PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS REGARDING THE IMPORTANCE AND EXISTENCE OF RESEARCHED-BASED PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS IN ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS AND TEACHER’S PERCEPTIONS OF EFFICACY IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

Robert Lowerre
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PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS REGARDING THE IMPORTANCE AND EXISTENCE OF RESEARCHED-BASED PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS IN ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS AND TEACHER’S PERCEPTIONS OF EFFICACY IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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Abstract

PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS REGARDING THE IMPORTANCE AND EXISTENCE OF RESEARCH-BASED PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS IN ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF EFFICACY IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

Robert Craig Lowerre, Ph.D.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2010

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The purpose of this research was to determine teachers’ perceptions of the degree to which research-based characteristics exist in alternative high schools and programs in the Commonwealth of Virginia and the importance of these characteristics to effective education. In addition, this research investigated whether or not these perceptions were related to the teachers’ perception of efficacy. These seven characteristics were (a) clearly identified enrollment criteria, (b) low ratio of student to teachers, (c) one-to-one interactions between staff and students, (d) social skills instruction, (e) effective academic instruction, (f) parental involvement and parental support programs, and (g) specific training for teachers who are working with at-risk youth.

Alternative school teachers were also administered the short form of the Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale that is specifically designed to assess the respondents’ perceptions of their self-efficacy as teachers.

The data show that alternative school teachers in Virginia ranked “low student to staff ratio” as the most important and “parental involvement and parental support programs” as the
least important research-based characteristics for the academic focus of their schools. It was also evidenced by the data that none of the research-based characteristics were shown to have “strong evidence” of existence in Virginia’s alternative schools and programs. Finally, the data showed that there is a positive correlation between the existence of the research-based characteristics and the reported self-efficacy of the alternative school teachers.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Different forms of alternative education have been in existence for decades. Almost as soon as education became formalized, a need to find different ways to teach those students who were not able to learn in a traditional learning environment became apparent. One could even make a strong argument that the one-room schoolhouses were a form of alternative education due to the fact that one teacher taught many grade levels and subjects at the same time. Despite the differentiation of instruction, many students were still removed from educational environments if they failed to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner both in the areas of academic achievement as well as behavior (Lange & Sletton, 2002).

Over time, separate alternative schools and programs were created to provide an education to those who had been unable to function in the traditional comprehensive environment. The role of the alternative school has changed from being a place where students with learning differences went to school to a place where students with behavior problems, or in danger of dropping out of school were sent (Lange & Sletton, 2002).

During the 1980s, the public began to demand a more measurable level of accountability from the public school districts. Despite an overall reduction, since the 1960s, in reported drop-out rates (Hollinger, 1996), reports such as *A Nation at Risk* (U.S. Department of Education, 1983) and legislation such as *Goals 2000* (U.S. Department of Education, 1994) painted a bleak picture of America’s future due to a perception of failing schools. Out of this era
came the accountability movement. In response, the Commonwealth of Virginia developed and adopted the current Standards of Learning and created testing benchmarks for school accountability (Virginia Department of Education [VDOE], 2008).

From the mid 1990s, the state Standards of Learning tests became the main measure of a school’s success in Virginia (VDOE, 2008). However, for many students, a 65 multiple choice question test may not be the only way to assess student learning (Powell, 2003). In addition, the requirement for earning a standard high school diploma was increased to include the completion of 22-credit bearing courses and success on at least six Standards of Learning End-of-Course Assessments (VDOE, 2008). All 50 states followed suit (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2010). As this process moved forward during the late 1990s, many students who were unable, or unwilling, to meet the established standards either dropped out or transferred to alternative schools (Gregg, 1999).

In 2001, the Superintendent of Public Instruction for Virginia released a memorandum stating: “Special purpose schools such as regional, special education, alternative, or career and technical schools that serve as the student's school of principal enrollment shall be evaluated on standards appropriate to the programs offered in the school and approved by the Board prior to August 1 of the school year for which approval is requested. Any student graduating from a special purpose school with a Standard, Advanced Studies, or Modified Standard Diploma must meet the requirements prescribed in 8 VAC 20-131-50” (VDOE, 2001). In doing so, an alternate path to accreditation was created. Schools would be allowed to work in partnership with the Virginia Department of Education to determine a way of assessing the school’s standards and programs that included a broader view than just the success rate on the Standards of Learning.
assessments. However, federal legislation passed in the same year began to restrict the flexibility offered by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 set performance and participation benchmarks to be used for determining the success of public schools and public school divisions. The standard is measured by a school’s Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) toward the goal of 100% success on end-of-course testing in the core content areas of English, mathematics, science and social studies as well as student performance indicators in nonacademic areas such as student attendance and graduation rate (Goldhaber, 2002). The Virginia Department of Education had allowed for the use of an alternate path to accreditation for “special purpose” schools; however, this is not recognized at the federal level (VDOE, 2001). Thus, alternative high schools in Virginia are still held to the same federal standards as their comprehensive counterparts.

Alternative high schools provide different approaches to provide instruction and to support students who have been unsuccessful with the traditional pedagogical model of teacher-driven instruction. These approaches have included an emphasis on vocational training (Grubb, 1992), smaller class size (Zimmer, 2003), specialized magnet programs (Dayton, 1992), increased use of social services and outreach programs (Henn-Reinke, 1991), adaptation of curriculum to reach unmotivated or disinterested students (Toby & Armor, 1992) as well as other methods to provide students the opportunity for success.

Wiseman (1996) researched the characteristics of alternative schools in North Carolina to determine the perceptions of teachers and administrators of these characteristics in terms of their importance to alternative programs as well as their existence in their schools. Wiseman found that there were significant gaps in perception between teacher and administrators with regard to the existence and importance of many program characteristics in alternative schools. The study
was limited to alternative schools in North Carolina, was conducted prior to the implementation of the accountability standards of NCLB, and did not try to assess the impact of the existence of these characteristics on teacher efficacy (Wiseman, 1996). Very little research has been conducted in the field of alternative education program characteristics since the introduction of NCLB.

Statement of the Problem

Under the NCLB legislation there is an expectation that all students, regardless of race, gender, economic class, limited English proficiency status, or any other defining factor will be able to pass assessments in the core academic areas by the year 2014. This standard applies to all schools, whether they exist in affluent neighborhoods or areas of economic stress. It applies to large comprehensive schools with traditionally high graduation rates to impoverished rural schools with high dropout rates, as well as to inner-city urban schools with low levels of measurable achievement. NCLB is designed to hold all schools accountable for improving student achievement at acceptably measurable levels (United States Department of Education, 2001).

While school districts have been required to place an emphasis on standardized tests, many students have been unsuccessful in these environments (Aron, 2003). Depending upon the policies of the individual school districts, students who are failing to perform at an acceptable level may apply to an alternative school, or be placed by the discretion of the superintendent. These schools can be defined as “alternative” because they have programs and characteristics that may not be found in the comprehensive schools (Hosley, 2003). However, despite the fact that many alternative schools are populated by students who were previously unsuccessful in academic achievement, they are held to the same standards as the traditional comprehensive
schools (VDOE, 2008). The review of the literature reveals that a fundamental difference between alternative and comprehensive schools is the degree to which certain research-based characteristics exist and alternative approaches to education are evidenced (Aron 2003; Hosley, 2003; Tobin, 1999).

The rationale for conducting this study lies in the question of what research-based characteristics are perceived to be of importance for alternative schools in Virginia. Very little research has been conducted in the area of teacher perceptions of research-based characteristics of alternative programs. Additionally, minimal research has been conducted to determine if teachers’ perceptions of these characteristics impact a teacher’s perception of efficacy. Wiseman (1996) conducted research into these issues, but the study was limited to North Carolina’s public alternative schools. The study predates NCLB and whatever changes that legislation may have brought to the alternative schools. This research intends to build upon Wiseman’s work and expand the research into Virginia’s public alternative schools in the post NCLB world as well as to look at possible relationships between the existence of these research-based characteristics and teacher efficacy.

Purpose

Lange and Sletton (2002) identified characteristics of effective alternative education programs that included: (a) clearly identified enrollment criteria, (b) low ratio of student to teachers, (c) one-to-one interactions between staff and students, (d) social skills instruction, (e) effective academic instruction, (f) parental involvement and parental support programs, and (g) specific training for teachers who are working with at-risk youth. These will be referred to in the following as “research-based program characteristics.”
The purpose of this research is to determine teachers’ perceptions of the degree to which research-based characteristics exist in alternative high schools and programs in the Commonwealth of Virginia and the importance of these characteristics to effective education. In addition, this research will investigate whether or not these perceptions are related to the teachers’ perception of efficacy.

Research Questions

1. What is the degree to which research-based program characteristics are perceived by teachers as important to alternative high schools and programs in Virginia?

2. What research-based program characteristics are perceived by teachers to exist within academically-focused alternative high schools and programs in Virginia?

3. Are there regional differences in perceptions of teachers regarding the degree of existence and the importance of research-based program characteristics in academically-focused alternative high schools and programs in Virginia?

4. Is there a relationship between the perception of teachers regarding the degree of existence of research-based program characteristics in their alternative school or program and the teachers’ perceptions of self-efficacy?

Literature/Research Background

A review of the literature reveals that alternative schools and programs have evolved from being largely based on religious or fundamental differences between small groups and the larger institutions of public school divisions to an approach that is designed to provide the individual student with an alternative school setting to the comprehensive school experience. During this shift in focus, schools began to be held to a higher level of accountability that has culminated in the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act. All schools are required to adhere to
state standards and assess at least 95% of all students, regardless of disability, race, or English language proficiency level. Alternative schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia are held to the same standard, unless they request and develop an alternative pathway to accreditation that is approved by the Virginia Department of Education as previously discussed.

As this increased level of accountability was brought to bear upon alternative schools, many have chosen to become “programs” instead of “schools” to avoid the requirement for mandated state assessments and the penalties that follow when the standards are not met. The Commonwealth of Virginia does not require a program to meet the same accountability requirements as it does a school. Many programs have special purposes that may go beyond the comprehensive academic nature of schools. However, many of these programs still maintain an academic focus. Other alternative schools have chosen to attempt to meet the same requirements as any comprehensive school, rather than change over to a program status.

Those alternative schools and programs that remained focused upon academics to meet these standards have found that different approaches to educating the student who had not experienced academic success in the comprehensive school had to be developed. The literature review yielded several distinct strategies that have been employed to meet this goal. They are as follows: clearly identified enrollment criteria, low student-teacher ratios, opportunities for one-to-one interactions between teachers and students, an emphasis on social skills instruction, a commitment to effective academic instruction, parental involvement and support programs, and specific training for teachers who are working with at-risk youth.

Wiseman (1996) conducted a study in North Carolina alternative schools and programs that identified the relevance and frequency of specific program characteristics. The study was limited to North Carolina alternative schools and programs and did not seek to identify any
relationship between specific characteristics and the success of the alternative school or program. This study will identify the existence of research-based characteristics of alternative schools and take the next step to identify any relationships between these characteristics and the perceived efficacy of teachers in alternative schools and programs that have an academic focus.

Methodology

In order to answer the four research questions, the methodology that was employed was quantitative. The intent of this study is to generalize the results to the four alternative high schools in Virginia as well as the 30 regional alternative education programs, as identified by the Virginia Department of Education, that exist on the high school level. The researcher surveyed the alternative high schools and programs in the Commonwealth of Virginia using a cover letter and survey. The survey was administered utilizing an online format.

This study’s survey addressed seven research-based program characteristics. The survey asked teachers to rate the importance of each characteristic as it applies to their alternative school or program and then to rate the degree to which each of those characteristics actually exist in their alternative high schools or programs. Next, questions designed to measure the teacher’s perception of efficacy were asked. This was followed by a free-response section to allow for the respondent to add any additional components that he or she felt were essential to their schools or programs. The data were analyzed using SPSS and reported.

This study will help identify and determine the importance of research-based characteristics in alternative high schools. Due to rising accountability standards, many school districts are modifying existing alternative programs, and in extreme cases, eliminating them. Reporting the results of the research will be beneficial, and the study is greatly needed, as very little research exists regarding the actual use of research-based best practices in alternative high
schools and programs. This research will add to the body of knowledge regarding whether research-based characteristics of alternative schools are perceived to be important by teachers and to what degree these characteristics are present in the alternative schools and programs in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Additionally, it will determine if teachers’ perception of efficacy is impacted by the existence, or lack of existence of these characteristics. At the conclusion of this study, the researcher hopes to have (a) reported valuable data on the often neglected topic of the existence and importance of research-based best practice characteristics in alternative high schools, and (b) given local school districts important information about research-based effective practices that school leaders can use to improve their ability to provide a meaningful educational experience for some of their most challenging students.

**Definition of Terms**

**Alternative high school.** A school that usually takes a nontraditional approach to education which often focuses on providing educational, vocational, and counseling support to students who may otherwise drop out of school (Lange & Sletton, 2002; Hosley, 2003).

**Alternative school as defined by the Commonwealth of Virginia.**

Defined in the broadest sense, alternative education involves learning experiences that offer educational choices which meet the needs of students with varying interests and abilities. Alternative education offers choices in terms of time, location, staffing, and programs.

Alternative education programs must be designed to help students acquire the knowledge and develop the skills and attitudes reflected in the goals of education for Virginia's public schools. Alternative education programs already exist in many schools in the state. Among them are programs for the handicapped, for gifted and talented students, and for students enrolled in vocational education classes; however, alternative education, in the broadest sense, is not limited to these programs.

The courses offered shall be approved by the local school board in accordance with regulations of the Board of Education.

If regular high school credit is awarded to students in the alternative programs, regulations of the Board of Education shall be applicable.
Instructional personnel used in alternative programs shall be certified if any portion of their salaries is derived from public funds (Code of Virginia).

**Alternative program.** A stand-alone learning environment with the same characteristics as an alternative high school, but without the accountability requirements regarding the passing rates of end-of-course assessments. For the purpose of this study, the alternative program must exist as its own entity and not fall into the category of a “school within a school.”

**Comprehensive high school.** A school that includes grades 9 through 12 having a primary focus on academic training for the purpose of students entering into institutions of higher education, obtaining productive employment, and contributing to society as a good citizen. Assignment to these schools is based upon geographical location rather than a student’s unique individual educational need (Aron, 2003).

**Research-based characteristics.** Characteristics of alternative high schools that can be found in best practices of alternative education research. For the purpose of this study, these characteristics are as follows: (a) clearly identified enrollment criteria, (b) low ratio of student to teachers, (c) one-to-one interactions between staff and students, (d) social skills instruction, (e) effective academic instruction, (f) parental involvement and parental support programs, and (g) specific training for teachers who are working with at-risk youth.
CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Overview

The literature involving the combination of research-based program characteristics of alternative education is growing, but remains somewhat limited. While alternative educational programs have existed for some time, researching best practices and providing research-based programs is relatively new. Additionally, accountability programs that are developing ways to assess alternative programs that are outside the traditional standardized testing measures are in their infancy. Therefore, a brief history of alternative education will begin this literature review. This will be followed by a review of the research that has been completed in the area of alternative education practices. Several areas that have been identified by multiple researchers will be discussed in depth.

A History of Alternative Education

Alternative education as a concept began as a reaction by religious groups to the doctrine of compulsory education. Along with compulsory education came an attempt to mandate a set of universal Protestant values upon all students. Many fundamental religious groups, particularly those that were outside the mainstream set of Christian beliefs, were opposed to this. One opponent of compulsory education was Brigham Young, an early leader of the Mormon church, who in 1877 stated that he was opposed to free education as much as he was opposed to taking away property from one man and giving it to another (Witte, 2008).
Tyack (1974) writes extensively of the “cultural conflicts” that defined the educational experience of many school districts. Immigrant families needed to preserve their culture through language and custom and stop the attempts of the authorities to remove that element from the public school. Dominant ethnic groups wielded the power to have pieces of their heritage put into the curriculum of a school, and in some unique cases actually taught in the native language of the students. However, by the 1890s nativists had managed to push the foreign languages out of the public schools, and English became the language of instruction (Tyack, 1974).

A natural result of these exclusions of religion and culture was for the minority groups to form their own schools. While fairly common today, it was not without great struggle that minority groups gained the right to educate their children outside of the compulsory public education system (Tyack, 1974).

A series of U.S. Supreme Court decisions made creating educational alternatives a slow but steady process. In *Mormon Church v. United States* (1890), the court held that the U.S. government could take privately held land and use it to create public schools. In this case, land that was held by the Mormon Church was forcibly seized by the federal government for the purpose of building government schools. While this was specifically related to land in the Utah Territory gained from the Mexican War, it still signaled that the U.S. government did not respect the claims of religious minorities (Quaqua Society, 2004).

In *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (1925), the U.S. Supreme Court struck down as unconstitutional an Oregon State compulsory school attendance law that stated that all Oregonian children must attend a public school. This U.S. Supreme Court decision established that attendance at private schools, including religious schools, could not be prohibited. This then
opened the doors for home-schooling and other forms of alternative education (Quaqu Society, 2004).

