

# Expansion of an Alternative School Typology

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**Abstract:** *The alternative education program remains a viable response for engaging students who would otherwise be dropouts. Raywid (1994) synthesized and advanced an alternative school typology describing organizational characteristics with related effectiveness that appeared useful for considering and improving program practices. A unique opportunity arose involving the chance to scrutinize the transformation of a school-within-a-school alternative program in consideration of Raywid's (1994) typology using a mixed-methods case study relying upon questionnaire, documentary, observational, interview data, and propositions. The findings yielded significant contributions through expansion of the typology.*

Policymakers, administrators, and educators appear to value and organize alternative schools as experiences, and expectations vary across circumstance. Raywid (1994) largely captured this variety in practice through a typology advancing alternative school organizational types by effectiveness (i.e., fully effective type I – transformative; ineffective type II – punitive; and marginally effective type III – therapeutic). Interested policymakers, administrators, and educators should find interest in distinguishing effective ways to organize alternative schools as these programs offer potentially robust approaches toward intervening in and preventing dropout activity.

## Overview

This article (a) briefly reviews Raywid's (1994) typology; (b) addresses recent alternative school literature; (c) summarizes a mixed-methods case study addressing Raywid's (1994) typology; and (d) provides recommendations for interested policymakers, administrators, and educators. With significant findings expanding Raywid's (1994) typology, the author advances that the student at risk would benefit from alternative school practices that incorporate traditional school activity and integrates progressive curricular and service delivery models.

## Raywid's Alternative School Typology

Raywid (1994) produced a typology that some scholar-practitioners commonly used while exploring alternative schools. Type I programs were usually proactive, successful, focused, innovative, and transformative; type II programs were usually reactive, last chance, and punitive; and type III programs were rehabilitative, successful with distinct disadvantages, and remedial, and returned students to mainstream schools after successful intervention. Typically, an alternative education program manifested one dominant tendency while possibly exhibiting aspects from one or both additional types.

## Alternative Schools

Recent literature about dropout prevention and alternative education pointed toward conceptual difficulties and commonalities in practices. The alternative school has emerged as one response toward addressing dropout activity, as there may be as many as 20,000 alternative organizations in the United States (Barr & Parrett, 2001) serving nearly four million students (Lehr & Lange, 2000).

## Effective Alternative Education Programs?

Dynarski and Gleason (1998) proposed that intensive middle school alternative programs held promise for effectively intervening in dropout activity while high school alternative programs showed little effect except for students who were academically motivated. Relying upon literacy scores and absentee and dropout rates over two- and three-year periods for 21 federally sponsored projects across the United States, with six organizations specifically identified as alternative programs, Dynarski and Gleason (1998) found that alternative schools imparted minimal effects modulating student dropout activity relative to regular school activity. The study appeared to have contained small sample sizes, short timeframes, and a lack of specificity as to what comprised an alternative education program, demonstrating some of the problems of determining alternative education program effectiveness.

Scholars and practitioners were confronted with differing types, sizes, methodologies, student needs, and locations while trying to distinguish successful alternative schools (Lange & Sletten, 2002; Martin, Tobin, & Sugai, 2002; Tobin & Sprague, 2000). Alternative schools were usually highly adaptive to circumstance (Cox, 1999; Duke & Griesdorn, 1999; Leiding, 2002; Tobin & Sprague, 2000). There was a recent paucity of research showing that curricular content and skill acquisition were comparable between demographically congruent groups of alternative and mainstream youth (Tobin & Sprague, 2000). What

little available research there was usually contained methodological errors (May & Copeland, 1998; Worrell, 2000). While early evaluations of alternative schools lacked control or comparison groups, sample randomization, and pre- and posttesting (Kellmayer, 1995), recent literature appeared largely populated with qualitative case studies focused on examining respective program attributes.

Recent literature describing alternative education programs typically indicated that improved student attendance, grades, and graduation rates—and decreased behavior problems *while attending* alternative schools—were markers for program effectiveness. Well-designed alternative schools were effective in helping youth who were failing in traditional settings (Barr & Parrett, 2001; Guerin & Denti, 1999; Nichols & Utesch, 1998). Matching specific student needs against corresponding alternative school characteristics boded well for student outcomes (Rayle, 1998). Organizationally, effective alternative schools used democratic principles and processes as staffs sought to influence and not control students, and the students were involved in the design of their educational process (Barr & Parrett, 2001; Kellmayer, 1995; Lambert, 2003; Lange & Sletten, 2002; Leiding, 2002). Typically, youth in effective alternative schools reported high levels of engagement and *esprit de corps* (Barr & Parrett, 1997, 2001; Kellmayer, 1995; Ruebel, Ruebel, & O’Laughlin, 2001).

