

Dr. Karol Schmidt, this submission is in response to the Call for Papers issued on December 28, 2015. Each of the attached papers/reports pertain to the important discussion the State Board of Education is having on A-F accountability system. The Alternative Education Consortium has also submitted a position paper on the topic.

Alternative Education

There is hope for students considered to be "at-risk" of leaving school prior to graduation. At-risk students can benefit from Alternative Education programs that provide an intervention and learning expectation and experiences for students to maximize their potential for success. Such programs focus upon the realities of the needs and interests of at-risk students by offering experiences for improved self-concept, motivation, reduction of truancy, reduction of disruptive behavior, and improved academic learning. Characteristics of at-risk students often include documented history of disruptive behavior, dropped out of school and returning, poor academic standing, several grades behind cohort, primary caregiver or financially responsible for dependents, adjudicated, homeless, learning disability, and/or ward of the state.

Attached papers/reports include:

1. AIR Alternative Education Final Report: "Based on the study's findings, we can posit that students identified as troubled or troubling tend to flourish in alternative learning environments where they believe that their teachers, staff, and administrators care about and respect them, value their opinion, establish fair rules that they support, are flexible in trying to solve problems, and take a non-authoritarian approach to teaching (Quinn, Poirier, Faller, Gable, & Tonelson, in press)."
2. Alt Ed Literature Review: "Findings from the review indicate that while alternative began in the non-public educational arena, at this time they are most often found in the public school system. Alternatives are typically serving students who are at risk for school failure or are disenfranchised from the-traditional school system. Findings on student academic outcomes are mixed. The synthesis concludes with implications for policy and practice." (Contains 74 references.)
3. Alt Ed Research Project: "There is a growing concern for the apparently increasingly large numbers of young people who are for various reasons missing out on the benefits of education and possibly a better future. These are the young people, the invisible ones who are not even completing Year 10, who are becoming disconnected from education before the age of 15 or 16..... (Brooks, Milne, Paterson, Johansson and Hart, 1997:1)." "While it is not possible to define a typical early school leaver there are some common groupings that may assist in targeting programs and services. The Youth Research Centre in their report on Early School Leaving (1990: 9) identified the following categories:
 - Positive Choice - those who leave school making a positive choice to take up their options.
 - Opportune Leavers - leave school to find a job or to establish a personal relationship.
 - Would be Leavers - those who would prefer to leave but are continuing for now to increase their work options.
 - Circumstantial Leavers - forced out of school for non-educational reasons ie financial issues.
 - Discouraged leavers - their experience of school is discouraging - they have had no success and their performance and interest in school is low.
 - Alienated leavers - more difficult to meet their needs than the discouraged – many leave school very early.
4. Impact of Georgia's Accountability System: "We find that imposing sanctions on failing schools has a positive impact on future performance. However, increasing the number of

binding requirements has a negative impact on a school's probability of passage. This result suggests that heterogeneous schools, or schools with several large subgroup populations, are negatively impacted by the requirement. While we find that accountability components have a statistically significant impact on probability of AYP passage, factors related to school resources and quality appear to have a greater influence. The mechanism for the negative impact of binding requirements remains unidentified as we also find that binding requirements have a slight positive impact on individual subgroup performance. The magnitude of this impact is dependent upon the subgroup examined, school type, and position of the subgroup within the Meets/Exceeds distribution. Overall, our results suggest the need for re-examination of the binding requirements as a method of targeting disadvantaged populations."

5. NAEA Exemplary Practices 2014: "Throughout the world, nontraditional and alternative schools serve students who require or thrive in an environment other than a traditional educational setting. This population of learners may face challenges in school, home, and community. As a result, their ability to access services in the traditional setting may be at risk.

Nontraditional and alternative education delivers innovative 21st Century approaches to teaching and learning which provide students with the opportunity to meet graduation requirements, engage in college and career readiness, and participate as productive members of their communities. In an effort to enhance the quality of nontraditional and alternative education in all fifty states, the National Alternative Education Association (NAEA) has identified 15 exemplary practices. Research-based, field tested, and incorporating best practices in the field of education, Exemplary Practices 2.0: Alternative Education Standards of Quality and Program Evaluation represents unified standards and indicators of quality programming. Exemplary Practices 2.0 provides educational leaders and practitioners with a standards-based approach to program evaluation, identifies essential characteristics, and notes the importance of wrap-around services which include school counseling, social work, and technology; all of which play a role in successful schools and programs."

Johnson Bia, Ph.D.
Chief Administrative Officer for Education
& Regional Director of PPEP Institute
PPEP, Inc.