The modern roots of alternative education can be traced to the 1950s. Beginning with the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of 1954, public schools began to feel pressure to educate those who had been marginalized in the past. The 1960s brought forth President Johnson’s “War on Poverty” and with it an attitude of helping the underclass to raise itself through education (Siegel, 2004). By the late 1960s, alternative schools were created with the intent to change the system so that unsuccessful students could find success (Gregg, 1999). Alternative schools generally fell into two categories, those operating within the realm of public schools, and those operating outside the public school setting (Lange & Sletton, 2002).

The first alternative schools that fell outside the public school system were generally referred to as Freedom Schools. Freedom schools were often community-based and served minorities who had been subjected to “oppressive educational practices” (Graubard, 1972, p. 353). These schools were student-centered and virtually curriculum-free. Perhaps the most famous of these schools was founded by A.S. Neill and called Summerhill. Neill is quoted as saying, “My view is that a child is innately wise and realistic, if left to himself without adult suggestion of any kind, he will develop as far as he is capable of developing” (Young, 1990, p. 10). This seemed to be the prevailing attitude in the Free School Movement. Like many Freedom Schools of the time, Summerhill focused on giving children the “freedom to learn and the freedom from restrictions” (Lange & Sletton, 2002, p. 3).

Despite this freedom of thought, most of these schools ultimately failed. Deal (1975, as cited in Lange & Sletton, 2002) states that these failures were caused by the schools’ inability to balance the individualized structure of the schools with the degree of formalization necessary
for their survival. However, these schools laid the foundation for the current alternative
education movement (Lange & Sletton, 2002).

The second category of alternative schools developed from within the public school
system. These schools were often referred to as “open schools.” The basic concept behind open
education is that children learn in different ways at different times based upon the things around
them that are of interest to them (Bader & Blackmon, 1978, as cited in Muir, 2005, p. 1). The
teacher acts as a guide and encourages students to progress at their own pace and develop
independence of thought. “The goal is to develop in the students initiative, creativity, and critical
thinking” (p. 1). Some of the characteristics were very similar to the Free Schools, with the
emphasis on cooperation, self-paced learning, and parent and student choice.

These foundations led to the movement where schools within schools were created.
Magnet schools serve a wider geographic area and usually served a single specific purpose.
Magnet schools often exist as cooperative efforts between adjacent education authorities that
may not be able to finance the school on their own. In some cases, learning centers that also
serve a single purpose were developed within the confines of existing schools and served the
public education students (Lange & Sletton, 2002).

The passage of Public Law 94-142 continued the trend of improvement by providing
more support to those who had been left out of the educational process due to disability. Despite
this federal mandate of providing an equal education to those with disabilities, special education
students often found themselves set apart from other students, sometimes to the point of having
no contact with nondisabled peers at all.

Alternative educational programs fared about the same. While not federally mandated,
they operated in similar fashion as some of the special education programs. The students were
usually separated into programs where the alternative student had limited contact with the rest of his or her peers. In fact, as opposed to the original intent, many of the alternative programs had the effect of trying to change the student to fit into the existing system (Gregg, 1999).

Alternative Schools Today

As alternative education moves into the 21st century, many school districts have gone to “outsourcing” their alternative programs to private, for-profit programs. Many of these programs are very successful due to their extremely small class sizes and nontraditional approaches to education. However, they are expensive and not easily accessed by some of the students who need these programs the most (Zimmer, 2003).

To help with this economic barrier, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has committed over $400 million to “help those often ignored by the traditional education system to graduate and succeed” (Bloom, Thompson, & Ivry, 2010). Perhaps this trend will continue into the future as public school districts find themselves unable to cope with the demands of an increasing number of alternative students.

The first trait of many of the current alternative schools is the small size of the student body. Class sizes are small, with the numbers rarely climbing above 15 students per teacher. There is a focus on one-to-one interaction between the student and the educator (Lange & Sletton, 2002).

A second common trait is that the curriculum tends to be of a basic nature. A focus is placed upon core classes that provide a rudimentary academic knowledge. There are few electives such as foreign language or advanced classes that may earn college credit. However, despite this more conservative approach, some of the most successful alternative schools strive to
“allow opportunities for student success relevant to the students’ futures” (Lange & Sletton, 2002, p. 6).

Above all else, there exists an expanded role for the teacher. An alternative education teacher must be willing to stretch beyond the traditional roles of an instructor and become a mentor, parent figure, and a trusted advisor to the student (Lange, 1998). These characteristics can be found in much of the research on the best practices of alternative schools and will be documented in the following section. Trying to educate a struggling student in a smaller setting that has the same educational characteristics as a comprehensive school will not work (Tobin, 1999).

Public School Accountability in the Commonwealth of Virginia

In 1995, the Virginia State Board of Education adopted revised Standards of Learning (SOL). Following this adoption, the state created the Standards of Learning Assessments in order to determine if the SOLs were being correctly implemented. Both of these programs are directly linked to the state’s Standards of Accreditation, which determines if schools and local school districts are meeting the state requirements for public education (VDOE, 2008).

SOL assessments are given at the end of the third and fifth grades, at the end of each middle school year, as well as at the end of selected core-curriculum high school courses. It is important to note that these scores reflect a minimum standard and should not be viewed as the ultimate goal (VDOE, 2008).

In addition to the individual standards, schools in Virginia must reach certain benchmarks in order to be considered accredited. The current benchmarks require that at least 70% of students tested pass in the four core curriculum areas: English, history, mathematics, and science.
Currently, accreditation falls into one of three categories: “fully accredited,” “accredited with warning,” or “conditionally accredited.”

Fully accredited schools have at least 70% of the students pass the SOL tests in each of the four core-content reporting content areas. Schools that are accredited with warning have failed to meet these requirements in at least one of the four core areas. Upon receiving an accredited with warning label, the school must undergo a process of a state academic review. During this process, representatives of the Virginia Department of Education conduct a comprehensive review of the educational practices of the school. Research-based recommendations are made with regard to improving the quality of instruction. This process may take up to 3 years. If a school continues to perform below the minimum standards, the state may opt to take over and manage the school, or in extreme cases, take over and manage the local school district (VDOE, 2008).

Schools that have been identified as conditionally accredited have failed to achieve the passing benchmark in several areas, or have failed to show significant improvement over time. These schools must apply for their conditionally accredited status and must be willing to work with the VDOE to develop a plan to progress to an acceptable level of improvement. Failure to make an acceptable degree of improvement at this level will lead to a rating of accreditation denied (VDOE, 2008).

From the inception of the SOL and the SOL assessments, all schools, regardless of purpose or demographic enrollment, including alternative schools, were required to meet the accreditation standards. Unfortunately, many alternative schools that were designed to educate disruptive students were unable to meet the minimum standards set forth by the state. In many cases, these schools were either changed into school within a school programs to avoid
accountability requirements or permanently closed (White, 2003). Some districts went as far as to contract out their alternative programs to private, for-profit companies. The commonwealth responded by offering a pathway to alternative accreditation that involved a more comprehensive approach to measuring a school’s success. In 2001, the Superintendent of Public Instruction issued a memo that allowed for an alternate accreditation based on standards that would include other measurements than the exclusive use of the Standards of Learning assessments, but few alternative schools in Virginia participate in this program.

As a result of these accountability requirements, alternative schools must find ways to engage students who have previously not experienced success at the traditional comprehensive schools. Research has shown that there are best practices or characteristics that have been identified to contribute to the success of these alternative students. The following section of the literature review seeks to identify the characteristics that have been found to support the success of these students.

Research-based Program Characteristics for Alternative Education Programs

This section of the review of the literature will focus on the research that has been completed regarding the characteristics of alternative education programs. Included are clearly identified enrollment criteria, low student/teacher ratios, one-on-one interactions between students and staff, social skills instruction, effective classroom instruction, parental involvement and support programs, and specific training for teachers who are working with at-risk youth.

Clearly Identified Enrollment Criteria

Many times, who attends an alternative school is determined by the comprehensive school administration. The students are identified by the comprehensive school as needing an
alternate placement. These identified students are often considered “troublemakers” by their previous schools, if they attended school with enough regularity to be noticed (Hiraoka, 1996). Chronic truancy, excessive discipline problems, or severe emotional disabilities are characteristics of many of the students who attend alternative schools. The comprehensive school educators may often have a punitive view of the alternative schools, and perceiving the problem to be with the student, rather than the school’s failure to provide a pathway for success (Gregory, 2001). Additionally, alternative schools often fail to have the ability to determine the proper time for the entrance of new students. Students are processed into rather than oriented to their new school (Gregory, 2001). While alternative schools are often created to remove disruptive or dangerous students from the comprehensive school setting, a more proactive approach of identifying students who would benefit from an alternative placement should be considered (Tobin, 1999).

Alternative schools need to define their mission and goals in order to effectively inform their enrollment (Lange & Sletton, 2002). Early identification of potential alternative school candidates based upon universal screening of comprehensive school students can help determine situations where an alternative placement would be appropriate. Utilizing teacher discipline referrals, child study results that failed to yield an exceptional education identification, student attendance and truancy records, as well as identifying chronic victims of bullying and harassment can all yield a set of criteria that may help in identifying potential students that would benefit from an alternative program (Tobin, 1999).

Low Student/Teacher Ratios

A low student to teacher ratio is most essential for an effective alternative program (Lange & Sletton, 2002). Small class sizes mean that there is more time for the students and staff
to work together. Adults can assume the roles of mentors and coaches because of this structure (Tobin, 1999). Research findings demonstrate that the most successful alternative education efforts have an average teacher to student ratio of 1 to 16 (Aron, 2003).

Research has found that the size of a school can contribute to the overall alienation of a student from the educational system. The same research found a relationship with the overall size of a school and the number of dropouts (Pittman & Haughwout, 1987). Other research found that smaller schools tended to have less violence (Natriello, McDill, & Pallas, 1990) and experienced a decrease in student discipline issues (Bryk & Thum, 1989).

The small school and class size also allow the teachers and administrators of alternative schools the ability to really get to know the students’ backgrounds, strengths, and weaknesses (Tobin, 1999). This individualized approach can help foster a sense of belonging that may have been absent in the larger comprehensive school environment (Lange & Sletton, 2002).

*One-to-One Interaction Between Teachers and Students*

Closely related to the issue of student to teacher ratios is the affordability of time for one-to-one interactions between the teacher and the student in an alternative educational setting (Powell, 2003). Students who work with a teacher with high expectations and a committed high level of support for the students’ success are more likely to experience an increase in their own level of investment in their success (Duttweiler, 1995).

This emphasis on the positive interactions and relationships between teachers and students can be found often in the missions of alternative schools. A staff that understands the power of positive language while dealing with the students is important to the success of the programs (Kanter, 2001). Teachers must be willing to accept a higher degree of personal responsibility for the students’ success as well as an extended understanding of the role that they
will play in the life of the student. They must also be willing to be persistent with their students and believe that a positive outcome is possible (Lange & Sletton, 2002).

The use of an adult mentoring program is a characteristic of many alternative schools and programs that is effective at improving student achievement; however, a mentoring program must have adequate mentor training in order to be effective (Tobin, 1999). Research has found that a positive mentor, who is actually located on the campus of the school, greatly increases the likelihood that the student will refrain from aggressive behavior while at school; however, it is noted that more research on mentor programs is needed (Tobin, 1999).

**Social Skills Instruction**

Because social skills deficits in school predict future delinquency, instruction in areas of social skills is critical to a successful alternative education program (Walker, Steiber, & Bullis, 1997). The type of instruction may vary depending upon the needs of the students; however, several core concepts appear consistently throughout many alternative school programs.

Conflict resolution skills and teaching interpersonal problem-solving strategies are an important part of successful alternative programs (Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Kazdin, Siegel & Bass, 1992). Combined with effective anger management skills, alternative schools can improve the chances of students’ future successes (Tobin, 1999).

A study conducted over a 12-week period found that by using a social skills program called “Second Step,” violent and aggressive behaviors decreased significantly when compared to a control group who received no additional social skills instruction (Grossman et al., 1997). Social skills programs that focus on the need to replace aggressive behavior with nonaggressive practices have contributed to an overall decrease in aggressive behavior in many alternative school settings (Bullis & Davis, 1996).
Effective Classroom Instruction

Gregory (2001) warns that all too often, alternative schools seldom become complete programs. Instead, they are used to repair gaps in student transcripts or are often reduced to half-day programs. When progress is made with students who are finally experiencing success, they are returned to the home school.

Many of the students who attend alternative schools will need extra academic support (Tobin, 1999). As an alternative to the comprehensive school, the alternative school needs to instruct in a fashion that is different than that of the comprehensive school. Research conducted by Swanson and Hoskyn (1998) indicates that the best instructional practices include the following: a combination of direct teacher-centered and strategy-based student-centered instruction, limiting the task difficulty and number of steps, working with small interactive groups, and utilizing directed response and questioning of students.

One of the major issues facing alternative schools is the transient nature of the students. Schools are often unable to control the entrance time of the students, and records are often delayed or incomplete (Gregory, 2001). Small group or pull out-tutoring has been found to be an effective strategy in order to assess and remediate students (Tobin, 1999).

A variety of program options is also seen as a best practice of an alternative school. Schools often provide instruction that support not only the earning of a high school diploma, but also a General Educational Development (GED) diploma or occupational and skill certification (Aron, 2003). Another key to success is the concept of redesigning the requirements for graduation to include progress in nonacademic areas and developing a more authentic measurement of success than just the use of tests and grades (Tobin, 1999).
Parental Involvement and Parental Support Programs

Family involvement in creating the programming in alternative education was found to be critical in the success of many students (Hosley, 2003). While some programs have invited parental input on an “as-needed” basis, research supports that a more integrated approach will yield better results (Tobin, 1999). Parents of alternative education students often need help in developing parenting skills that will lead to a higher success rate for their children. In order to encourage parents to make these improvements, schools must first be aware of the parents’ needs and develop the institutional skills necessary to develop a collaborative approach to parenting. These skills have been identified in the Awareness Parenting Model as support for parents, attentiveness to parents, responsiveness to parents, guidance for parents, and receptiveness to the emotional needs of parents (Bornstein et al., 1998).

When schools are able to offer the support to parents, research has shown that there can be a significant improvement in student academic achievement and social skills improvement (Bornstein et al., 1998). When schools are unable to offer direct parenting skill support, they can coordinate with local mental health and other professionals to provide this needed support (Walker & Bullis, 1995).

Specific Training for Teachers who are Working with At-risk Youth

Studies have shown that teachers often find themselves unprepared to teach in the challenging environment of alternative education programs. One such study found that there are very few undergraduate or graduate level programs that award degrees in alternative education-related studies. Teachers have reported that the skills needed to successfully teach in the alternative education environment include skills that are not always included in the regular education programs offered by universities (Hosley, 2003).
Specific skills needed to work in an alternative education setting include a wider view of cross-curricular subjects, exceptional classroom management, specialized pedagogical techniques, helping skills, and specific knowledge of factors that contribute to children developing into at-risk students (Hosley, 2003). Additionally, teachers are often placed in alternative education settings rather than choosing to be there on their own (Lange, 1998).

Hosley (2003) reports that many school districts have chosen to utilize teachers with special education training for their alternative education programs. This is not surprising due to the over representation of special education students in alternative education. Hosley also found that despite the increased needs of the students in these settings, school psychologists and social workers were represented at a rate less than one full-time equivalent position per program. Additionally, teachers reported that they had inadequate or no additional preservice training for working in an alternative education setting 43% of the time. Research supports the need for additional training for those working in alternative programs (Hosley, 2003).

Teacher Efficacy

Efficacy is defined by Aiken (1980) as a learned predisposition to respond “positively or negatively to certain objects, situations, concepts, or persons” (Aiken, 1980, p. 2). In other words, it is defined as a person’s attitude or confidence in his or her ability to do a specific task. As it is related to the act of teaching, Hoy (2000) defines teacher efficacy as a teacher’s confidence in his or her ability to promote student learning. Teacher efficacy has been identified as having a powerful effect on teacher success in the sense that a teacher who believes that he or she is able to successfully impact student learning is much more likely to do so and will seek out the professional development that will allow them to change to improve their teaching skills (Bandura, 1977; Henson, 2001). Jerrald (2007) states that teachers with a strong sense of efficacy
are able to exhibit greater levels of organization and preparation, are more open to innovative ideas, and are more willing to try new methods to better address the needs of their students, are more determined and resilient when things do not go according to plan, are less judgmental of students when they make mistakes, and are less likely to refer a student to a special education evaluation. Conversely, teachers with a low sense of self-efficacy are resistant to change, will not seek out ways to improve, and believe that their students will not be successful (Ashton, 1984). A teacher’s belief in his or her own ability has a significant influence upon their effectiveness in the classroom (Gibson & Dembo, 1984).

Several studies have been conducted that have looked at the relationships between different variables and teacher efficacy. These studies have researched how teaching satisfaction (Fritz, Miller-Heyl, Kreutzer, & MacPhee, 2001); teacher certification and degree (Hoy and Woolfolk, 1993), experience (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993); working with special needs students (Stanovich & Jordan, 1998); gender (Haydal, 1992); student behavior (Melby, 1995); school leadership (Adams, 1996); and grade level taught (Larson, 1996), all contribute to impact a teacher’s sense of efficacy.