### **Common Alternative Education Program Characteristics**

Derived largely through empirical and qualitative studies, alternative school attributes generally ranged in terms of adopting the characteristics as listed in Figure 1.

The literature focus here and elsewhere seemingly assumed student or school deficits required redress through alternative education activity. Hence, alternative school processes appeared to typically fall along social and curricular approaches.

### **Social Deficits Approach**

Along with other youth-oriented social programs that were geared for and usually failed to adequately address social deficits (Brendtro, Ness, & Mitchell, 2001), alternative education organizational activity typically fell short of *fixing* student behavior. Some alternative schools seemingly offered student *repair* and *return* services. In a study focused on detecting if participation in an alternative middle school would decrease delinquent behaviors, youth who were temporarily placed in an alternative school and then returned to a traditional school demonstrated recurrently poor behaviors (Cox, 1999). Similarly, another alternative school that had demonstrated positive attributes of a learning environment (i.e., small class size and

**Figure 1. Typical Alternative Education Program Characteristics**

Staffing	Instruction	Focus	Nontraditional
Small school, class size, staff	Standards-based	Supportive environment	Flexible scheduling, evening hours, multiple shifts
Low student-to-teacher ratio	Innovative and varied curricula	Informal or high structure	Student and staff entry choice
Adult mentors	Functional behavior assessments	Student-orientation	Reduced school days
Leadership from either a principal or director/teacher-director	Self-paced instruction	Proactive or problem focus (i.e., last chance)	Linkages between schools and workplaces
Lack of specialized services (e.g., library, career counseling)	Vocational training involving work in the community	Character, theme, or emphasis from interests of founding teachers	Intensive counseling and monitoring
Dynamic leadership	Social skills instruction	Teacher-student and student-student relationships	Collaboration across school systems and other human service agencies
Fewer rules and less bureaucracy	Individualized and personalized learning		Collegiality with faculty and students

(Composite characteristics derived from Barr & Parrett, 1997, 2001; Chalker & Brown, 1999; Cox, 1999; Duke & Griesdorn, 1999; Knutson, 1998; Lange & Sletten, 2002; Leiding, 2002; Lehr & Lange, 2003; Raywid, 1994, 2001; Reimer & Cash, 2003; Ruebel et al., 2001; Saunders & Saunders, 2001; Schutz & Harris, 2001; Tobin & Sprague, 2000.)

individualized instruction) returned youth to *home* schools with similar results: The academic advantages did not carry over (Kallio & Sanders, 1999). For a yearlong transition alternative high school, youth were stigmatized and academically unprepared for returning to the traditional high school (Sakayi, 2001). In relation to a reentry alternative education school where students returned to the regular school after catching up on credits and demonstrating proper attendance, communication patterns did not reflect the desirable effect of socializing at-risk youth for traditional schools and justified rather than clarified the role of the alternative school (Souza, 1999). For some, the image of an alternative school seemingly was oriented on placing difficult youth into highly structured settings with appropriate prosocial behavioral training. In relation to Raywid's (1994) typology, this type II alternative education approach appeared to be ineffective.

In a statewide study, as grades improved while youth were enrolled in alternative schools, consideration was given to segregating the disruptive youth from the *true* alternative youth (e.g., academically challenged, disaffected) (Turpin & Hinton, 2000). Many youth enrolled in alternative schools wished to remain in those settings instead of returning to traditional schools (Duke & Griesdorn, 1999; Sakayi, 2001). For some at-risk youth, traditional school settings may have appeared to have been hostile and criminogenic (Duke & Griesdorn, 1999). Typically, youth who have prospered in alternative settings should have remained until graduation (Barr & Parrett, 2001; Kellmayer, 1995). In a cross-state study, alternative school students perceived a high degree of one-on-one relationships in alternative school settings and a sense of closeness with each other and alternative school staffs (Castleberry & Enger, 1998). In a separate study presenting similar findings by contrasting student perceptions of past (traditional) and present (alternative) school environments, students "reported significantly more positive experiences in their interactions with administrators, teachers, and counselors/case workers at [the alternative school]" and "students rated the overall environment of the alternative school significantly higher than their prior school" (Saunders & Saunders, 2001, p. 22). According to Castleberry and Enger (1998), alternative school attendance led toward increasing student positive attitudes about school and life (student perceptions about their outlooks occurred during their enrollment in alternative schools). The social implications of alternative education activity indicated that distinguishing organizational effectiveness should account for student interest, aptitude, and willingness to learn (Duke & Griesdorn, 1999). From the social deficits approach, distinguishing the successful transformation of disaffected, nonconformist at-risk students elicited a set of detectable emergent properties.

