back the completed survey, I appreciate your promptness. If not, this card might serve as a reminder. Thank you for your valuable time in making this study a success.

Sincerely,

Deborah D. Wiseman

APPENDIX D  
Follow-up Letter

Route 3 Box 228  
Spruce Pine, NC 28777  
February 20, 1996

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Recently I sent a postcard reminding you of a survey concerning the perceptions of administrators and teachers of alternative schools. A vast majority of the surveys have been returned. However, your response to the survey has not been received at this time. It would be greatly appreciated if you would complete the survey and mail it to me within the week. I have included another postage-paid envelope for your convenience. I look forward to receiving your survey. Your perceptions are important to this study.

Sincerely,

Deborah D. Wiseman  
Doctoral Candidate  
Enclosure

APPENDIX E  
Final Letter

Route 3 Box 228  
Spruce Pine, NC 28777  
March 5, 1996

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Recently I sent a follow-up letter to you concerning the survey of the perceptions of administrators and teachers of alternative schools. At this time, your completed survey has not been received. I have enclosed an additional copy of the survey instrument along with a stamped envelope just in case the initial instrument has been misplaced. It would be greatly appreciated if you would take a few minutes to complete the survey and return it to me as soon as possible.

This study is for the purpose of completing a Doctorate in Educational Administration and the results will be used solely for that purpose. Participation in this research project is strictly voluntary. Thank you for taking your valuable time to assist in making this study a success.

Sincerely,

Deborah D. Wiseman  
Doctoral Candidate  
Enclosures

APPENDIX F  
Subject Matter Experts

## SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS

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