In the Fritz et al. (2001) study, 241 teachers were given a pretest and a posttest along with a 9-month follow-up study to determine the effectiveness of the “Dare to be You” (DTBY) teacher training program. The DTBY program emphasizes personal self-esteem and locus of control. DTBY is communicated on four levels including enhancement of these attributes in the teacher, classroom strategies to reinforce these attributes, the development of interpersonal skills needed to provide a positive learning environment for the students, and additional curriculum activities.
The Teacher Efficacy Scale (Gibson & Dembo, 1984) was used as the measurement instrument in the Fritz et al. (2001) study. The results of the survey indicated a positive relationship between the teachers who had participated in the DTBY program and their perceived sense of efficacy and teaching satisfaction as compared to their peers who had not received the training. Fritz et al. (2001) hypothesizes that over the course of a school year, teachers lose the “fresh start” enthusiasm. The DTBY training program provided the support necessary to continue to have a strong sense of teaching satisfaction (Fritz et al., 2001).

One of the persistent controversies related to teacher efficacy has been the struggle to develop a universally acceptable measure (Henson, 2001). As a response to this issue, Gibson and Dembo (1984) developed the Teacher Efficacy Scale. This instrument is a 16-item instrument that measures global self-efficacy and is not context specific. This instrument served as the model to which others were compared; however, it was found to have some deficiencies. Specifically, the Teacher Efficacy Scale has been criticized as being more of a measure of locus of control than that of outcome expectancy (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 1998). As a result of this criticism, Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy (1998) developed the Teacher’s Sense of Efficacy Instrument, which was built upon Bandura’s social cognitive theory, to include constructs of mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social and verbal persuasion, and physiological and emotional arousal (Henson, 2001).

This instrument has been found to be both reliable and valid (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001). Positive correlations with other existing instruments indicate construct validity and the reliability was found to be at an alpha level of .90. The Teacher’s Sense of Efficacy instrument was used by the researcher determine the respondents’ sense of efficacy.
The Wiseman Study

Wiseman (1996) surveyed 21 of North Carolina’s 42 alternative programs. The purpose of the study was to identify program characteristics that existed in North Carolina’s alternative high schools. The study compared the existence, importance, and importance of these characteristics as perceived by both teachers and administrators. The means were compared and any gaps of significance were explored and analyzed.

The study looked at the following aspects of alternative schools: school climate, leadership, caring staff, student services, teaching practices, attitudes of the students, and student services. The teachers and administrators were also surveyed on how important they thought that each of these characteristics was in their school as well as the actual existence of each characteristic. Wiseman compared the means using $t$-tests and looked for gaps in perceptions. Additionally, a Kendall’s Tau coefficient test was conducted.

Wiseman came to nine separate conclusions:

- Administrators' perceptions were more positive than teachers' perceptions about existence of program characteristics of alternative schools.
- Administrators and teachers differed significantly in their perceptions of existence of nine of the 40 program characteristics of alternative schools.
- Administrators' perceptions were higher than teachers' perceptions about importance of program characteristics of alternative schools.
- Administrators and teachers differed significantly in their perceptions of importance of five of the 40 program characteristics of alternative schools.
- 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.
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.

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. 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.

Administrators and teachers surveyed exhibit commitment to their alternative school and are anxious to participate in research on alternative schools (Wiseman, 1996, p. 230-243).

Conclusion

While the Wiseman (1996) study was a comprehensive study for its time, it was conducted prior to the full implementation of the NCLB legislation. Additionally, it was limited to the alternative schools in North Carolina and did not study the effect of the existence of these characteristics on perceptions of teacher efficacy. The researcher will use the Wiseman study as a starting point, but build upon it by focusing on research-based program characteristics to determine if such characteristics are present in schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and to what extent the perceptions of teachers of the presence and relevancy of these characteristics impact teacher efficacy.
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes how this research was conducted. Included in this chapter are the following topics: purpose of the study, research questions, selection of sample, research instrument, data collection procedures, and proposed data analysis techniques.

Purpose

The purpose of this research was to determine teachers’ perceptions of the importance of research-based characteristics of alternative schools and their perceptions of the extent to which these characteristics exist in alternative high schools and programs in the Commonwealth of Virginia. In addition, this research investigated whether or not these perceptions were related to the teachers’ perception of efficacy. It is hoped that by identifying the perceptions that teachers have regarding the importance and existence of research-based characteristics in alternative high schools and programs, this research will add to the understanding of what research-based characteristics exists in the alternative schools. Additionally, by determining what, if any, effect that these perceptions had on teacher efficacy, the research will demonstrate the importance of these research-based characteristics.

Research Questions

1. What is the degree to which research-based program characteristics are perceived by teachers as important to alternative high schools and programs in Virginia?

2. What research-based program characteristics are perceived by teachers to exist within academically-focused alternative high schools and programs in Virginia?
3. Are there regional differences in perceptions of teachers regarding the degree of existence and the importance of research-based program characteristics in academically-focused alternative high schools and programs in Virginia?

4. Is there a relationship between the perception of teachers regarding the degree of existence of research-based program characteristics in their alternative school or program and the teachers’ perceptions of self-efficacy?

Methodology

This study used a quantitative approach to collect and analyze the data. The instruments for data collections were an online survey that used a Likert-style instrument, constructed specifically for this study to elicit information on the degree to which research-based characteristics existed in the schools/programs, and their importance. Additionally, the use of the short form of the Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy (2001) survey, Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale, was used to measure teacher perceptions of self-efficacy.

This instrument, an online survey, was designed specifically to assess teachers’ perceptions of the importance of research-based characteristics of alternative high schools, and their perceptions of the extent to which these characteristics exist in alternative high schools and programs in the Commonwealth of Virginia. It consists of three sections. Section A consists of questions designed to identify the respondents’ perceptions of the importance of research-based characteristics shown to be effective at improving student achievement in the school district’s alternative programs. This was followed by section B, which is designed to assess the perceptions of the degree to which these research-based characteristics exist in their alternative high schools and programs. The section C of the survey (the short form of the Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy [2001] Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale) is specifically designed to assess
the respondents’ perceptions of their self-efficacy as teachers. Following the Likert scale question portion of the survey where the respondent identifies the aforementioned characteristics, the respondents have the opportunity to add additional information that they believe to be important and/or in existence in their alternative school or program that were not included in the research-based categories (see Appendix A).

In sections A and B of the survey, the questions are categorized into the seven research-based program characteristics as identified by the review of the literature. Section A of the survey instrument defines the seven categories and gives examples of each to allow the respondent to quantify each category with regard to their academically-focused alternative school or program. Section B of the survey instrument allows the respondent to identify the existence of the characteristics in their academically-focused alternative school or program. The majority of the questions were developed by Wiseman (1996) and reviewed by a panel of experts for content validity. In order to provide for appropriate statistical analysis, additional questions were created using the language and examples that were found in the literature describing the research-based characteristics. Table 1 identifies each question in Section B with the appropriate characteristic.

Section C of the survey is the short form of the Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy (2001) survey Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale. This section consists of 12 questions that are designed to determine the teachers’ perception of their sense of efficacy. Permission to use this survey was received by Anita Woolfolk Hoy, Ph.D., who has been authorized by the developers of the instrument to allow for its use. A copy of her permission in included as Appendix B.
Table 1

Identification of Research-based Characteristics With Survey Questions

**Clearly Identified Enrollment Criteria**

1. Students choose to attend the alternative school or program.

4. Students must meet specifically identified criteria for admission.

15. The school actively recruits students who meet the enrollment criteria.

27. Organizations that recommend students are aware of the enrollment criteria.

**Low Student to Teacher Ratios**

7. Class sizes are maintained at 15 or fewer students.

9. Students work in small groups with their teachers.

23. The student population is at a manageable number allowing for one-to-one interactions between faculty and students.

11. Academic class sizes are smaller than elective class sizes.

**One-to-One Interactions Between Teachers and Students**

2. Students meet on a regular basis with teachers to get academic help and support.

6. Students are able to communicate freely with their teachers.

18. Time is scheduled on a regular basis for students to meet individually with their teachers.

22. Students speak positively about their relationships with the teachers at their school/program.

**Social Skills Instruction**

3. Students participate in a character education program.

13. Counseling sessions that address personal development skills, such as anger management, are regularly scheduled.

16. Students have access to social service providers at school.

25. Students are given the opportunity to learn conflict resolution skills.

Table 1 - continued
Effective Academic Instruction

10. The curriculum provides students with skills that they will need for postsecondary success.

17. Curriculum is individualized for each student.

20. Nontraditional scheduling is available for students.

24. Students have the opportunity to participate in career and technical education classes.

Specific Training for Teachers who are Working With At-risk Students

8. Staff development is scheduled to provide training for teachers working with at-risk youth.

14. Staff receives regular in-service on topics related to working in an alternative school environment.

21. Staff receives regular in-service on instructional best practices.

28. Staff receives training on intervention strategies for working with at-risk youth.

Parental Involvement and Parental Support Programs

5. Parents have the opportunity to attend parent seminars and workshops at school.

12. The school has a documented procedure to direct parents toward community-based resources.

19. Regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences take place.

26. Parents are treated as partners in the education of their children.
A Likert-style quantitative instrument has been consistently used as a measure to determine increments of perception (Nardi, 2006). Creating an opportunity at the end of the survey for the respondent to add any additional comments as a follow-up to the quantitative data will allow the study participant the opportunity to expand upon any of their perceptions or attitudes that may not be addressed in the survey.

Selection of Sample

By accessing the Commonwealth of Virginia’s Department of Education’s (VDOE) website, 132 school divisions were identified. Each of these school divisions fell into one of eight Virginia Superintendent’s Regions (see Figure 1 and Appendix C). These superintendent regions are grouped based on common contiguous geographic areas. These eight regions contain the 132 school divisions. While some of the larger school divisions have their own alternative high schools or programs, many of the smaller districts have combined their resources to create regional alternative programs. Each district’s website is linked to the VDOE site. By accessing the local district’s site, it can be determined if there is an alternative high

Figure 1. Virginia Superintendent Regions
Source: Virginia Polytechnical and State University, Institute for Connecting Science Research to the Classroom.
school or program that exists within the division, or if that division is participating in a VDOE approved regional alternative school or program (see Appendix D).

The sample consisted of all 30 VDOE regional alternative programs and VDOE recognized alternative high schools that have an academic focus. These schools and programs are defined as high schools that are held accountable by earning accreditation through passing the Virginia Standards of Learning, but which enroll students who have been unsuccessful in the comprehensive high school setting. The teachers at the alternative schools or programs were requested to participate. In the event that the local school district had established a cooperative effort with neighboring school districts to create regional alternative schools, those schools were included in the population. Small short-term alternative programs that exist within the confines of an existing school (i.e., a week-long suspension alternative program, etc.) were not included, as they were unlikely to have the degree of autonomy that exists with separate alternative schools.

This sample was selected for two key reasons. First, the number of school divisions within the Commonwealth of Virginia is small enough that all could be included. Second, by including only those schools and programs that have an academic focus, schools and programs that are largely designed for behavior modification were not included in the study. The success of these schools is more difficult to measure empirically and due to their specific nature, some of the research-based characteristics simply may not apply.

Procedures

The first step in the collection of data was to identify each of the school districts that are operating within the Commonwealth of Virginia and determine which had alternative schools and programs. While some school divisions may have their own alternative school or program,
others may combine resources to send students to regional alternative schools or programs. These schools and programs were included in the study; however, small programs that exist within a single high school were not. By utilizing the Virginia Department of Education’s website, the researcher was able to identify these schools and programs and make contact with the appropriate person who had supervisory authority.

Once this person was identified, he or she received an introductory email asking for permission to survey their teachers (Appendix E). The email explained the study and the data collection procedure, included a confidentiality statement and a statement as to the willingness of the researcher to share the results of the survey with the participants at the conclusion of the study. It also requested the person with supervisory authority to respond to the email and identify the number of teachers that work at their school or program.

Those administrators who replied were sent by mail a set of envelopes corresponding to the number of teachers that he or she identified as working at their site. Each envelope contained a card that had a unique web address that took them to the survey. Participants had the opportunity to complete the survey from work or home, as long as they had access to the Internet. The survey contained the informed consent information and the “opt out” language. Because of the need to match the data from teachers to the data from their superintendent’s regions, participant’s responses were identified by superintendent’s region in the form of a code assigned by a third party to their cards containing the link to the survey. These cards were placed in the envelopes by a third party and the researcher was able only to identify the superintendent’s region of origin, not individual teachers of schools. Respondent anonymity was maintained in this fashion while still providing the researcher with the necessary data to complete the study.
After a 10-day period, those administrators that had not responded to the initial request were sent a follow-up email, after which a phone call was made to the administrator to encourage participation.

This survey was piloted at two middle schools in a local school district. Both had been chosen for their convenience to the university as well as to limit reducing the number of potential high school level respondents in Virginia. Approval for conducting the pilot was sought from the research and planning department of the local school division. The data yielded from this pilot was not used in the final data set since these schools are middle schools, not high schools.

**Validity**

According to Royce (2006), validity is the extent to which a research instrument measures its intended purpose. By designing questions that can be easily understood by all respondents, the researcher will establish a degree of validity, but a level of criterion validity is a more desired objective. To achieve this, the survey was reviewed by expert practitioners and piloted with teachers in alternative middle schools to test for understanding. Fowler (1993) states that if all of the respondents and/or reviewers understand the questions in a survey instrument, the likelihood of content validity error existing is lessened.

**Reliability**

Royce (2006) states that an “instrument that consistently and dependently measures some concept or phenomenon with accuracy” (p. 295) is said to be reliable. When the instrument is administered to similar groups, it will yield similar results.

**Data Analysis**

Once the responses to the online survey were received, the data were entered into the SPSS and analysis began.
Research Question 1

Study-wide means for each of the seven research-based characteristics were generated. The Likert scale values for each respondent provided a measure of the degree to which each research-based characteristic is believed to be important. These means were tested for significance of variance and a binary logic model was used to determine a rank order of importance among the means.

Research Question 2

Study-wide means for each of the seven research-based characteristics were generated. The Likert scale values on the seven characteristics provided a measure of the degree to which each research-based characteristic exists in their individual school. These means were compared to an appropriate measure to determine the existence of each characteristic.

Research Question 3

Regional differences for the importance of the research-based characteristics were detected by generating region-wide means and testing them for significance of variance followed by a binary logic model to determine a rank order of importance among the means. The ranks were compared across the regions that had a statistically adequate response rate.

Regional differences for the existence of the research-based characteristics were detected by generating a region-wide mean. The Likert scale values on the seven characteristics provided a measure of the degree to which each research-based characteristic exists in each region. These means were compared to an appropriate measure to determine the existence of each characteristic. The existence of the research-based characteristic was then reported by region.

Research Question 4
A correlation model was developed by comparing each individual teacher’s response as to the existence of the research-based characteristics and their individual score on the Tschannen-Moran and Hoy “Teacher’s Sense of Efficacy Scale” to investigate the relationship between the existence of the research-based characteristics and teacher self-efficacy.

Limitations of the Study

The researcher acknowledges that four critical limitations exist with this study:

1. The researcher is an active principal at an alternative high school. As a result, it was imperative to make every effort to remove any researcher bias. This was accomplished by third party coding during the data collection phase as well as a third party review of the data analysis results.

2. The study can only be generalized to alternative high schools and programs within the Commonwealth of Virginia.

3. The researcher is assuming that all surveyed respondents were honest and accurate in their responses to the survey.

4. It may be very difficult to identify alternative programs that qualify for this study in some of the smaller school districts.
CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

Purpose

The purpose of this research was to determine teachers’ perceptions of the degree to which research-based characteristics exist in alternative high schools and programs in the Commonwealth of Virginia and the importance of these characteristics to effective education. In addition, this research investigated whether or not these perceptions were related to the teachers’ perception of efficacy. This was accomplished by investigating alternative school teachers’ responses to questions regarding the importance and existence of the seven characteristics identified to be of importance to alternative schools and programs. These seven characteristics were (a) clearly identified enrollment criteria, (b) low ratio of student to teachers, (c) one-to-one interactions between staff and students, (d) social skills instruction, (e) effective academic instruction, (f) parental involvement and parental support programs, and (g) specific training for teachers who are working with at-risk youth. Teachers were also administered the short form of the Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy (2001) Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale that is specifically designed to assess the respondents’ perceptions of their self-efficacy as teachers. The research questions were as follows:

1. What is the degree to which research-based program characteristics are perceived by teachers as important to alternative high schools and programs in Virginia?

2. What research-based program characteristics are perceived by teachers to exist within academically-focused alternative high schools and programs in Virginia?
3. Are there regional differences in perceptions of teachers regarding the degree of existence and the importance of research-based program characteristics in academically-focused alternative high schools and programs in Virginia?

4. Is there a relationship between the perception of teachers regarding the degree of existence of research-based program characteristics in their alternative school or program and the teachers’ perceptions of self-efficacy?