Indicators of behavioral achievement for alternative education programs include: (a) low rate of serious code of conduct violations, (b) high rate of daily attendance, (c) increased percentage of students who felt good about attending school, (d) improved rate of attendance from previous to present school programs, (e) low number of suspensions/expulsions, (f) acquisition and use of social skills (e.g., anger and peer mediation), and (g) internalized locus of control/responsibility (Duke & Griesdorn, 1999; May & Copeland, 1998). Standing in contrast to the social aspects of alternative education organizational activity were academic issues.

## **Curricular Deficits Approach**

With a focus on increasing student academic achievement, the alternative school staff usually seeks indicators for determining organizational effectiveness. The emergent properties of academic achievement in alternative schools included percentages and rates of students who: (a) graduate with a diploma, (b) earn a GED, (c) improve their grade point average, (d) earn credits toward graduation, (e) return to the regular high and earned passing grades, (f) improve scores on standardized tests, and (g) reduce failing grades (Duke & Griesdorn, 1999). Yet, the qualities of these indicators appeared to remain subject to contending values. For example, although the GED is usually held in lighter regard than the high school diploma, GED recipients on average have higher school capability (Wayman, 2001).

## **Curricular and Social Deficit Models, Reconsidered**

As alternative school practitioners focused on academic and social deficits, students and organizations appeared to emerge as rational objects subject to appropriate managerial manipulation. Leaders of alternative schools "should conduct the most broad-based evaluation possible, including an analysis of all pertinent affective and cognitive data that are available . . . Academic achievement . . . should be considered one component of a comprehensive program evaluation" (Kellmayer, 1995, p. 128). As Raywid (1994) and Kellmayer (1995) posited, effective alternative schools appeared to focus on providing highly relevant and experiential learning opportunities through staff and student transformation. The institutional distinction and integration between social and curricular approaches of the education process apparently persisted separate from and as part of the alternative school. Effective education is *transformative* (i.e., problem posing and generative) (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Danielson, 2002; Eisner, 1994; Lambert, 2003; Leiding, 2002; Ramos, 1993). Other alternative school considerations included locations and relationships with traditional schools.

## **Site Considerations**

Configured in a variety of settings, alternative schools were constituted as (a) schools-within-schools (located on related, traditional campuses), (b) districtwide separate programs, (c) regional programs serving multiple districts, and (d) co-located with vocational-technical centers (Duke & Griesdorn, 1999). Site consideration was critical; placing an alternative school in an enriched socioeconomic environment has potentially powerful academic and social consequences for students (Kellmayer, 1995). Other site factors regarded unwanted cultural assimilation or conflicts at host locations, transportation, competing rule sets, and ready access to social, career, technological, and medical services (Kellmayer, 1995). Physical environmental considerations should include using facilities that evoke professional regard (Duke & Griesdorn, 1999).

## **Relational Considerations**

As modifying school system factors to a lesser restrictive extent should accommodate at-risk youth and returning dropouts (Wayman, 2001), nurturing a *caring community* approach in alternative schools may prove to be efficacious. Factors for fostering a caring community in a school setting included: (a) establishing trust

and support, (b) developing a sense of common good (c) defining responsibility in terms of personal and group accountability, (d) maximizing involvement, (e) building *esprit de corps*, (f) establishing honesty through open communications, and (g) connecting with extended neighborhood and community (Splittgerber & Allen, 1996). While cultivating family-like relationships within alternative schools appeared conducive toward effective organizational activity (Kellmayer, 1995), promoting prosocial relationships between traditional and alternative schools likewise advanced effective school activity (Knutson, 1996).

## **Case Study Summary**

Acting as the director-teacher seeking to transform a school-within-a-school alternative education program under scrutiny to bolster student performance, the researcher followed mixed-methods case study procedures, and corroborated and extended Raywid's (1994) typology describing alternative schools and related effectiveness. In addition to sampling student and parental, guardian, and volunteer characterizations of program activity through questionnaires at the beginning and end of the research period, the researcher collected, annotated, coded, and recoded case study data informational bits from documents, observation logs, and interviews using NVivo software to detect themes. The thematic characterizations included coding program activities reflecting propositions, Raywid's (1994) typology, Danielson's (2002) school improvement rubrics, and types of participatory activity. The research focus was on detecting typological indications while transitioning an organization toward improving student performance. Through this process, the researcher corroborated and extended Raywid's (1994) typology with a new type of alternative school offering significant implications for interested policymakers, administrators, and educators.

## **Propositions**

The transition of the alternative education program from a type III to type I that corroborated Raywid's (1994) typology should evince an incremental change of characterization of the program's primary focus from meeting students' social, emotional, and basic academic needs toward a thematic emphasis on achievement and enrichment, and changing curricular activity from having a remedial focus toward a participatory, problem-posing learning approach. Some alternative propositions that disputed or extended Raywid's (1994) typology should show continuing or evolving characterization of the focus of program activity as behavioral modification or the focus of the program's instruction as lacking personal or social relevance.