Design Overview

This study used a quantitative approach to collect and analyze the data. The instruments for data collections were an online survey that used a Likert-style instrument, constructed specifically for this study to elicit information on the degree to which research-based characteristics exist in the schools/programs, and their importance. Additionally, the use of the short form of the Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy (2001) survey Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale was used to measure teacher perceptions of self-efficacy.

As the completed online surveys were received, the resulting data were entered into the Predictive Analytics SoftWare (PASW)® database. Initially, the data were analyzed by utilizing descriptive statistics for each item on all three parts of the survey, as well as by superintendent’s region for each of the respondents. The respondents were all teachers who taught in an alternative school or programs identified as such by the Virginia Department of Education. Nonparametric statistical measures were used to analyze the data related to each of the research questions.

Results

Respondent profiles and findings related to the four research questions are described in this section. While teachers at alternative schools and programs throughout all of the
superintendent’s regions were invited to participate in this study, the responses were not evenly distributed across the eight regions.

Respondent Profile

Links to the survey were sent to all of the regional alternative schools identified by the Virginia Department of Education as well as the four alternative high schools that still operate as “comprehensive high schools” in terms of Virginia Standards of Learning accountability (N = 34). The principals/administrators forwarded the survey links to the individual staff members at the schools who could choose to participate. Ninety-two surveys were returned (N = 92).

Of the 92 respondents (N = 92), 40 (43.5%) were from Region 1 (Central Virginia to the Tidewater); 7 (7.6%) were from Region 2 (Tidewater and Eastern Shore); 7 (7.6%) were from Region 3 (Northern Neck); 15 (16.6%) were from Region 4 (Northern Virginia); 7 (7.6%) were from Region 5 (Piedmont and Shenandoah Valley); 1 (1.1%) was from Region 6 (Southwestern Central Virginia), 1 (1.1%) was from Region 7 (Southwest Virginia); and 14 (15.2%) were from Region 8 (Southside Virginia). Frequency and percentage of respondents by superintendent’s region are reported in Table 2.

Research Question 1

What is the degree to which research-based program characteristics are perceived by teachers as important to alternative high schools and programs in Virginia? This study investigated the perceptions of alternative school teachers as to the importance of seven characteristics that were found in the literature to be necessary for success of alternative schools and programs. The survey instrument provided the respondent with seven research-based
### Table 2

*Survey Respondents by Superintendent's Region*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Superintendent's Region</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>51.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>58.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>75.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>82.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>83.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>84.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>92</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
characteristics and descriptors that defined the characteristics (see Table 3). The survey can be found in Appendix A. The respondents were given a Likert scale to rate the importance of each characteristic with a 1 identifying the characteristic as “not important at all” and a 5 identifying the characteristic as “very important.” The means of the seven research-based characteristics as rated by the respondents are reported in Table 4.

A repeated measure analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the general linear model was used to evaluate the responses regarding the importance of the seven research-based characteristics to determine if the variability among the means is significant. This model treated the seven research-based characteristics as independent measures related to the concept of Importance. Because this statistical model is using repeated measures from the same respondents, it must be assumed that the relationship between the sets of responses is similar. This concept of sphericity can cause a loss of power that can lead to a Type II error where there is failure to reject the null hypothesis even when it is not true.

In order to test the hypothesis that the variances of the responses were equal, Mauchly’s test for sphericity was conducted. Upon reviewing the results, Mauchly’s test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated with a $p=.000$ (see Table 5).

Since sphericity was violated, a correction to the F ratio must be made to ensure its validity. The estimate of sphericity $\varepsilon = .824$. This indicated that it is appropriate to use the Huynh-Feldt correction. A test of Within Subjects Effects was conducted using the Huynh-Feldt correction to verify that the results were still significant after the correction. The results show that the variability among the means is still greater than would be expected by chance alone $F(4.942, 449.732) = 18.323, p < .000$. 
Table 3

Research-based Characteristics of Alternative Schools as Defined on Survey

1. Clearly identified enrollment criteria

- Students are screened to identify those that would benefit from an alternate placement.
- Mission of the school is defined in order to inform potential students.
- Student data is used to determine appropriateness of enrollment in the alternative school/program.

2. Low student to teacher ratios

- Class sizes are small enough to allow for students and staff to work together.
- Class size allows for adults to act as mentors.
- Teachers have the opportunity to make stronger connections with the students with this structure.

3. One-to-one interaction between teachers and students

- Time is built into the schedule for one-to-one interactions between teacher and student.
- Teachers are able to accept a high degree of responsibility for their students' success.
- An adult mentoring program is available.

4. Social skills instruction

- Conflict resolution skills and interpersonal problem-solving strategies are taught.
- Students are taught anger management techniques.
- Students have the opportunity to participate in group and individual counseling sessions.

5. Effective classroom instruction

- Extra academic support is made available to students.
- Small group or pull out tutoring is available.
- Instructional best practices are utilized in the classroom.
6. Parental involvement and parental support programs

- The school/program offers direct parenting skills support classes.

- The school/program coordinates with outside agencies such as mental health or social services to bring support to parents.

- The school/program has a plan in place to encourage parents to be involved in their child's school.

7. Specific training for teachers who are working with at-risk youth

- Consistent in-service is provided to faculty and staff to support working with at-risk youth.

- Teachers are hired that have experience in working with at-risk youth.

- Teachers are given additional contractual time for training to work with at-risk youth.
Table 4

*Means of the Seven Research-based Characteristics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clearly identified enrollment</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>.994</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low student/staff ratio</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>.618</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-to-one interaction</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>.804</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social skills instruction</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>.865</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective classroom instruction</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>.637</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental involvement</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>1.274</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific staff training</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>1.077</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5

*Mauchly's Test for Sphericity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Within Subjects Effect</th>
<th>Mauchly's W</th>
<th>Approx. Chi Square</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>sig.</th>
<th>Epsilon Greenhouse</th>
<th>Epsilon Huynh-Feldt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factor 1</td>
<td>.464</td>
<td>68.097</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.777</td>
<td>.824</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results of this analysis provided the omnibus clearance to proceed with the Paired Sample \textit{T}-Tests with the post hoc Holm’s sequential Bonferroni approach to control for Type I error. These results indicate that the null hypothesis can be rejected. Significant differences were found between 14 of the 21 pairs of characteristics. The significant differences are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

\textit{Paired Sample \textit{T}-Test Between Pairs of Research-based Characteristics}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{lrrrr}
  \text{Clear} & \text{Identified} & \text{Low} & \text{Student/Staff} & \text{Mean} & \text{SD} & \text{df} & \text{Sig.*} \\
  \text{enrollment} & \text{enrollment} & \text{ratio} & & \text{.37} & \text{.922} & \text{91} & \text{.000} \\
  \text{- Effective} & \text{instruction} & & & \text{.26} & \text{.863} & \text{91} & \text{.005} \\
  \text{Parental} & \text{involvement} & & & \text{.51} & \text{1.181} & \text{91} & \text{.000} \\
  \text{Specific} & \text{Staff Training} & & & \text{.33} & \text{1.060} & \text{91} & \text{.004} \\
  \text{One-to-one} & \text{interaction} & & & \text{.41} & \text{.772} & \text{91} & \text{.000} \\
  \text{Social} & \text{skills} & & & \text{.36} & \text{.793} & \text{91} & \text{.000} \\
  \text{Parental} & \text{involvement} & & & \text{.88} & \text{1.203} & \text{91} & \text{.000} \\
  \text{Specific} & \text{Staff Training} & & & \text{.70} & \text{1.014} & \text{91} & \text{.000} \\
  \text{Effective} & \text{instruction} & & & \text{.30} & \text{.737} & \text{91} & \text{.000} \\
  \text{Parental} & \text{involvement} & & & \text{.47} & \text{1.143} & \text{91} & \text{.000} \\
  \text{Parental} & \text{involvement} & & & \text{.52} & \text{1.084} & \text{91} & \text{.000} \\
  \text{Specific} & \text{Staff Training} & & & \text{.34} & \text{.964} & \text{91} & \text{.001} \\
  \text{Parental} & \text{involvement} & & & \text{.77} & \text{1.214} & \text{91} & \text{.000} \\
  \text{Specific} & \text{Staff Training} & & & \text{.59} & \text{1.007} & \text{91} & \text{.000} \\
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

*Denotes 2-Tailed Significance
To establish an overall table of importance, the 14 instances of significance were ordered by following binary logic where the characteristics were compared to each other in terms of the number of times that the means of each characteristic was found to be significantly greater than each other. A particular characteristic was given a score of 1 if its mean was significantly above the mean of another characteristic, and a -1 if its mean was significantly below the mean of another characteristic. In this way, the ordering of the means was developed. Table 7 shows that “low student to staff ratio” was the highest priority characteristic, and “parental involvement” was the lowest priority characteristic.

Table 7

*Rank of Research-based Characteristics Based Upon Significance of Variance of Means*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>No. of Comparisons Where Mean Was Greater</th>
<th>No. of Comparisons Where Mean Was Smaller</th>
<th>Sum</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low student to staff ratio</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective instruction</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach social skills</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearly identified enrollment criteria</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-to-one interaction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific staff training</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental involvement</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question 2

What research-based program characteristics are perceived by teachers to exist within academically-focused alternative high schools and programs in Virginia? In order to answer this question, the respondents were given 28 questions that provided examples of the seven research-based characteristics. Each research-based characteristic had four questions that were associated with it (see Table 8). Respondents were asked to rate each statement using the following scale: 5 – Always Present, 4 – Usually Present, 3 – Sometimes Present, 2 – Rarely Present, 1 – Never Present. Table 9 lists the seven research-based characteristics and identifies which of the survey items were used as indicators of the existence of that characteristic. The majority of the questions on the survey instrument were developed by Wiseman (1996) and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research-based Characteristic</th>
<th>Corresponding Survey Item Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clearly identified enrollment criteria</td>
<td>1, 4, 15, 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low student to teacher ratios</td>
<td>7, 9, 11, 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-to-one interactions between teachers and students</td>
<td>2, 6, 18, 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social skills instruction</td>
<td>3, 13, 16, 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective academic instruction</td>
<td>10, 17, 20, 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific training for teachers who are working with at-risk students</td>
<td>8, 14, 21, 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental involvement and parental support programs</td>
<td>5, 12, 19, 26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 9

*Combined Means of the Seven Research-based Characteristics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clearly identified enrollment</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low student/staff ratio</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-to-one interaction</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social skills instruction</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective classroom instruction</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental involvement</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific staff training</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
reviewed by a panel of experts for content validity. In order to provide for appropriate statistical analysis, additional questions were created using the language and examples that were found in the literature describing the research-based characteristics.

In order to analyze each characteristic as a single concept, variables were transformed in PASW® by identifying the survey items associated with each characteristic and combining the responses for each research-based characteristic into a single variable. In other words, the responses associated with each characteristic were combined into one sum with a potential response range of between 4 and 20. In order to determine a level that would indicate strong evidence of existence, a mean of at least 12, which is the median between 4 (all four responses of “never present”) and 20 (all four responses of “always present”), was selected. While this cut-off is clearly arbitrary, it appears to be a generous operational definition of “existence.” A score of 12 could be notionally associated with four scores at the descriptor level of “sometimes present.” These means were reported in Table 9.

*Results for Each of the Seven Research-based Characteristics*

As indicated in Table 8, there were four survey items that corresponded to the characteristic of “clearly identified enrollment criteria.” The text of each of the survey items is shown Table 10.

As seen in Table 9, with regard to “clearly identified enrollment criteria,” the mean for all respondents of 11.4 does not satisfy the score requirement discussed above and so does not provide strong evidence of existence of “clearly identified enrollment criteria.”

As indicated in Table 8, there were four survey items that corresponded to the characteristic of “low student to teacher ratios.” The text of each of the survey items is shown Table 11.
Table 10

*Survey Items Addressing the Characteristic of Clearly Identified Enrollment Criteria*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Survey Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Students choose to attend the alternative school or program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Students must meet specifically identified criteria for admission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>The school actively recruits students who meet the enrollment criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Organizations that recommend students are aware of the enrollment criteria.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11

*Survey Items Addressing the Characteristic of Low Student to Teacher Ratios*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Survey Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Class sizes are maintained at 15 or fewer students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Students work in small groups with their teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The student population is at a manageable number and allows for one-to-one interaction between faculty and students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Academic class sizes are smaller than elective class sizes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As seen in Table 9, with regard to “low student to teacher ratios,” the mean for all respondents of 8.7 does not satisfy the score requirement and so does not provide strong evidence of existence of “low student to teacher ratios.”

There were four survey items that corresponded to the respondent’s perception to the characteristic of one to one interactions between teachers and students. They are identified in Table 12.

Table 12

*Survey Items Addressing the Characteristics of One-to-One Interactions Between Teachers and Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Survey Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Students meet on a regular basis with teachers to get academic help and support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Students are able to communicate freely with their teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Time is scheduled on a regular basis for students to meet individually with their teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Students speak positively about their relationships with the teachers at their school/program.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 9, with regard to “one-to-one interaction between students and teachers,” the mean for all respondents of 9.1 does not satisfy the score requirement discussed above and so does not provide strong evidence of existence of “one-to-one interaction between students and teachers.”
There were four survey items that corresponded to the respondent’s perception to the characteristic of social skills instruction. They are identified in Table 13.

Table 13

*Survey Items Addressing the Characteristic of Social Skills Instruction*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Survey Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Students participate in a character education program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Counseling sessions that address personal development skills, such as anger management, are regularly scheduled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Students have access to social service providers at school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Students are given the opportunity to learn conflict resolution skills.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 9, with regard to “social skills instruction,” the mean for all respondents of 11.2 does not satisfy the score requirement discussed above and so does not provide strong evidence of existence of “social skills instruction.”

There were four survey items that corresponded to the respondent’s perception to the characteristic of effective academic instruction. They are identified in Table 14.

As seen in Table 9, with regard to “effective academic instruction,” the mean for all respondents of 8.4 does not satisfy the score requirement discussed above and so does not provide strong evidence of existence of “effective academic instruction.”

There were four survey items that corresponded to the respondent’s perception to the characteristic of specific training for teachers who are working with at-risk students. They are identified in Table 15.
Table 14

*Survey Items Addressing the Characteristic of Effective Academic Instruction*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Survey Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The curriculum provides students with skills that they will need for postsecondary success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Curriculum is individualized for each student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Nontraditional scheduling is available for students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Students have the opportunity to participate in career and technical education classes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15

*Survey Items Addressing the Characteristic of Specific Training for Teachers who are Working With At-risk Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Survey Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Staff development is scheduled to provide training for teachers working with at-risk youth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Staff receives regular in-service on topics related to work in an alternative school environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Staff receives regular in-service on instructional best practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Staff receives training on intervention strategies for working with at-risk youth.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As seen in Table 9, with regard to “specific training for teachers who are working with at-risk youth,” the mean for all respondents of 11.2 does not satisfy the score requirement discussed above and so does not provide strong evidence of existence of “specific training for teachers who are working with at-risk youth.”

There were four survey items that corresponded to the respondent’s perception to the characteristic of parental involvement and parental support groups. They are identified in Table 16.

Table 16

Survey Items Addressing the Characteristic of Parental Involvement and Parental Support Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Survey Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Parents have the opportunity to attend parent seminars and workshops at the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The school has a documented procedure to direct parents toward community-based resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences take place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Parents are treated as partners in the education of their children.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 9, with regard to “parental involvement and parental support groups,” the mean for all respondents of 11.5 does not satisfy the score requirement discussed above and so does not provide strong evidence of existence of “parental involvement and parental support groups.”
As demonstrated by results shown in Table 9, the research-based characteristics, when measured by the respondents as a whole, were not found to have strong evidence of existence in Virginia’s alternative schools and programs. When the data were analyzed on the level of individual respondents, there were some characteristics that were found to have strong evidence of existence. This is addressed in the analysis of research question 3.

Research Question 3

Are there regional differences in perceptions of teachers regarding the degree of existence and the importance of research-based program characteristics in academically-focused alternative high schools and programs in Virginia? Answering this question is problematic due the inadequate response numbers in some of the responding superintendent’s regions. As previously reported in Table 2, only three regions, Superintendent’s Region 1, 4, and 8, had response numbers with an \( N \) greater than or equal to 14. Although numerous efforts to collect additional data from the other regions were made, ultimately, the researcher had to accept that the number of responses was not going to increase. In two cases, Region 4 and Region 5, the researcher was informed that the alternative programs had been closed due to a lack of funds available to maintain them. This may account for the lower responses numbers from these two regions. While Region 4 contains the Northern Virginia school districts, the closing of one of the three alternative high schools in Fairfax County may have been a contributing factor of the low response from that region. Region 5 contains much of the western portion of Central Virginia. Many of the smaller counties combine and send students to one of the regional alternative schools. The closing of one of the regional schools may have contributed to the low response from Region 5.
While the complete question cannot be adequately answered due to an insufficient number of responses from some of the individual districts, some comparisons can be made based on the data from Superintendent’s Regions 1, 4, and 8. A process similar to that which was used to answer research question 1 was used.