## **Problem Statement**

The alternative school offers an option for disaffected and disenfranchised students who would otherwise drop out of school. For the past 30 years, a growing number of alternative schools across the United States have helped at-risk students achieve academic success (Barr & Parrett, 2001; Lange & Sletten, 2002; Meyers, 2001; Reimer & Cash, 2003). There has been extensive inquiry into a variety of alternative schools describing effective practices by approach,

such as Raywid's (1994) typology advancing alternative school effectiveness by type I, transformative; type II, punitive; and, type III, therapeutic (Kellmayer, 1995; Lehr & Lange, 2000, 2003; Raywid, 1994). However, there has been little formal inquiry into corroborating, disputing, or extending Raywid's (1994) typology as means to describe and promote effective alternative school practices. A case study was conducted in order to confirm, challenge, or expand this typology in a natural and unique setting while leadership and managerial practices were introduced to transform an alternative education program from a marginally effective type III to a more effective type I approach as presented by Raywid's (1994) typology.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the mixed-methods case study was to explore Raywid's (1994) alternative school typology through inquiry of leadership and managerial practices used during a transition from a type III therapeutic to type I transformative program for an inclusive dropout prevention alternative middle and high school program that serves 65 students in northeastern Arizona. The researcher of this study used a single-case design to provide a holistic perspective of transformational activities of an alternative education program. Through inquiry methods involving direct and participant observation, documentation, questionnaires, and interviews, the study corroborated and expanded Raywid's (1994) typology.

## **Significance**

As contemporary alternative education programs are highly adaptive to circumstances (Cox, 1999; Duke & Griesdorn, 1999; Lehr & Lange, 2003; Tobin & Sprague, 2000), the boundaries between these programs and respective context appeared to be less than clear. Thus, empirical inquiry through the case study methodology appeared appropriate as this study determined whether Raywid's (1994) typology was sufficient or whether some alternative set of explanations was more appropriate (Yin, 1994). As the leadership of the alternative education program attempted to transform an inclusive alternative education program, a unique opportunity emerged for contrasting program effectiveness along Raywid's (1994) typology. School leaders, practitioners, and participants benefited from the emerging explanations surrounding alternative education activity.

## **Case Study Findings**

The case study's findings include typological and propositional characterizations. In addition, the researcher found an emergent fourth type of alternative school titled *student-focused*.

## **Raywid's Typology and Effective School Practice**

As the case study data projected, Raywid's (1994) typology largely described alternative education program practices. The case study data advanced a participatory image of the alternative education program with a staff that appeared to have departed from traditional practices using negotiated and consequential means and goals while focusing on meeting and challenging students' basic and, in some cases, advanced social, emotional, and academic needs.

During and at the end of the research period, within Raywid's (1994) typology, the program seemingly emerged predominantly as a type III rehabilitative school with participatory regard including aspects of type I and type II features. The staff departed from traditional instructional approaches and began to ease in challenging activities. Participatory characterizations suggested that the staff established and refined behavioral management approaches to foster student self-management. In addition, the program staff sought to meet student needs through adaptive practices and individualized placement at the alternative program, at the regular school, or both. From a student-focused type IV perspective, behavior management prominently appeared as a driving characteristic along with attendant organizational patterns including *behavior management*, *relational*, *adaptive*, and *another chance* (Table 1).

**Table 1**

Research period typological coding.

	References
Type I - Transformative	
Fulfilling	5
Challenging	15
Popular	3
Choice	6
Innovative	3
Departure	16
Total	48
Type II - Punitive	
Skills and drill	1
Behavior modification	8
Last chance	5
Total	14
Type III - Therapeutic	
Rehabilitation	42
Remediation	15
High maintenance	11
Total	68
Type IV - Student-Focused	
Behavior management	60
Relational	7
Adaptive	36
Another chance	8
Total	111

As characterized by participatory sampling through questionnaires, the program appeared to have remained well regarded with relevant instruction and continuing challenges in program areas

involving opportunities for learning and climate. Questionnaire data collected at the beginning and end of the research period included participatory characterizations through *School Effectiveness Questionnaires* (Baldwin, Coney, Fardig, & Thomas, 1993; Baldwin, Coney, & Thomas, 1993) of program activity as noted in Tables 2-11. Respondents were instructed to score questions along the following Likert scale: 1 – strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neutral (parent edition)/no opinion (high school student edition), 4 – agree, and 5 – strongly agree. T-tests were completed by characterization to determine significant mean differences of interpreted program activity between pre-transitional (September 2003) and transitional (December 2003) periods.

### **Behavior Management**

As determined through case study evidence relating to classroom management practices and individual contracts negotiated between staff and high school students, *behavior management* emerged as a consideration not listed in Raywid's (1994) typology. *Behavior management* appeared to have projected staff intentionality toward promoting student self-management and self-discipline. Further, *behavior management* seemingly emerged as a program focus toward managing participatory relationships and activities with emphasis towards negotiating, promoting, and educating appropriate behaviors on individual and group bases.

### **Relational**

As shown through case study evidence relating to participatory relations, particularly between staff and students and their families, *relational* activity seemingly manifested as a characteristic not made explicit in Raywid's (1994) typology. Relational activity seemingly advanced staff intentionality towards fostering and bolstering participatory trust and dialogue as precursors for sustained academic activity.

### **Adaptive**

As illustrated through case study evidence relating to program flexibility and individualization, *adaptive* surfaced as an organizational trait not addressed in Raywid's (1994) typology. *Adaptive* appeared as the staff's response to a variety of student dispositions, needs, and goals.

### **Another Chance.**

As noted through case study evidence relating to programmatic efforts to attract and support school dropouts seeking school opportunities, *another chance* seemingly manifested as an organizational feature not made clear in Raywid's (1994) typology. The program's staff apparently sought to serve students who had not previously experienced success in academic settings in congruity with the organizational emphasis for offering academic opportunities to prevent dropout activity and return dropouts to school.

### **Extension of Raywid's Typology**

Raywid (1994) synthesized and described three types of alternative schools through metaphors, intentions, foci, and assumptions, as summarized in Figure 2.

**Table 2**

Student characterization of program's positive school climate.

	December 2003 N = 26		September 2003 N = 31	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Teachers and students at my school trust and respect each other.	3.69	0.97	3.93	0.81
2. Teachers are approachable, so I feel comfortable asking for help.	4.42	0.76	4.61	0.80
3. Absenteeism is not a problem at my school.*	3.72	0.98	3.64	0.64
4. The school rewards student and teachers for their achievements.**	3.77	0.76	3.93	0.81
5. Students and teachers at school take good care of the school building and grounds.	4.19	0.85	4.32	0.65
6. Students feel safe at school.	4.35	0.80	4.10	0.98
7. Students are proud of the appearance of the school building/grounds.	4.27	0.72	4.19	0.83
8. Teachers care about their students as individuals.	4.23	0.91	4.55	0.57
9. Teachers like the subjects they teach.	4.11	0.77	4.10	0.79
10. Students are proud to be at this school.	4.65	0.56	4.23	0.84

\*December 2003 N = 25.

\*\*September 2003 N = 30.

Note: There was no significant effect for means difference,  $t(10) = -0.27$ ,  $p < .05$ .**Table 3**

Parent/guardian/volunteer characterization of program's positive school climate.

	December 2003 N = 15		September 2003 N = 10	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. An atmosphere of respect and trust exists in the school.	4.47	0.52	4.20	1.23
2. Social and cultural differences are respected in the school.	4.60	0.51	4.30	0.95
3. Students and teachers have a positive attitude toward school.	4.60	0.63	4.00	1.05
4. Students are recognized for their accomplishment.	4.77	0.43	4.30	0.95
5. School staff members and students work together to keep the school clean and attractive.	4.47	0.64	4.60	0.70
6. Students feel that the school is a good place to be.	4.35	0.70	4.50	1.08
7. The teachers and staff consider the interests and needs of each student.	4.87	0.35	4.30	0.95

Note: There was no significant effect for means difference,  $t(7) = 2.35$ ,  $p < .05$ .**Table 4**

Student characterization of program's frequent assessment/monitoring of student achievement.

	December 2003 N = 26		September 2003 N = 31	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Teachers keep track of how students are doing in their school work.	4.54	0.58	4.48	0.51
2. Grades are a good indication of ability and effort.	4.31	0.88	4.23	0.88
3. Teachers tell students how students are doing on tests/assigned school work.	4.04	0.82	4.26	0.73
4. Teachers keep parents informed about student progress in class.	4.46	0.65	3.93	0.93

Note: There was no significant effect for means difference,  $t(4) = 0.72$ ,  $p < .05$ .

**Table 5**

Parent/guardian/volunteer characterization of program's frequent assessment/monitoring of student achievement.

	December 2003 N = 15		September 2003 N = 10	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. The school keeps track of each student's performance.	4.53	0.52	4.60	0.52
2. Student performance is evaluated in a variety of ways.	4.47	0.64	4.20	0.63
3. Parents are kept informed on how well their children are doing in school.	4.73	0.46	4.80	0.42
4. The school quickly informs parents when their children are not doing well.	4.67	0.47	4.70	0.48
5. Students are kept informed of how well they are doing in school.	4.73	0.46	4.70	0.48

Note: There was no significant effect for means difference,  $t(5) = -0.41$ ,  $p < .05$ .