The respondents were sorted by which superintendent’s region their school was located. The respondents were given a Likert scale to rate the importance of each characteristic with a 1 identifying the characteristic as “not important at all” and a 5 identifying the characteristic as “very important.” Means were generated, by region, and the ANOVA test was used to determine if the variance among the means was significant. As before, tests for violation of sphericity were also conducted.

Following the ANOVA and sphericity tests, the results, when there were significant results, were ranked in order of perceived importance. These results were compared across the three superintendent’s regions to look for any regional differences.

The existence of the research-based characteristics was also compared across these three regions using the same statistical tests used in answering question 2. Combined means of existence were used for each region and the results were reported. Differences across the three superintendent’s regions were analyzed and reported.

The following tables (Tables 17-30) and findings will compare that data with regard to the degree of existence and importance or research-based characteristics in each of the three regions.
Table 17

Superintendent's Region 1 Means of the Importance of the Seven Research-based Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clearly identified enrollment</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>1.123</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low student/staff ratio</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>.616</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-to-one interaction</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>.656</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social skills instruction</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>.747</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective classroom instruction</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>.540</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental involvement</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>1.280</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific staff training</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>1.049</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As performed in the previous analysis of the combined responses, to test the hypothesis that the variances of the responses were equal, Mauchly’s test for sphericity was conducted. Upon reviewing the results, Mauchly’s test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated with a $p = .009$ (see Table 18).

Table 18

Mauchly’s Test for Sphericity for Means in Superintendent’s Region I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Within Subjects Effect</th>
<th>Mauchly's W</th>
<th>Approx. Chi Square</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>sig.</th>
<th>Epsilon Greenhouse</th>
<th>Epsilon Huynh-Feldt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Importance</td>
<td>.356</td>
<td>37.97</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>.737</td>
<td>.844</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since sphericity was violated, a correction to the F ratio must be made to ensure its validity. The estimate of sphericity $\varepsilon = .844$. This indicated that it is appropriate to use the Huynh-Feldt correction. A test of Within Subjects Effects was conducted using the Huynh-Feldt correction to verify that the results were still significant after the correction. The results show that the variability among the means is still greater than would be expected by chance alone $F(5.061, 197.396) = 5.696, p < .001$.

The results of this analysis provided the omnibus clearance to proceed with the Paired Sample $T$-Tests with the post hoc Holm’s sequential Bonferroni approach to control for Type I error. These results indicate that the null hypothesis can be rejected. Significant differences were found between 3 of the 21 pairs of characteristics. The significant differences are shown in Table 19.
Table 19

*Superintendent's Region I Paired Sample T-Test Comparing Significance*

*Between Pairs of Research-based Characteristics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low student/staff ratio - Parental involvement</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.189</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low student/staff ratio - Specific staff training</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.150</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective classroom instruction - Specific staff training</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.150</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Denotes 2-Tailed Significance
Following the procedure described in the analysis of research question 1, any instances of significance were ordered by following binary logic where the characteristics were compared to each other in terms of the number of times that the means of each characteristic was found to be significantly greater than each other. A particular characteristic was given a score of 1 if its mean was significantly above the mean of another characteristic, and a -1 if its mean was significantly below the mean of another characteristic. In this way, the ordering of the means was developed. Table 20 shows that “low student to staff ratio” was the highest priority characteristic, and “parental involvement” was the lowest priority characteristic. It is important to note that three of the characteristics had no significant interaction with any other characteristic. These three characteristic’s specific rank cannot be determined; however these ranks fall within the third and fifth positions. The result of this process determined the ranking of importance as seen in Table 20.

Referring to Tables 10 through 16 for the process of the combining research-based characteristics into composite scores between 4 and 20 with a score greater than 12 indicating the existence of the characteristic, the results of the existence of the research-based characteristics for Superintendent’s Region 1 can be seen in Table 21. Table 21 indicates, with regard to the research-based characteristics, none of the means satisfy the requirement for strong evidence and do not provide strong evidence of existence of any of the research-based characteristics.

The same process that was used to report the findings from Superintendent’s Region 1 follows with regard to Superintendent’s Region 4 (see Table 22).
Table 20

Superintendent's Region 1 Rank of Research-based Characteristics Based Upon Significance of Variance of Means

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>No. of Comparisons Where Mean Was Greater</th>
<th>No. of Comparisons Where Mean Was Smaller</th>
<th>Sum</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low student to staff ratio</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective instruction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach social skills</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearly identified enrollment criteria</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-to-one interaction</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific staff training</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental involvement</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 21

*Superintendent's Region 1 Descriptive Statistics for Existence for Characteristics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clearly identified enrollment criteria</td>
<td>11.13</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low student/staff ratio</td>
<td>9.21</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-to-one interaction</td>
<td>8.94</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social skills instruction</td>
<td>10.64</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective classroom instruction</td>
<td>8.21</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental involvement</td>
<td>10.69</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific staff training</td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 22

*Superintendent's Region 4 Means of the Importance of the Seven Research-based Characteristics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clearly identified enrollment criteria</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>816</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low student/staff ratio</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>.258</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-to-one interaction</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>.828</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social skills instruction</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>.883</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective classroom instruction</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>.593</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental involvement</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>1.046</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific staff training</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>.883</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As performed in the previous analysis of the combined responses, to test the hypothesis that the variances of the responses were equal, Mauchly’s test for sphericity was conducted. Upon reviewing the results, Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had not been violated with a $p = .109$ (see Table 23).

Table 23

*Mauchly’s Test for Sphericity for Means in Superintendent’s Region 4*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Within Subjects Effect</th>
<th>Mauchly’s W</th>
<th>Approx. Chi Square</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>sig.</th>
<th>Epsilon Greenhouse</th>
<th>Epsilon Huynh-Feldt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Importance</td>
<td>.089</td>
<td>28.467</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>.109</td>
<td>.568</td>
<td>.773</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since Mauchly’s statistic test was not significant and sphericity was not violated, it is reasonable to assume that the variances of the differences are not significantly different. Since sphericity can be assumed, no correction to the F ratio must be made to ensure its validity. The results show that the variability among the means is still greater than would be expected by chance alone $F(6.0, 84) = 5.605, p < .001$.

The results of this analysis provided the omnibus clearance to proceed with the Paired Sample *T*-Tests with the post hoc Holm’s sequential Bonferroni approach to control for Type I error. These results indicate that the null hypothesis can be rejected. A significant difference was found between only 1 of the 21 pairs of characteristics. The significant difference is shown in Table 24.
Table 24

**Superintendent's Region 4 Paired Sample T-Test Comparing Significance**

*Between Pairs of Research-based Characteristics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low student/staff ratio - Specific staff training</td>
<td>1.267</td>
<td>.300</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>.018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Denotes 2-Tailed Significance*
Table 25 shows that “low student to staff ratio” was the highest priority characteristic, and “specific training for staff working with at-risk youth” was the lowest priority characteristic. It is important to note that five of the characteristics had no significant interaction with any other characteristic. These five characteristic’s specific rank cannot be determined; however, these ranks fall within the second and sixth positions. The result of this process determined the ranking of importance as seen in Table 25.

Table 25

Superintendent's Region 4 Rank of Research-based Characteristics

Based Upon Significance of Variance of Means

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>No. of Comparisons Where Mean Was Greater</th>
<th>No. of Comparisons Where Mean Was Smaller</th>
<th>Sum</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low student to staff ratio</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective instruction</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach social skills</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearly identified enrollment criteria</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-to-one interaction</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental involvement</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific staff training</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Referring to Tables 10 through 16 for the process of the combining research-based characteristics into composite scores between 4 and 20 with a score greater than 12 indicating the existence of the characteristic, the results of the existence of the research-based characteristics for Superintendent’s Region 4 can be seen in Table 26.
Table 26

Superintendent's Region 4 Descriptive Statistics for
Existence of Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clearly identified enrollment criteria</td>
<td>9.36</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low student/staff ratio</td>
<td>7.07</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-to-one Interaction</td>
<td>8.15</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social skills instruction</td>
<td>11.14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective classroom instruction</td>
<td>8.14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental involvement</td>
<td>9.29</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific staff training</td>
<td>12.08</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As seen in Table 26, with regard to the research-based characteristics, “specific staff development for teachers who work with at-risk youth” satisfies the requirement and provides strong evidence of existence in Superintendent’s Region 4.

The same process that was used to report the findings from Superintendent’s Region 1 and 4 follows with regard to Superintendent’s Region 8 (see Tables 27-29).

Table 27

Superintendent's Region 4 Means of the Importance of the
Seven Research-based Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clearly identified enrollment criteria</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>.816</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low student/staff ratio</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>.258</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-to-one interaction</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>.828</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social skills instruction</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>.883</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective classroom instruction</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>.593</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental involvement</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>1.046</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific staff training</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>.883</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As performed in the previous analysis of the combined responses, to test the hypothesis that the variances of the responses were equal, Mauchly’s test for sphericity was conducted. Upon reviewing the results, Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated with a $p = .004$ (see Table 28).
Table 28

*Mauchly’s Test for Sphericity for Means in Superintendent’s Region 8*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Within Subjects Effect</th>
<th>Mauchly's W</th>
<th>Approx. Chi Square</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>sig.</th>
<th>Epsilon Greenhouse</th>
<th>Epsilon Huynh-Feldt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Importance</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>41.967</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.504</td>
<td>.673</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Since sphericity was violated, a correction to the F ratio must be made to ensure its validity. The estimate of sphericity $\varepsilon = .673$. This indicated that it is appropriate to use the Huynh-Feldt correction. A test of Within Subjects Effects was conducted using the Huynh-Feldt correction to verify that the results were no longer significant after the correction. The results show that the variability among the means is not greater than would be expected by chance alone $F(4.04, 52.015) = 1.315, p = .277$.

The results of this analysis failed to provide the omnibus clearance to proceed with the Paired Sample $T$-Tests with the post hoc Holm’s sequential Bonferroni approach to control for Type I error as performed with the other data sets. No significant results can be reported with regard to the ranking of importance of research-based characteristics in Superintendent’s Region 8.

Referring to Tables 10 through 16 for the process of the combining research-based characteristics into composite scores between 4 and 20 with a score greater than 12 indicating the existence of the characteristic, the results of the existence of the research-based characteristics for Superintendent’s Region 8 can be seen in Table 29.

As seen in Table 29, with regard to the research-based characteristics, “Parental Involvement” and “Social Skills Instruction” satisfies the requirement and provides strong evidence of existence in Superintendent’s Region 8.

Of the three superintendent’s regions with the highest survey return rate, a low student to teacher staff was ranked as the most important characteristic by Region 1 and Region 4. Of the three superintendent’s regions with the highest survey return rate, there was no consistency with any of the characteristics satisfying the requirement that would demonstrate strong evidence of
Table 29

*Superintendent's Region 8 Descriptive Statistics for Existence of Characteristics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clearly identified enrollment criteria</td>
<td>11.85</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low student/staff ratio</td>
<td>9.00</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-to-one Interaction</td>
<td>10.75</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social skills instruction</td>
<td>12.93</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective classroom instruction</td>
<td>10.83</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental involvement</td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific staff training</td>
<td>11.14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 30

*Comparison of Ranking of Importance of Research-based Characteristics for Superintendent's Regions, 1, 4, and 8*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Region 1 Rank</th>
<th>Region 4 Rank</th>
<th>Region 8 Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clearly identified enrollment criteria</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low student/staff ratio</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-to-one interaction</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social skills instruction</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective classroom instruction</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental involvement</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific staff training</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
existence. The researcher acknowledges that there is insufficient data to fully answer research question three and this comparison of superintendent’s regions may be an area for future study.

Research Question 4

Is there a relationship between the perception of teachers regarding the degree of existence of research-based program characteristics in their alternative school or program and the teachers’ perceptions of self-efficacy? As previously outlined during the analysis of research question 2, a composite variable was created for each of the seven research-based characteristics. In order to analyze each characteristic as a single concept, variables were transformed in PASW® by identifying the survey items associated with each characteristic and combining the responses for each research-based characteristic into a single variable. In other words, the responses associated with each characteristic were combined into one sum with a potential response range of between 4 and 20. In order to determine a level that would indicate strong evidence of existence, a mean of at least 12, which is the median between 4 (all four responses of “never present”) and 20 (all four responses of “always present”), was selected. While this cut-off is clearly arbitrary, it appears to be a generous operational definition of “existence.” A score of 12 could be notionally associated with four scores at the descriptor level of “sometimes present.”

In the aforementioned analysis, the composite variable represented the respondent sample as a whole. For research question 4, the seven composite variables were again combined into one additional variable that was reported for each individual respondent. Unlike research question 2 where there was a need for a definitive, although arbitrary, measure as to whether or not a research-based characteristic existed, this question is better addressed by not including all participants’ data in the analysis.
In order to determine the participant’s perceptions of efficacy, the Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy (2001) Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale Short Form was used. This scale can be found in Appendix A. This scale provides respondents with a Likert scale to indicate the degree to which they believe that they can influence different elements in the classroom. The scale provides the following options: 5 – A Great Deal, 4 – Quite a Bit, 3 – Some Influence 2 – Very Little, 1 – Nothing.

In order to identify whether or not a teacher perceived that he or she had a positive sense of efficacy, a composite variable was created. This variable combined the responses to the 12 questions that were on the Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale. The scale had a range of 12 (all responses of “Nothing”) and 60 (all responses of “A Great Deal”). This composite score defines the participant’s level of self-efficacy.

The teacher’s perceptions of the existence of the research-based characteristics were correlated with the teacher’s perception of efficacy. The Pearson product-moment correlation was .604. This indicated that the relationship between the teachers’ perceptions of the existence of the research-based characteristics and their perceptions of self-efficacy accounted for 36% of the variance in the data. The correlation between the perceived existence of the research-based characteristics and perceptions of self-efficacy was significant at a value of p < .001. The scatterplot of data is shown in Figure 2. The least-squares regression line is shown as a solid line, and the horizontal line indicates where the “existence” criterion used in analyzing Question 2 would fall.

The scatterplot in Figure 2 indicates a positive correlation between the existence of research-based characteristics and the respondent’s perceptions of self-efficacy. The higher the degree of the existence of the research-based characteristics, the higher the respondents’ reported
Figure 2. Scatterplot Correlation Between the Existence of Research-based Characteristics and Perceptions of Self-efficacy
a perception of self-efficacy. One outlying data point can be seen at (55,139). While is it
unknown as to the cause of this participant’s responses, to ensure an accurate analysis, the
correlation was repeated while excluding this outlying data.

The Pearson product-moment correlation, excluding the outlier, was .514. This indicated
that the relationship between the teacher’s perceptions of the existence of the research-based
characteristics and their perceptions of self-efficacy accounted for 26% of the variance in the
data. The correlation between the perceived existence of the research-based characteristics and
perceptions of self-efficacy was significant at a value of p < .001. The scatterplot of data is
shown in Figure 3. The least-squares regression line is shown as a solid line, and the horizontal
line indicates where the “existence” criterion used in analyzing Question 2 would fall.

The scatterplot in Figure 3 still indicates a positive correlation between the existence of
research-based characteristics and the respondents’ perceptions of self-efficacy, even with the
exclusion of the outlying data. It is important to note that even when the threshold of “strong
existence” was not met, the positive correlation still existed. The higher the degree of the
existence of the research-based characteristics, the higher the respondents reported a perception
of self-efficacy.

Discussion of Outlier Data

Since the cause of the outlying data cannot be determined and discounted, its potential
effect upon the statistical procedures must be addressed. All of the previous analytical tests were
conducted again with the outlying data removed in order to see if any results of outcomes were
affected. The removal of the outlying data had no significant effect on any of the outcomes.
There were no changes in the significance or lack of significance in any test, nor were there any
changes in the rankings of responses.
Figure 3. Scatterplot Correlation Between the Existence of Research-based Characteristics and Perceptions of Self-efficacy With Outlier Excluded
CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

The purpose of this research was to determine teachers’ perceptions of the degree to which research-based characteristics exist in alternative high schools and programs in the Commonwealth of Virginia and the importance of these characteristics to effective education. In addition, this research investigated whether or not these perceptions were related to the teachers’ perception of efficacy. This was accomplished by investigating alternative school teachers’ responses to questions regarding the importance and existence and of the seven characteristics identified to be of importance to alternative schools and programs.

These seven characteristics were (a) clearly identified enrollment criteria, (b) low ratio of student to teachers, (c) one-to-one interactions between staff and students, (d) social skills instruction, (e) effective academic instruction, (f) parental involvement and parental support programs, and (g) specific training for teachers who are working with at-risk youth. Teachers were also administered the short form of the Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale that is specifically designed to assess the respondents’ perceptions of their self-efficacy as teachers.

The research questions were as follows:

1. What is the degree to which research-based program characteristics are perceived by teachers as important to alternative high schools and programs in Virginia?
2. What research-based program characteristics are perceived by teachers to exist within academically-focused alternative high schools and programs in Virginia?

3. Are there regional differences in perceptions of teachers regarding the degree of existence and the importance of research-based program characteristics in academically-focused alternative high schools and programs in Virginia?