**Table 6**

Student characterization of program's emphasis on basic skills.

	December 2003 N = 26		September 2003 N = 31	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. The things learned in English class are important.	4.11	0.71	4.19	0.75
2. The things learned in social studies class are important.	3.96	0.96	4.22	0.76
3. The things learned in mathematics class are important.	4.23	0.76	4.29	0.86
4. The things learned in science class are important.	4.08	0.89	4.10	0.79
5. Students will be able to make good use of what they learn in English class.	4.35	0.63	4.26	0.73
6. Students will be able to make good use of what they learn in social studies class.	4.23	0.82	4.03	0.87
7. Students will be able to make good use of what they learn in mathematics class.	4.15	0.97	4.23	0.88
8. Students will be able to make good use of what they learn in science.	4.08	0.93	4.19	0.75

Note: There was no significant effect for means difference,  $t(8) = -0.82$ ,  $p < .05$ .

**Table 7**

Parent/guardian/volunteer characterization of program's emphasis on basic skills.

	December 2003 N = 15		September 2003 N = 10	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Students are taught to apply basic skills and problem-solving skills in reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies.	4.33	0.62	4.30	0.67
2. The school provides learning activities to help students with special needs or interests.	4.60	0.51	4.50	0.71

Note: There was no significant effect for means difference,  $t(2) = 1.86$ ,  $p < .05$ .

**Table 8**

Student characterization of program's maximum opportunities for learning.

	December 2003 N = 26		September 2003 N = 31	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. School offers a variety of elective classes.	3.88	1.23	3.90	0.87
2. Homework assignments are challenging.	3.58	1.03	3.13	1.06
3. Classes are seldom interrupted by activities, announcements, or other people.	3.46	1.44	3.42	0.93
4. Students have the opportunity to work on lessons with other students.	3.88	0.86	3.97	0.80
5. The material presented in class is often interesting.	3.96	0.77	3.74	0.68
6. The way the teachers present the material makes the subjects interesting.	3.61	0.90	3.77	0.67
7. The way my textbooks/workbooks present information helps students learn.	3.88	0.82	4.13	0.76
8. The school provides many extracurricular activities.	3.69	0.97	3.77	0.84
9. Students get what they need from this school.	4.11	0.82	4.39	0.62
10. Teachers know their subject areas well.	4.50	0.58	4.39	0.72
11. Teachers can explain material in a way that I can understand.	4.42	0.70	4.39	0.80
12. Teachers are well prepared.	4.31	0.84	4.19	0.83

Note: There was no significant effect for means difference,  $t(12) = -0.13$ ,  $p < .05$ .**Table 9**

Parent/guardian/volunteer characterization of program's maximum opportunities for learning.

	December 2003 N = 15		September 2003 N = 10	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Teachers spend as much time as needed on instruction.	4.33	0.72	4.40	0.70
2. There are few disruptions to instruction in the school.	3.73	1.03	3.40	0.97
3. Field trips and other activities are used appropriately to support instruction.	4.20	0.77	3.80	0.63
4. School courses are varied to meet the different needs, interests, and abilities of students.	4.73	0.46	4.40	0.70
5. Students have enough opportunities to learn with and from each other.*	4.60	0.51	4.33	0.71
6. Teachers are adequately prepared for their teaching fields.	4.80	0.41	4.40	0.52

\*September 2003 N = 9.

Note: There was no significant effect for means difference,  $t(6) = 3.83$ ,  $p < .05$ .

**Table 10**

Student characterization of program's high expectations.

	December 2003 N = 26		September 2003 N = 31	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Teachers encourage students to do their best on assigned work and tests.*	4.50	0.65	4.47	0.63
2. Teachers expect all students to do well in school.	4.38	0.80	4.52	0.51
3. Teachers challenge students to learn as much as they can.	4.42	0.64	4.29	0.82

\*September 2003 N = 30.

Note: There was no significant effect for means difference,  $t(3) = 0.08$ ,  $p < .05$ .**Table 11**

Parent/guardian/volunteer characterization of program's high expectations.

	December 2003 N = 15		September 2003 N = 10	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. School staff members set high, but appropriate and achievable, goals for students.	4.73	0.46	4.40	0.70
2. Students and parents know what the school expects of them.	4.53	0.52	4.40	0.52
3. All students are expected to work toward high standards.	4.53	0.64	4.40	0.52

Note: There was no significant effect for means difference,  $t(3) = 2.95$ ,  $p < .05$ .**Figure 2. Raywid's Typological Characteristics**

Type	Metaphors	Intentions	Foci	Assumptions
I	Transformative Popular Choice	Thematic Innovative Departure	Long lasting improvement in student performance Shared, experiential, and relevant instruction	School-student match Normal staff-student ratio
II	Last chance Sentenced Assignment Soft jail	Behavioral modification Punitive	Extension of traditional programs	Student deficits
III	Community Referral Therapy	Remedial Rehabilitative Return students to traditional settings	Social-emotional needs Student success while in alternative programs	Student deficits Low staff-student ratios Costly to operate

As description *is* prescription (Edie, 1964; Jacques, 1996; Krell, 1992), Raywid (1994) proposed that type I alternative schools were more effective to operate than types II and III. Considering Heidegger's ontic (Krell, 1992) and Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) metaphorical means toward understanding the limitations and obscurities of seeing past advanced scientific, self-contained forms of truth, Raywid's (1994) typology seemingly offered a comprehensive image of alternative school activity. Yet, there emerged a set of organizational characteristics indicating the presence of a fourth type as summarized in Figure 3.

**Figure 3. Student-Focused Type Characteristics**

Type	Metaphors	Intentions	Foci	Assumptions
IV	Cybernetic Another chance Option	Adaptive Challenging Individualized Cross-boundary student placement	Student-centered Self-management Sensitive to circumstance Performance-based	School-student match Integrated relationship with traditional school

To see past the ontic forms presupposing comprehensive consideration, the scholar and practitioner can rely upon separate scales and images to gain insight into the respective types and related characteristics. Scholar and practitioner regard for the aims and purposes of education hint at the complexities for each advanced alternative school type as tentatively summarized in Figure 4.

**Figure 4. Alternative School Types—Educational Aims and Purposes**

Type	Aims	Purposes
I	Ideological, Progressive	Transformation
II	Behavioral, Orthodoxy	Compliance
III	Humanistic	Participation
IV	Emancipatory, Progressive	Empowerment

### Implications

Even as these aims and purposes are not mutually exclusive, the scholar and practitioner may become concerned with the type I ideological approach residing in a particular theme that may transform *and limit or skew* participatory perspective. In and across context, as participatory interpretations of compliant behaviors may vary from being prosocial to punitive, the scholar and practitioner may be apprehensive about using type II orthodox measures construable as punitive to help guide an immature student toward behaving appropriately. To gain student type III participation-as-therapy, -remediation, or -rehabilitation engenders scholarly and practitioner images about lowered expectations and student defects. What the scholar and practitioner may gain from type IV student-focused

activity involves bolstering participatory investment and voice into and positive control over respective educational expectations and experiences. While the rudimentary nature of this revised typology appears to leave the scholar and practitioner with questions about applicability and efficacy across organizations, a leadership and managerial approach that may significantly bolster student achievement involves establishing and/or incorporating type IV programs and characteristics into alternative education practices. Such practices include promoting student self-management, using performance-based and challenging curricula, nurturing relationships,

developing and providing options, being adaptive to circumstance, and retaining, establishing, or enriching integrative relationships with traditional schools so students may choose to access educational opportunities across boundaries.

### Recommendations for Policymakers, Administrators, and Educators

Interested practitioners should consider integrating alternative education program and traditional school activity. In addition, practitioners should promote, establish, and/or transform curricular and service delivery models toward incorporating self-management, performance-based, challenging, and individualized characteristics.

### Integrating Alternative and Traditional Schools

While the literature readily promotes integrating schools within communities for purposes of improving school and student performance (Danielson, 2002; Lambert, 2003; Leiding, 2002; U.S. Department of Education, 2002), what appears to be missing is the school within the community. As alternative schools tend to operate as stand-alone organizations separate from traditional schools for a variety of reasons, the advantages of shared economies-of-scale, educational opportunities, and social participation and dialogue across school boundaries diminish or disappear. The at-risk student who takes advantage of the opportunity to and succeeds in alternative *and* traditional school settings will come away with different and improved academic and social experiences and expectations. For traditional school participants not trapped into negative perceptions about alternative schools and students, working along with reform-minded alternative school staffs and serving successful alternative students should spark opportunities demonstrating the

value of adaptive and nontraditional administrative and educational approaches benefiting a variety of students in and out of the alternative school system. There are, of course, challenges toward this integrative relationship as alternative and traditional school activities do emerge ontologically as different and potentially oppositional.

Without a shared vision and clear communication between leaders and key staff of traditional and alternative schools, there appears to be little chance that an effective, integrative relationship between schools will develop. As alternative and traditional schools typically vary approaches for promoting student activity, establishing and refining cross-building expectations becomes important. As demonstrated by the findings in the case study, there are complex and contentious images of the alternative school and student that are role-, relational-, and context-bound. For the traditional schoolteacher who faults the student for not succeeding without introspection, there may be concerns about how that same student is finding success in an alternative school, to include questions about the alternative school's quality. For the frustrated-turned-elated parent who now finds his or her youth engaged in school, and attributes this change in behavior to an alternative school, an entirely different image emerges. In an integrative relationship, paradoxical and postmodernistic demands emerge as traditional and alternative school leaders and staff work toward common ends using uncommon means.