4. Is there a relationship between the perception of teachers regarding the degree of existence of research-based program characteristics in their alternative school or program and the teachers’ perceptions of self-efficacy?

This study used a quantitative approach to collect and analyze the data. The instruments for data collections were an online survey that used a Likert-style instrument, constructed specifically for this study to elicit information on the degree to which research-based characteristics exist in the schools/programs, and their importance. Additionally, the use of the short form of the Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) survey Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale was used to measure teacher perceptions of self-efficacy.

As the completed online surveys were received, the resulting data were entered into the PASW® database. Initially, the data were analyzed by utilizing descriptive statistics for each item on all three parts of the survey, as well as by superintendent’s region for each of the respondents. The respondents were all teachers who taught in an alternative school or programs identified as such by the Virginia Department of Education. Nonparametric statistical measures were used to analyze the data related to each of the research questions.

Discussion of Respondent Profiles

In explaining these frequency data, the strongest response, came from Region 1 (Central Virginia to the Tidewater), Region 4 (Northern Virginia), and Region 8 (Southside Virginia).
These regions accounted for 75% of the responses and have a total of 12 alternative schools. Region 1 and Region 4 contain the largest alternative high schools in the commonwealth. Additionally, no school or district in these regions indicated that they would not participate in the study, however one of the schools, Pimmit Hills Alternative High School, was scheduled to be closed at the end of the school year in which the study was conducted due to budget reductions.

Region 2 (Tidewater and Eastern Shore), Region 3 (Northern Neck) and Region 5 (Piedmont and Shenandoah Valley) accounted for 23% of the responses and have a total of 11 alternative schools. Additionally, two of the districts served by these regions declined to participate in the study and one of the schools identified by the Virginia DOE website had been closed.

Region 6 (Southwest Central Virginia) and Region 7 (Southwest Virginia) accounted for 2% of the responses and have a total of 10 alternative schools. One of the schools identified by the Virginia DOE website had been closed.

There are some potential causes for the variance in the response rates from the different superintendent’s regions. While the data does not directly address this phenomenon, it is possible that the process to gain access and permission for the teachers to participate may have contributed to the variance. The researcher had to gain permission from the principal or coordinator of the alternative school to contact the teachers. In some cases, the principal responded that he or she also had to gain permission from a higher authority in the school district to allow access for the researcher. Since the nature of this research sought to identify the existence of research-based characteristics and if the existence of these characteristics had an effect on teacher efficacy, it is conceivable that some administrators felt that the potential
findings of this study could reflect negatively on the school district and thus may have chosen not to forward the surveys to their teachers.

It is also possible that the individual teachers simply chose not to participate in the study out of concern for how the results may affect their positions in their districts. While every effort was made to assure confidentiality, it is possible that some chose not to participate for that reason.

Research Question 1 was: *What is the degree to which research-based program characteristics are perceived by teachers as important to alternative high schools and programs in Virginia?*

The study investigated how teachers perceived the degree of importance of (a) clearly identified enrollment criteria, (b) low ratio of student to teachers, (c) one-to-one interactions between staff and students, (d) social skills instruction, (e) effective academic instruction, (f) parental involvement and parental support programs, and (g) specific training for teachers who are working with at-risk youth.

Upon analysis of the data, the teachers responded that the research-based characteristics were in the following order of importance:

1. Low Student to Staff Ratio
2. Effective Academic Instruction
3. Social Skills Instruction
4. Clearly Identified Enrollment Criteria
5. One to One Interactions between Staff and Students
6. Specific Staff Training for Teachers Who Work with At-Risk Youth
7. Parental Involvement and Parental Support Programs

This data shows that Virginia’s alternative school teachers confirm the work of Lange and Sletton (2002) and perceive that a low student to teacher ratio is essential to the success of alternative programs. This has important implications as school divisions struggle to operate within limited budgets. Alternative schools are expensive in terms of per pupil expenditures, but increasing the ratio of teachers to students, while perhaps saving money, could cause the alternative school to become less effective.

The high ranking by the alternative teachers perception of the importance of effective academic instruction supports the work of Swanson and Hoskyn (1998) whose study found that the best instructional practices in alternative schools included a combination of direct teacher-centered and strategy-based student-centered instruction. This also addresses the concern of Gregory (2001) that alternative schools often reduce curriculum to the bare minimum standards.

While the statistical analysis of the data yielded relatively close results for the middle four characteristics as ranked, parental involvement and parental support programs stood out as having the least importance. The response of the alternative teachers was contradictory to the research of Hosley (2003) that identified parental involvement as critical to student success. While this research did not identify the reason for the low perception of importance given to this characteristic by the respondents, it may be due to what Bornstein et al. (1998) identified as the fact that some parents of alternative students lack the knowledge or ability to become involved with their student’s education. In other words, since the parents tend to not be involved, the teachers have learned to not rely upon that involvement as important for the success of their schools and programs.
Research Question 2 was: *What research-based program characteristics are perceived by teachers to exist within academically-focused alternative high schools and programs in Virginia?*

The study investigated how teachers perceived the existence of the following research-based characteristics in their alternative schools (a) clearly identified enrollment criteria, (b) low ratio of student to teachers, (c) one-to-one interactions between staff and students, (d) social skills instruction, (e) effective academic instruction, (f) parental involvement and parental support programs, and (g) specific training for teachers who are working with at-risk youth.

The data showed that the alternative teachers’ responses failed to indicate a perception of a degree of strong evidence that any of the research-based characteristics are present in their alternative schools and programs.

While it failed to meet the threshold of “strong evidence,” it is noteworthy that the characteristic receiving the highest score in terms of its perceived existence in the teachers’ alternative schools was “parental involvement and parental support programs,” the research-based characteristic reported by alternative teachers as being the least important. It is equally noteworthy that the characteristics that had the lowest scores with regard to their perceived existence in the teachers’ alternative schools were “low student to teacher ratio” and “effective academic instruction.” Teachers responded that these two characteristics were perceived as the most important, yet also responded that they were perceived as the least present.

Research question 3 was: *Are there regional differences in perceptions of teachers regarding the degree of existence and the importance of research-based program characteristics in academically-focused alternative high schools and programs in Virginia?*
As stated in Chapter 4, answering this question was problematic due the inadequate response numbers in some of the responding superintendents’ regions.

Of the three superintendents’ regions with the highest survey return rate (Regions 1, 4 and 8) a low student to teacher staff was ranked as the most importantly perceived characteristic by two of the regions.

Of the three superintendents’ regions with the highest survey return rate, there was no consistency with any of the characteristics satisfying the requirement that would demonstrate perception of a strong evidence of existence. Alternative teachers from superintendent’s region 4 reported a perception of strong evidence of the existence of “specific staff training for teachers who work with at-risk youth” while superintendent’s region 8 reported a perception of strong evidence of the existence of “parental involvement” and “social skills instruction.”

The researcher acknowledges that there is insufficient data to fully answer research question three and this comparison of superintendent’s regions may be an area for future study.

Research question 4 was: *Is there a relationship between the perception of teachers regarding the degree of existence of research-based program characteristics in their alternative school or program and the teachers’ perceptions of self-efficacy?*

This question required a different type of analysis than the previous three research questions in the sense that it was studying each participant’s response to two different sets of questions. Instead of looking at the teachers’ responses as a whole, it required an individual, separate analysis of each teacher’s responses.

When analyzing the teachers’ perception of the existence of the research-based characteristics in their schools, 75 teachers had complete responses. Of the 75 teacher respondents, 16 reported that the research-based characteristics, as a whole, existed in their
schools. Of the 75 teacher respondents, 59 reported that the research-based characteristics, as a whole, did not exist in their schools.

When analyzing the teachers’ perception of their own efficacy, 89 teachers had complete responses. Of the 89 teacher respondents, 88 reported scores that indicated that they did not have a positive sense of efficacy. Of the 89 teacher respondents, 1 reported a score that indicated that he or she did have a positive sense of efficacy.

The teacher’s perceptions of the existence of the research-based characteristics were correlated with the teacher’s perception of efficacy. The relationship between the teachers’ perceptions of the existence of the research-based characteristics and their perceptions of self-efficacy was found to have a positive correlation. The higher the degree of the existence of the research-based characteristics, the higher the respondents’ reported a perception of positive self-efficacy.

Implications and Recommendations

From the data, it is clear that the alternative school teachers believe in the importance of the research-based characteristics of alternative schools. While they have reported some characteristics as more important than others, the lowest mean reported was above median on the scale that indicated the degree of importance. Having said that, there is definitely a gap between what the literature and previous research says are the characteristics needed for a successful alternative school and what actually exists in Virginia’s alternative schools and programs. Whether these characteristics are thought to exist by policy makers and administrators is unknown, but clearly the teachers believe that these characteristics are not in their schools.

The reality is that to fully implement all of the research-based characteristics, it is going to require a financial commitment on the part of the local school district. While some of the
characteristics, such as a policy of a clear set of enrollment criteria, low teacher to student ratios require, by definition, more teachers. Strong mentor programs require time and resources to effectively train teachers. Parental support programs will also require resources both in terms of time as well as funds.

The consequence to the comprehensive school if the alternative schools are unsuccessful is significant. Students under the age of 18 must attend school. If the alternative programs are unsuccessful, or if the decision is made to close them, the students who were attending these schools will be forced to return to the comprehensive environment. This will cause the comprehensive school to allocate resources to meet the needs of these students, or if they choose to ignore these needs and simply allow the student to be unsuccessful, they will be faced with the consequences to their accreditation of a drop out.

If it is the goal of a school district to provide high-quality educational options for students who have not been successful in the traditional, comprehensive school setting, it is recommended that they conduct a thorough self-study to determine what research-based characteristics truly exist in their alternative schools; and if deficiencies are found, provide an action plan to remedy these deficiencies. There are several accrediting agencies that can provide assistance with developing a self-study process. While the process can be arduous and uncomfortable, the resulting data that is generated can be used to formulate positive change.

Recommendations for Future Study

Throughout the course of this study, there were several areas where the researcher found insufficient data. These areas present opportunities for future studies. They are as follows:
1. Survey Virginia’s alternative school administrators to determine their perceptions of the existence of research-based characteristics and compare them to the responses of the teachers. A similar study was done in North Carolina several years ago by Wiseman (1996).

2. As budgets continue to decrease, conduct a follow-up study based upon this research to see if the perceptions measured here change over the next three to five years.

3. The response rate was particularly low in certain rural areas of Virginia. Develop a study to determine the perceptions of the existence of the research-based characteristics in alternative schools that compares rural teachers’ responses to those teachers in urban districts.

4. As some districts have chosen to close their alternative schools and programs, a study should be conducted to determine the impact on overall student performance and graduation rates as the students are no longer served in a program designed specifically for them.

5. It is of concern that there was such a negative sense of efficacy among the respondents to this study. Conduct a qualitative study to thoroughly explore the reasons for the low sense of efficacy among alternative school teachers.

6. With the potential disparity among the existence of the research-based characteristics across the different superintendent’s regions, conduct a qualitative study to determine the perceptions of superintendents of the alternative educational programs across the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Concluding Thoughts

At the time of the conclusion of this study, the Commonwealth of Virginia is faced with significant financial challenges that have affected the budget processes of local school districts. Funds that have always been abundant in the past are becoming scarcer, and districts are left having to make serious cuts to staffing and programs. Even at the beginning of the study, the
researcher found that alternative schools were closing due to a lack of funding. Since that time, the amount of funds available to school districts has further declined.

Ultimately, funding alternative programs and ensuring that these programs have the characteristics needed for success comes down to the issue of educational priorities. There is no doubt that these programs, by their very nature, are more expensive per student than their comprehensive counterparts. The fundamental question then becomes how important is the success of every student, and how much is a school district willing to spend on that success. It is easy to state that every student deserves the best and must have their educational needs met at the highest level; however, when that thought is grounded in the reality of shrinking budgets and increasing accountability and expectations, some tough choices lay ahead for educational policy makers.
LIST OF REFERENCES


Bullis, M., & Davis, C., (1996). Further examination of job-related social skills measures for adolescents and young adults with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Behavioral Disorders, 1*


Mormon Church v. United States, 136 U.S. 1 (1890).


*Comprehensive and collaborative systems that work for troubled youth: A national agenda.* National Coalition for Juvenile Justice Services Training Resource Center. Eastern Kentucky University.


APPENDIX A

Perceptions of Research Based Characteristics of Alternative Schools

PLEASE REMEMBER THAT COMPLETION OF THIS SURVEY IS COMPLETELY VOLUNTARY AND THAT ALL RESPONSES WILL REMAIN STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

Completion of this survey will take between 10 to 15 minutes.

In Section A, please rate the following characteristics according to their importance to the academic focus of your alternative school.

Each characteristic is followed by some examples of how the characteristic may apply to an alternative school/program.

In Section B, please rate to what extent each item exists in your alternative school.

In Section C, the questionnaire is designed to help gain a better understanding of the amount of control you have over certain situations in your school.

SECTION A

Please rate the following characteristics according to their importance to the academic focus of your alternative school using the following scale:

5 – Very Important, 4 – Somewhat Important, 3 – Neither Important or Unimportant, 2 – Somewhat Unimportant, 1 – Not Important at All

1. **Clearly Identified Enrollment Criteria**

   Examples may include the following:
   - Students are screened to identify those that would benefit from an alternate placement.
   - Mission of the school is defined in order to inform potential students.
   - Student data is used to determine appropriateness of enrollment in the alternative school/program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
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<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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2. **Low Student to Teacher Ratios**

   Examples may include the following:
   - Class sizes are small enough to allow for students and staff to work together.
   - Class size allows for adults to act as mentors.
   - Teachers have the opportunity to make stronger connections with the students with this structure.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
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<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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100
3. **One-to One Interaction Between Teachers and Students**

Examples may include the following:
- Time is built in to the schedule for one-to-one interactions between teacher and student.
- Teachers are able to accept a high degree of responsibility for their students’ success.
- An adult mentoring program is available.

4. **Social Skills Instruction**

Examples may include the following:
- Conflict resolution skills and interpersonal problem solving strategies are taught.
- Students are taught anger management techniques.
- Students have the opportunity to participate in Group and individual counseling sessions.

5. **Effective Classroom Instruction**

Examples may include the following:
- Extra academic support is made available to students.
- Small group or pull out tutoring is available.
- Instructional best practices are utilized in the classroom.

6. **Parental Involvement and Parental Support Programs**

Examples may include the following:
- The school/program offers direct parenting skills support classes.
- The school/program coordinates with outside agencies such as mental health or social services to bring support to parents.
- The school/program has a plan in place to encourage parents to be involved in their child’s school.

7. **Specific Training for Teachers who are Working with At-Risk Youth**

Examples may include the following:
- Consistent in-service is provided to faculty and staff to support working with at-risk youth.
- Teachers are hired that have experience in working with at-risk youth.
- Teachers are given additional contractual time for training to work with at-risk youth.
SECTION B

Please rate to what extent each item exists in your alternative school using the following scale.