### ***Student-Focused Curricular and Service Delivery Model***

As well substantiated in literature promoting Deweyan educational practices embracing progressive curricular and service delivery approaches, students who find relevance and are involved in the design of their educational processes typically achieve success in school (Barr & Parrett, 2001; Goodman, 1999; Lambert, 2003; Lange & Sletten, 2002; Leiding, 2002). As identified through the case study, characteristics of a student-focused curricular and service delivery model for alternative schools include *behavior management*, *relational*, *adaptive*, and *another chance*. Each metaphor beckons images that have advantages and disadvantages.

### ***Behavior Management***

Dewey (1916) framed instilling discipline in the student not as a matter of imposing consequences but as means to help the student manage self. As amply presented in the findings of the case study, a prominent feature of the cultural system of action under scrutiny included behavioral management characteristics. The student and parent/guardian who invest in the school process by participating in the creation of performance goals and identifying appropriate behaviors probably differ in disposition than the student and parent/guardian who are the recipients of what others value as appropriate. Using individualized contracts and credit maps are powerful means for shifting locus of control toward self-management by cueing performance and helping instill student discipline. Unfortunately, the notion of behavior management carries with it, for some, negative connotations.

Scholarly indignation with type II behavioral modification programs appears based upon the assumption that such programs

use correctional assumptions and processes with little or no regard for adapting educational activity to meet the student's learning needs. The distinction between modification and management may not be clear, even as the former appears as a top-down student repair service while the latter emerges as an approach eliciting the student's participation. Using individualized contracts as basis for addressing problem behaviors stands at odds with traditional classroom management approaches advancing singular rule sets and requires an adroit handling of student and stakeholder regard about discipline matters. Ideally, as the student gains voice, confidence, and control over his or her educational process, problem behaviors diminish and desist.

### ***Relational***

As suggested by literature describing many alternative school cultures, numerous programs exude a warmth and friendliness where students feel welcome (Bailey & Stegelin, 2003; Guerin & Denti, 1999; Kellmayer, 1995; Leiding, 2002; McGee, 2001). The case study data suggest that developing trust between the student and staff through dialogue usually precedes sustained student productivity. As each student is valued through staff regard over matters academic and personal, the student finds a connectedness and anchor within the alternative school and one or more caring, adult mentors. Staff-student ratios facilitating ready access are an important variable for type IV alternative schools.

### ***Adaptive***

As organizations evolve in today's postmodern world, there emerges a compelling need for personalized and contextually sensitive approaches that dignify the participants (Handy, 1996). As such, the effective alternative school is the postmodern response to the traditional school that relies upon bureaucratic models of yes-teryear, as efficiency, consistency, and standardization are prized curricular and service delivery activities. Student performance is linked with how well the alternative school staff is able to engage respective dispositions and needs (Barr & Parrett, 1997). Toward this end, the use of relevant, experiential, challenging, and performance-based curricula bodes well for improving student performance in type IV alternative schools. Such an approach is incongruent with Carnegie units, scripted course materials outlining activities by time allocations, and grade-level specified activities. For an integrative relationship between traditional and alternative schools, arranging dissimilar curricular and service delivery models constitutes leadership and managerial challenges that are still nonetheless doable and, importantly, beneficial for the student at risk.

### ***Another Chance***

Lange and Sletten (1995, 2002) advanced a fourth type of alternative school titled *second chance*. As Lange and Sletten (1995) emphasized the remedial and social-emotional focus of such programs, Raywid's (1994) model appeared to remain unchanged. The type IV student-focused type, by contrast, focuses toward empowering and emancipating the student who has not previously had success in academic settings. Still, Lange and Sletten (1995, 2002) presented an important alternative school dimension not explicitly

addressed in Raywid's (1994) typology, and that concerns how many alternative schools offer students additional chances to achieve academic goals. Except for the rarest of circumstance as a student may present a significant threat to the safety of others or self, limiting student opportunities through denying entry into school to engage in and grow from prosocial, educational activity appears counterproductive for the student and society at large. While the term *second chance* suggests egalitarian regard for the student at risk, it may limit the number of opportunities a student at risk may need to succeed. *Another chance*, on the other hand, signifies an alternative school approach that seeks to truly leave no child behind.

## Summary

As the policymaker, administrator, and educator organize alternative schools based on respective experiences and expectations, consideration should include regard for an expanded typology characterizing and advancing effective practices. As alternative education has emerged as one potentially robust approach for intervening in and preventing dropout activity, questions relating to school organization and curricular and service deliveries remain important.

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