5 – Always Present, 4 – Usually Present, 3 – Sometimes Present,
2 – Rarely Present, 1 – Never Present

Existence in Your Alternative School/Program

1. Students choose to attend our alternative school/program. 1 2 3 4 5
2. Students meet on a regular basis with teachers to get academic help and support. 1 2 3 4 5
3. Students participate in a character education program. . 1 2 3 4 5
4. Students must meet specifically identified criteria for admission into our school/program. 1 2 3 4 5
5. Parents have the opportunity to attend parent seminars and workshops at the school. 1 2 3 4 5
6. Students are able to communicate freely with their teachers. 1 2 3 4 5
7. Class sizes are maintained at 15 or fewer students. 1 2 3 4 5
8. Staff development is scheduled to provide training for teachers working with at-risk youth . 1 2 3 4 5
9. Students work in small groups with their teachers. 1 2 3 4 5
10. The curriculum provides students with skills that they will need for post-secondary success. 1 2 3 4 5
11. Academic class sizes are smaller than elective class sizes 1 2 3 4 5
12. The school has a documented procedure to direct parents toward community-based resources. 1 2 3 4 5

13. Counseling sessions that address personal development skills, such as anger management, are regularly scheduled. 1 2 3 4 5

14. Staff receives regular in-service on topics related to working in an alternative school environment. 1 2 3 4 5

15. The school/program actively recruits students who meet the enrollment criteria. 1 2 3 4 5

16. Students have access to Social Service providers at school/program. 1 2 3 4 5

17. Curriculum is individualized for each student. 1 2 3 4 5

18. Time is scheduled on a regular basis for students to meet individually with their teachers. 1 2 3 4 5

19. Regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences take place. 1 2 3 4 5

20. Non-traditional scheduling is available for students. 1 2 3 4 5

21. Staff receives regular in-service on instructional best practices. 1 2 3 4 5

22. Students speak positively about their relationships with the teachers at the school/program. 1 2 3 4 5

23. The student population is at a manageable number to allow for one-to-one interactions between faculty and students. 1 2 3 4 5

24. Students have the opportunity to participate in career and technical education classes. 1 2 3 4 5
25. Students are given opportunities to learn conflict resolution skills. 1 2 3 4 5

26. Parents are treated as partners in the education of their children. 1 2 3 4 5

27. Organizations that recommend students are aware of the enrollment criteria 1 2 3 4 5

28. Staff receives training on intervention strategies for working with at-risk youth. 1 2 3 4 5

Section C

This section is the short from of the Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy Survey “Teacher’s Sense of Self-Efficacy Scale”

Please rate the amount of control you have over these situations using the following scale:

5 – A Great Deal, 4 – Quite a Bit, 3 – Some Influence
2 – Very Little, 1 - Nothing

1. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom? 1 2 3 4 5

2. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work? 1 2 3 4 5

3. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work? 1 2 3 4 5

4. How much can you do to help your students value learning? 1 2 3 4 5

5. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students? 1 2 3 4 5

6. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules? 1 2 3 4 5

7. How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy? 1 2 3 4 5
8. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?  1 2 3 4 5

9. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?  1 2 3 4 5

10. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?  1 2 3 4 5

11. How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?  1 2 3 4 5

12. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?  1 2 3 4 5

Please list any other characteristics that you feel are essential to a successful alternative school.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX B

Permission for use of Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy Survey

Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale

Anita Woolfolk Hoy, Ph.D.  Professor
Psychological Studies in Education

Dear Robert Lowerre

You have my permission to use the *Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale* in your research. A copy of both the long and short forms of the instrument as well as scoring instructions can be found at:

http://www.coe.ohio-state.edu/ahoy/researchinstruments.htm

Best wishes in your work,

Anita Woolfolk Hoy, Ph.D.
Professor
## APPENDIX C

Independent School Divisions and Division Contact Information

by Superintendent’s Regions

### Region I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division Name</th>
<th>Superintendent</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
<th>Fax Number</th>
<th>Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charles City County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Janet C. Crawley</td>
<td>804-652-4612</td>
<td>804-829-6723</td>
<td>10910 Courthouse Rd Charles City, VA 23030-3426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chesterfield County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Marcus J. Newsome</td>
<td>804-748-1405</td>
<td>804-796-7178</td>
<td>9900 Krause Rd Chesterfield, VA 23832-0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonial Heights City Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Joseph O. Cox Jr.</td>
<td>804-524-3400</td>
<td>804-526-4524</td>
<td>512 Boulevard Colonial Heights, VA 23834-3798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinwiddie County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Charles Maranzano Jr.</td>
<td>804-469-4190</td>
<td>804-469-4197</td>
<td>14016 Boydton Plank Road Dinwiddie, VA 23841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goochland County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Linda A. Underwood</td>
<td>804-556-5601</td>
<td>804-556-3847</td>
<td>2938-I River Rd W Goochland, VA 23063-0169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanover County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Stewart D. Roberson</td>
<td>804-365-4500</td>
<td>804-365-4680</td>
<td>200 Berkley St Ashland, VA 23005-1399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henrico County Public Schools</td>
<td>Mr. Frederick S. Morton IV</td>
<td>804-652-3717</td>
<td>804-652-3856</td>
<td>3820 Nine Mile Rd. Richmond, VA 23223-0420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopewell City Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Winston O. Odom</td>
<td>804-541-6400</td>
<td>804-541-6401</td>
<td>103 N 12th Ave Hopewell, VA 23860-3758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Kent County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. J. Roy Geiger II</td>
<td>804-966-9650</td>
<td>804-966-9879</td>
<td>11920 New Kent Highway New Kent, VA 23124-0110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petersburg City Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. James M. Victory</td>
<td>804-732-0510</td>
<td>804-732-2154</td>
<td>255 South Boulevard, East Petersburg, VA 23805-2700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powhatan County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Margaret S. Meara</td>
<td>804-598-5700</td>
<td>804-598-5705</td>
<td>2320 Skaggs Rd Powhatan, VA 23139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince George County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. R. Francis Moore</td>
<td>804-733-2700</td>
<td>804-861-5271</td>
<td>6410 Courts Rd Prince George, VA 23875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond City Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Yvonne Brandon</td>
<td>804-780-800</td>
<td>804-780-800</td>
<td>301 North 9th St</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division Name</td>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>Phone Number</td>
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<td>Accomack County Public Schools</td>
<td>Mr. W. Richard Bull Jr</td>
<td>757-787-5754</td>
<td>757-787-2951</td>
<td>23296 Courthouse Ave Accomac, VA 23301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chesapeake City Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. W. Randolph Nichols</td>
<td>757-547-0165</td>
<td>757-547-0196</td>
<td>312 Cedar Rd Chesapeake, VA 23322</td>
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<tr>
<td>Franklin City Public Schools</td>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>757-569-8111</td>
<td>757-516-1015</td>
<td>207 W Second Ave Franklin, VA 23851-2100</td>
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<td>Hampton City Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Patrick J. Russo</td>
<td>757-727-2000</td>
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<td>Isle of Wight County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Michael W. McPherson</td>
<td>757-357-0449</td>
<td>757-357-0849</td>
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<td>Newport News City Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Ashby Kilgore</td>
<td>757-591-4545</td>
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<td>Norfolk City Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Stephen C. Jones</td>
<td>757-628-3830</td>
<td>757-628-3820</td>
<td>800 E City Hall Ave. Room 1200 Norfolk, VA 23510</td>
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<td>Northampton County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Richard J Bownmaster</td>
<td>757-678-5151</td>
<td>757-678-7267</td>
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<td>Poquoson City Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Jennifer B. Parish</td>
<td>757-868-3055</td>
<td>757-868-3107</td>
<td>500 City Hall Ave Room 214 Poquoson, VA 23662</td>
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<td>Portsmouth City Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. David C. Stuckwisch</td>
<td>757-393-8742</td>
<td>757-393-5236</td>
<td>801 Crawford St Portsmouth, VA 23704-3822</td>
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<tr>
<td>Southampton County Public Schools</td>
<td>Mr. Charles E. Turner</td>
<td>757-653-2692</td>
<td>757-653-9422</td>
<td>21308 Plank Road P.O. Box 96 Courtland, VA 23837</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suffolk City Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Milton R. Liverman</td>
<td>757-925-6750</td>
<td>757-925-6751</td>
<td>100 N Main St Suffolk, VA 23434</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virginia Beach City Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. James G. Merrill</td>
<td>757-263-1000</td>
<td>757-263-1397</td>
<td>2512 George Mason Dr Virginia Beach, VA 23456-6038</td>
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## Region III

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<tr>
<td>Caroline County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Gregory N. Killough</td>
<td>804-633-5088</td>
<td>804-633-5563</td>
<td>16221 Richmond Turnpike Bowling Green, VA 22427</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colonial Beach Public Schools</td>
<td>Mr. Robert Luttrell</td>
<td>804-224-0906</td>
<td>804-224-8357</td>
<td>16 N. Irving Ave Colonial Beach, VA 22443-2324</td>
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<td>Essex County Public Schools</td>
<td>Mr. Thomas M. Saville</td>
<td>804-443-4366</td>
<td>804-443-4498</td>
<td>109 N Cross St Tappahannock, VA 22560</td>
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<td>Fredericksburg City Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. David G. Melton</td>
<td>540-372-1130</td>
<td>540-372-1111</td>
<td>817 Princess Anne St Fredericksburg, VA 22401-5819</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gloucester County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Howard B. Kiser</td>
<td>804-693-5300</td>
<td>804-693-1426</td>
<td>6489 Main Street Building Two Gloucester, VA 23061</td>
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<tr>
<td>King George County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Candace F. Brown</td>
<td>540-775-5833</td>
<td>540-775-2165</td>
<td>9100 St. Anthony's Road King George, VA 22485</td>
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<td>King William County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Mark Russell Jones</td>
<td>804-769-3434</td>
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<td>18548 King William Rd King William, VA 23086-0185</td>
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<td>King and Queen County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Richard W. Layman</td>
<td>804-785-5981</td>
<td>804-785-5686</td>
<td>242 Allens Circle, Route 681 Suite M, 2nd Floor King And Queen C H, VA 23085-0097</td>
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<td>Lancaster County Public Schools</td>
<td>Mrs. Susan J. Sciabbarrasi</td>
<td>804-435-3183</td>
<td>804-435-3309</td>
<td>2330 Irvington Rd Weems, VA 22576</td>
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<td>Mathews County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. David J. Holleran</td>
<td>804-725-3909</td>
<td>804-725-3951</td>
<td>Rt 611, 63 Church Street Mathews, VA 23109</td>
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<td>Middlesex County Public Schools</td>
<td>Mr. Donald Russell Fairheart</td>
<td>804-758-2277</td>
<td>804-758-3727</td>
<td>Cooks Corner Office Complex 2911 General Puller Highway Saluda, VA 23149-0205</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northumberland County Public Schools</td>
<td>Mr. David Clint Stables III</td>
<td>804-529-6134</td>
<td>804-529-6449</td>
<td>2172 Northumberland Hwy Lottsburg, VA 22511</td>
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<td>Richmond County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Marilyn F. Barr</td>
<td>804-333-3681</td>
<td>804-333-5586</td>
<td>460 Main St Warsaw, VA 22572</td>
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<td>Spotsylvania County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Jerry W. Hill</td>
<td>540-834-2500</td>
<td>540-834-2556</td>
<td>8020 Riverstone Drive Fredericksburg, VA</td>
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<td>Division Name</td>
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<td>Stafford County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. David E. Sawyer</td>
<td>540-658-6000</td>
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<td>West Point Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Jeffrey Smith</td>
<td>804-843-4368</td>
<td>804-843-4421</td>
<td>1626 Main St West Point, VA 23181</td>
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<td>Westmoreland County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Audrey Elaine Fogliani</td>
<td>804-493-8018</td>
<td>804-493-9323</td>
<td>141 Opal Lane Montross, VA 22520-1060</td>
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<td>Alexandria City Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Morton Sherman</td>
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<td>Arlington County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Robert G. Smith</td>
<td>703-228-6010</td>
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<td>1426 N Quincy St Arlington, VA 22207</td>
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<td>Clarke County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Michael F. Murphy</td>
<td>540-955-6100</td>
<td>540-955-6109</td>
<td>309 W Main St Berryville, VA 22611</td>
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<td>Culpeper County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Larry G Carter</td>
<td>540-825-3677</td>
<td>540-829-2111</td>
<td>450 Radio Lane Culpeper, VA 22701</td>
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<td>Fairfax City Public Schools</td>
<td>Mrs. Ann G. Monday</td>
<td>703-385-7911</td>
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<td>Fairfax County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Jack D. Dale</td>
<td>571-423-1010</td>
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<td>Falls Church City Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Lois F. Berlin</td>
<td>703-248-5601</td>
<td>703-248-5613</td>
<td>803 W Broad St Suite 300 Falls Church, VA 22046</td>
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<td>Fauquier County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Jonathan Lewis</td>
<td>540-351-1000</td>
<td>540-347-1026</td>
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<td>Frederick County Public Schools</td>
<td>Mrs. Patricia I. Taylor</td>
<td>540-662-3888</td>
<td>540-722-2788</td>
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<td>Loudoun County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Edgar B. Hatrick III</td>
<td>571-252-1000</td>
<td>571-252-1003</td>
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<td>Madison County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Brenda M. Tanner</td>
<td>540-948-5395</td>
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<td>Manassas City Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Gail E. Pope</td>
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<td>Manassas Park City Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Thomas H. DeBolt</td>
<td>703-335-8850</td>
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<td>Mr. Larry A. Massie</td>
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<td>Dr. Randall W. Thomas</td>
<td>540-743-6533</td>
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<td>Prince William County</td>
<td>Dr. Steven L. Walts</td>
<td>703-791-8712</td>
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<tr>
<td>Albemarle County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Pamela Moran</td>
<td>434-296-5826</td>
<td>434-296-5869</td>
<td>401 McIntire Road Charlottesville, VA 22902-4596</td>
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<td>Amherst County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Brian Ratliff</td>
<td>434-946-9387</td>
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<td>Augusta County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Gary D. McQuain</td>
<td>540-245-5100</td>
<td>540-245-5115</td>
<td>6 John Lewis Rd Fishersville, VA 22939</td>
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<td>Bath County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. K. David Smith</td>
<td>540-839-2722</td>
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<td>12145 Sam Snead Hwy. U.S. Route 220 N Warm Springs, VA 24484</td>
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<td>Dr. James G. Blevins</td>
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<td>Dr. Rebecca Gates</td>
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<td>540-261-2967</td>
<td>684 Village Highway Rustburg, VA 24588</td>
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<td>Campbell County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. George E. Nolley</td>
<td>434-332-3458</td>
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<td>Dr. Rosa S. Atkins</td>
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<td>Dr. Thomas W. D. Smith Jr.</td>
<td>434-589-8208</td>
<td>434-589-2248</td>
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<td>Mr. David Jeck</td>
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<td>Harrisonburg City Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Donald J. Ford</td>
<td>540-434-9916</td>
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<td>Mr. Percy Nowlin</td>
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<td>Botetourt County Public Schools</td>
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<td>Mr. Edward Graham</td>
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<td>Craig County Public Schools</td>
<td>Mr. Ronnie Colonel Gordon</td>
<td>540-864-5191</td>
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<td>Danville City Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Sue B. Davis</td>
<td>434-799-6400</td>
<td>434-799-5008</td>
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<td>Floyd County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Terry E. Arbogast</td>
<td>540-745-9400</td>
<td>540-745-9496</td>
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<td>Franklin County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Charles H. Lackey</td>
<td>540-483-5138</td>
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<td>25 Bernard Road Rocky Mount, VA 24151-6614</td>
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<td>Henry County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Sharon D. Dodson</td>
<td>276-634-4700</td>
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<td>3300 Kings Mountain Rd Admin Bldg 3rd Fl Collinsville, VA 24078-8958</td>
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<td>Martinsville City Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Scott R. Kizner</td>
<td>276-403-5820</td>
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<td>Montgomery County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Tiffany Anderson</td>
<td>540-382-5100</td>
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<td>Patrick County Public</td>
<td>Dr. Roger N. Morris</td>
<td>276-694-3163</td>
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Region VI
### Region VII

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<td>Bland County Public Schools</td>
<td>Mr. Donald W. Hodock</td>
<td>276-688-3361</td>
<td>276-688-4659</td>
<td>361 Bears Trail Bastian, VA 24314</td>
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<td>Bristol City Public Schools</td>
<td>Ms. Ina Danko</td>
<td>276-821-5600</td>
<td>276-821-5601</td>
<td>222 Oak St Bristol, VA 24201-4198</td>
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<td>Buchanan County Public Schools</td>
<td>Mr. Tommy P. Justus</td>
<td>276-935-4551</td>
<td>276-935-7150</td>
<td>1176 Booth Branch Rd. Grundy, VA 24614</td>
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<td>Carroll County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. James G. Smith</td>
<td>276-728-3191</td>
<td>276-728-3195</td>
<td>605-9 Pine St Hillsville, VA 24343</td>
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<td>Dickenson County Public Schools</td>
<td>Mrs. Judy Compton</td>
<td>276-926-4643</td>
<td>276-926-6374</td>
<td>309 Volunteer St Clintwood, VA 24228</td>
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<td>Galax City Public Schools</td>
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<td>Dr. Terry E. Arbogast II</td>
<td>540-921-1421</td>
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Grayson County Public Schools  Dr. Elizabeth Thomas  276-773-2832  276-773-2939  412 E Main St  Independence, VA  24348-0888
Lee County Public Schools  Mr. Fred Marion  276-346-2107  276-346-0307  5 Park Street  Jonesville, VA  24263
Norton City Public Schools  Dr. William Lee Brannon  276-679-2330  276-679-4315  22 Tenth Street  Norton, VA  24273
Pulaski County Public Schools  Dr. Donald E. Stowers  540-994-2550  540-994-2514  202 N Washington Ave  Pulaski, VA  24301-5008
Radford City Public Schools  Dr. William C Bishop  540-731-3647  540-731-4419  1612 Wadsworth St  Radford, VA  24141
Russell County Public Schools  Dr. Lorraine C. Turner  276-889-6500  276-889-6508  1 School Board Dr  Lebanon, VA  24266
Scott County Public Schools  Mr. James B. Scott  276-386-6118  276-386-2684  340 E Jackson St  Gate City, VA  24251
Smyth County Public Schools  Dr. Michael M. Robinson  276-783-3791  276-783-3291  121 Bagley Cir Ste 300  Marion, VA  24354-3140
Tazewell County Public Schools  Dr. Brenda B. Lawson  276-988-5511  276-988-1976  209 West Fincastle  Tazewell, VA  24651
Washington County Public Schools  Dr. Alan T. Lee  276-739-3003  276-623-4137  812 Thompson Dr  Abingdon, VA  24210-2354
Wise County Public Schools  Dr. Jeff Perry  276-328-8017  276-328-3350  628 Lake St  Wise, VA  24293-1217
Wythe County Public Schools  Dr. Albert S. Armentrout  276-228-5411  276-228-9192  1570 W Reservoir St  Wytheville, VA  24382

Region VIII

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<tr>
<td>Amelia County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. David M. Gangel</td>
<td>804-561-2621</td>
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<td>8701 Otterburn Road, Suite 101</td>
<td>Amelia, VA 23002</td>
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<td>Appomattox County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Aldridge A. Boone</td>
<td>434-352-8251</td>
<td>434-352-0883</td>
<td>185 Learning Lane</td>
<td>Appomattox, VA 24522</td>
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<td>Brunswick County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Oliver W. Spencer Jr.</td>
<td>434-848-3138</td>
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<td>Lawrenceville, VA 23868</td>
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<td>Buckingham County Public Schools</td>
<td>Mr. Gary Blair</td>
<td>434-969-6100</td>
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<td>Buckingham, VA 23921</td>
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<td>Charlotte County Public Schools</td>
<td>Mrs. Melody D. Hackney</td>
<td>434-542-5151</td>
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<td>Charlotte Court House, VA 23923</td>
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<td>Dr. James Thornton</td>
<td>804-492-4212</td>
<td>804-492-4818</td>
<td>1541 Anderson Hwy</td>
<td>Cumberland, VA 23040</td>
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<td>Greensville County Public Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Philip L. Worrell</td>
<td>434-634-3748</td>
<td>434-634-3495</td>
<td>105 Ruffin Street Emporia, VA 23847</td>
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<td>Halifax County Public Schools</td>
<td>Mr. Paul D. Stapleton</td>
<td>434-476-2171</td>
<td>434-476-1858</td>
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<td>Schools</td>
<td>Complex 1030 Mary Bethune St Halifax, VA 24558</td>
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<td>Lunenburg County Public Schools</td>
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<td>Mr. Wayne L. Staples 434-676-2467 434-676-1000</td>
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<td>Mecklenburg County Public Schools</td>
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<td>Mrs. Helen B. Hill 434-738-6111 434-738-6679</td>
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<td>Nottoway County Public Schools</td>
<td>10321 East Colonial Trail Nottoway, VA 23955</td>
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<td>Dr. Daniel J. Grounard 434-645-9596 434-645-1266</td>
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<td>Prince Edward County Public Schools</td>
<td>35 Eagle Drive Farmville, VA 23901-9011</td>
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<td>Dr. Patricia Watkins 434-315-2100 434-392-1911</td>
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APPENDIX D

Stand-Alone Alternative Education Schools and Programs by Superintendent’s Region

Region I

Location: Petersburg, Colonial Heights, Hopewell Cities; Dinwiddie, Prince George, and Sussex Counties
Program Name: Bermuda Run Regional Alternative Education Program
Contact: Marsha Miller, Director of Education, Specialized Youth Services of Virginia, Inc., 230 S. Crater Rd., Petersburg, Virginia 23803.
Phone: (804) 733-2180, e-mail: mmiller@sysva.com, fax: (804) 733-8502

Location: Powhatan, Goochland, and Louisa Counties
Program Name: Project Return
Contact: Randy Watts, Director of Pupil Personnel Services, Powhatan County Schools, 2320 Skaggs Road, Powhatan, Virginia 23139.
Phone: (804) 598-5700, e-mail: randy.watts@powhatan.k12.va.us, fax: (804) 598-5705

Location: Richmond City; Hanover and Henrico Counties
Program Name: Metro Richmond Alternative Education Program
Contact: Matthew Kreydatus, Transition Specialist, Metro Academy-Dooley School, St. Joseph’s Villa, 8000 Brook Rd., Richmond, Virginia 23227,
Phone: (804)553-3224 e-mail: mkreydatus@sjvmail.net
fax: (804) 553-3306

Location: Henrico County
Program Name: Virginia Randolph Community High School
Contact: Robert Lowerre, Principal, Virginia Randolph Community High School, 2204 Mountain Road, Glen Allen, Virginia 23060,
Phone: (804)261-5085 e-mail: rlowerre@henrico.k12.va.us
fax: (804)261-5087

Location: Chesterfield County
Program Name: Chesterfield Community High School
Contact: Anita Storino, Principal, Chesterfield Community High School 12400 Branders Bridge Road, Chester, Virginia 23831
Phone: 804-768-6156
Fax: 804-768-

Region II
Location: Newport News and Hampton Cities
Program Name: Enterprise Academy
Contact: Dr. Cynthia Cooper, Director of Alternative and Dropout Recovery Services, Newport News City Public Schools, 12465 Warwick Blvd., Newport News, Virginia 23606. Phone: (757) 591-4612, e-mail: Cynthia.Cooper@nn.k12.va.us, fax: (757) 595-2017

Location: Norfolk, Chesapeake, Franklin, Portsmouth, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach Cities; Isle of Wight and Southampton Counties
Program Name: Southeastern Cooperative Education Program
Contact: Dr. Judith Green, Executive Director, Southeastern Cooperative Educational Program, Smithfield Building, 6160 Kempsville Circle, 300B, Norfolk, Virginia 23510. Phone: (757) 892-6100 e-mail: green.judith@secep.net fax: (757) 892-6111

Location: Northampton and Accomack Counties
Program Name: Project Renew
Contact: Dr. Annette Gray, Director of Secondary Education, Northampton County Schools, 7207 Young Street, Machipongo, Virginia 23405. Phone: (757) 678-5151, e-mail: agray@ncps.k12.va.us, fax: (757) 678-7267

Location: York and Williamsburg/James City Counties; City of Poquoson
Program Name: Three Rivers Project-Enterprise Academy
Contact: Manuel Dillard, Associate Director for School Administration, York County Public Schools, 302 Dare Rd., Yorktown, Virginia 23692. Phone: (757) 898-0468, e-mail: mdillard@ycsd.york.va.us, fax: (757) 833-5225

Region III

Location: King William, Gloucester, Mathews, Middlesex, New Kent, Essex, and King and Queen Counties; Town of West Point
Program Name: Middle Peninsula Regional Alternative School Project
Contact: Gloria E. Washington, Director of Alternative Education, King William County Schools, 80 Cavalier Drive, King William, Virginia 23086. Phone: (804) 769-2708, ext. 609, e-mail: gwashington@kwcp.s.k12.va.us, fax: (804) 769-2430

Location: Stafford, Caroline, King George, and Spotsylvania Counties; Fredericksburg City
Program Name: Regional Alternative Education Program
Contact: Dr. Christopher Quinn, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, Stafford County Public Schools, 31 Stafford Ave., Stafford, Virginia 22554. Phone: (540) 658-6000 e-mail: quinner@staffordschools.net, fax: (540) 658-6061

Location: Westmoreland, Lancaster, Northumberland, and Richmond Counties, Town of Colonial Beach
Program Name: Northern Neck Regional Alternative Education Program
Contact: Randy Long, Principal, Northern Neck Regional Alternative Education Program, P. O. Box 787, Warsaw, Virginia 22572. Phone: (804) 333-4940, e-mail: hrlong70@aol.com, fax: (804) 333-0538

Region IV

Location: Fairfax County and Alexandria City Schools
Program Name: Transition Support Resource Center
Contact: Joan Ledebur, Interagency Alternative Schools, Gatehouse Administrative Center, 8115 Gatehouse Road, Suite 2600, Falls Church, Virginia 22042 Phone: (571) 423-3360, e-mail: Joan.Ledebur@fcps.edu, fax: (571) 423-3367

Location: Fauquier and Rappahannock Counties
Program Name: The Regional Continuum of Alternative Education Services
Contact: Craig Carscallen, Principal, Southeastern Alternative School, Fauquier County Public Schools, 4484 Catlett Road, Midland, Virginia 22728 Phone: (540) 788-1054, e-mail: ccarscallen@fcps1.org, fax: (540) 788-1207

Location: Prince William County; Manassas, and Manassas Park Cities
Program Name: New Dominion Alternative Center
Contact: Jehovannia Mitchell, Principal, New Dominion Alternative Center, Prince William County Schools, 8220 Conner Drive, Manassas, Virginia 20111 Phone: (703) 361-9808, e-mail: mitchejd@pwcs.edu, fax: (703) 361-2864

Location: Fairfax County
Program Name: Pimmit Hills High School
Contact: Beverly Wilson, Principal, Pimmit Hills High School. 7510 Lisle Avenue Falls Church, VA 22043 Phone (703)-506-2344, email beverly.wilson@fcps.edu

Location: Fairfax County
Program Name: Bryant Alternative High School
Contact: Jan McKee, Principal, Bryant Alternative High School, 2709 Popkins Lane, Alexandria, VA 22306 Phone: (703) 660-2000, e-mail: Jan.McKee@fcps.edu

Region V

Location: Buena Vista and Lexington Cities; Rockbridge County
Program Name: Turnaround Academy
Contact: Shelby Martin, Instructional Administrator, Buena Vista City Public Schools, 100 Bradford Avenue, Buena Vista, Virginia 24416 Phone: (540) 261-2127, e-mail: shelby.martin@bvcps.org, fax: (540) 261-1828

Location: Fluvanna, Alleghany Highlands, Bath, Botetourt, Buchanan, Charles City, Clarke, Craig, Culpeper, Floyd, Franklin, Giles, Grayson, Greene, Halifax, Highland, Madison, Orange, Shenandoah, and Smyth Counties; Radford City
Program Name: Project RETURN
Contact: Brenda Gilliam, Director of Secondary Education, Fluvanna County Public Schools, P.
Location: Lynchburg City; Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford, and Nelson Counties
Program Name: Regional Alternative Education Program
Contact: Linda J. Cole, Director for Alternative and Adult Education, Lynchburg City Public Schools, Amelia Pride Center, 1200-1208 Polk St., Lynchburg, Virginia 24505
Phone: (434) 522-3742 e-mail: colelj@lcsedu.net fax: (434) 522-2308

Location: Staunton, Harrisonburg, and Waynesboro Cities; Augusta County
Program Name: Genesis Alternative School
Contact: Dr. Sue Burkholder, Program Director and Principal, Genesis Alternative School, 2076 Jefferson Highway, Fishersville, Virginia 22939.
Phone: (540) 213-6507, e-mail: sburkhol@staunton.k12.va.us, fax: (540) 949-7424

Region VI
Location: Henry and Patrick Counties; Martinsville City
Program Name: Breaking Barriers -- A Regional Alternative Education Program
Contact: Linda Dorr, Director of Secondary Education, Henry County Public Schools, P. O. Box 8958, Collinsville, Virginia 24078.
Phone: (276) 634-4700, e-mail: ldorr@henry.k12.va.us, fax: (276) 634-4719

Location: Montgomery and Pulaski Counties
Program Name: Regional Program for Behaviorally Disturbed Youth
Contact: Larry Lowe, Program Manager, Montgomery County Public Schools, 208 College Street, Christiansburg, VA 24073
Phone: (540) 381-6100
Fax: (540) 381-6185
E-mail llowe@mcps.org

Location: Pittsylvania County and Danville City
Program Name: Regional Alternative School
Contact: Wanda Vaughan, Principal, Blairs Middle School, Pittsylvania County Public Schools, 200-A Blairs Middle School Circle, Blairs, Virginia 24527.
Phone: (434) 836-2900 e-mail: wanda.vaughan@pcs.k12.va.us, fax: (434) 836-8913

Location: Roanoke and Salem Cities
Program Name: Roanoke/Salem Regional Alternative Education Program
Contact: Hallie Carr, Director of Adjunct Programs and Secondary Counseling, Roanoke City Public Schools, 250 Reserve Avenue, SW, Roanoke, Virginia 24016,
Phone: (540) 853-2151, e-mail: hcarr@rcps.info, fax: (540) 853-1197

Location: Roanoke and Bedford Counties
Program Name: R. E. Cook Regional Alternative School
Contact: Dr. Lorraine Lange, Superintendent, Roanoke County Public Schools, 5937 Cove Road, Roanoke, Virginia 24019.
Phone: (540) 562-3900 ext. 10111 e-mail: llange@rcs.k12.va.us fax: (540) 562-3994
### Region VII

**Location:** Bristol City and Washington County  
Program Name: Crossroads Alternative Education Program  
Contact: Patty Bowers, Director, Student Services/Special Education, Bristol City Public Schools, 222 Oak Street, Bristol, Virginia 24201. Phone: (276) 821-5632, e-mail: pbowers@bristolvaschools.org, fax: (276) 821-5631

**Location:** Carroll County and Galax City  
Program Name: Carroll-Galax Regional Alternative Education Program (The RAE Center)  
Contact: Wade Meredith, Coordinator of Alternative Educational Services, Carroll County Public Schools, 605-9 Pine Street, Hillsville, Virginia 24343 Phone: (276) 728-3191, e-mail: wmeredit@ccpsd.k12.va.us, fax: (276) 728-3195

**Location:** Russell and Tazewell Counties  
Program Name: PROJECT BRIDGE  
Contact: Steve Banner, Administrator of Alternative Programs, Russell County Public Schools, P. O. Box 8, Lebanon, Virginia 24266. Phone: (276) 889-6519, e-mail: sbalted@yahoo.com, fax: (276) 889-6527

**Location:** Scott and Lee Counties  
Program Name: Renaissance Program  
Contact: Michael Brickey, Secondary Supervisor, Scott County Public Schools, 340 E. Jackson St., Gate City, Virginia 24251. Phone: (276) 386-6118, e-mail: mbrickey@scott.k12.va.us, fax: (276) 386-2684

**Location:** Wise and Dickinson Counties; Norton City  
Program Name: The Regional Learning Academy  
Contact: Ed Conley, Principal, The Regional Learning Academy, Wise County Public Schools, 515 Hurricane Rd., Wise, Virginia 24293. Phone: (276) 328-8612, e-mail: econley@wis.12.va.us, fax: (276) 328-4456

**Location:** Wythe and Bland Counties  
Program Name: Wythe/Bland Alternative Education Program  
Contact: LaDonna K. Meade, Director of Instruction, Wythe County Public Schools, 1570 W. Reservoir Street, Wytheville, Virginia 24382. Phone: (276) 228-5411, e-mail: lmeade@wythe.k12.va.us, fax: (276) 228-9192

### Region VIII
Location: Brunswick, Greensville, and Mecklenburg Counties
Program Name: Southside LINK
Contact: Dora Wynn, Assistant Superintendent, Brunswick County Public Schools, 1718 Farmers Field Road, Lawrenceville, Virginia 23868
Phone: (434) 848-3138, e-mail: Dora.wynn@brun.k12.va.us, fax: (434) 848-6039

Location: Nottoway, Amelia, Buckingham, Charlotte, Cumberland, Lunenburg and Prince Edward Counties
Program Name: Piedmont Alternative School
Contact: Allen Vernon, Director, Amelia-Nottoway Technical Center, 148 Vo-Tech Rd., Jetersville, Virginia 23083
Phone: (434) 645-7845 e-mail: avernon@ante-pas.com fax: (434) 645-1044
APPENDIX E

Survey Cover Email

Date

Alternative School Administrator’s Name
Address
City, State Zip Code

Dear Dr./Mr./Ms.__________________:

I am a high school principal and doctoral student at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia under the advisement of Dr. Cheryl Magill. I am interested in examining the perceptions of practicing Virginia school teachers who work in Alternative Schools and Programs regarding the importance and existence of research-based best practices in their respective schools and programs and their impact on teacher efficacy.

I am requesting that your teachers in your alternative school or program be permitted to receive a link to an online survey, and they may decide whether or not to participate in this research study. The survey allows the respondent to anonymously respond to questions regarding their perception of the importance of certain research-based characteristics of alternative schools and programs and whether these characteristics exist at their school or program. A copy of the survey instrument is enclosed and takes about 10-15 minutes to electronically complete.

Participation in the research study is completely voluntary. The data collected in this electronic survey will be summarized and reported in a way that will not identify any individuals, schools, programs, or divisions. The data will be stored on a secure server and deleted upon completion of research study regardless of participation.

It is my hope that this research study will provide valuable data on the current perceptions of teachers with regard to what the research shows to be best practices in alternative schools and programs, their existence in Virginia’s public alternative schools and programs, and how they perceive their own self-efficacy. Your permission for your teachers in your alternative schools and programs to participate in this study is of great importance to its success. If you choose to allow participation in this study, simply inform your teachers that they will be receiving a card with a link to the online survey within the next two weeks and that they have your permission to participate. These cards will be sent to you to distribute to your staff. If you choose not to allow your teachers to participate, please email me at rclowerr@henrico.k12.va.us by 4/5/10 and I will not send you the cards with the links to the survey.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact me at 804-248-1972. I appreciate your time and effort in this matter.

Respectfully,

Robert C. Lowerre  Cheryl Magill
Doctoral Candidate  Dissertation Chair
Vita

Robert Craig Lowerre was born in Fairfax, Virginia in 1967. He was adopted by Robert and Dorothy Lowerre and raised in Vienna, Virginia. He attended Virginia Tech where he earned his Bachelor of Arts Degree in Political Science in 1989. He attended Virginia Commonwealth University and earned his Master of Teaching Degree in 1995. Robert taught history and psychology at Highland Springs High School for 6 years before completing his Post-Master’s Certificate in Administration and Supervision in 2001. He currently serves as the Principal of The Academy at Virginia Randolph, where he has been in that position for 9 years. Robert lives with his wife, Tracy, and two children in Glen Allen, Virginia.