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Program Evaluation

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Alternative Schools Evaluation

Breckinridge Metropolitan

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Executive Summary

Overview

Alternative schools represent the fastest growing sector in education, yet research and evaluations on alternative learning environments are just beginning. Breckinridge Metropolitan High School, located in Louisville, KY, is an alternative school for students who are removed from school for a behavioral violation. Many students are also placed in the school as a result of involvement in the Juvenile Justice System. The overall purpose of Breckinridge Metro is to keep students in school. The objectives of the evaluation were 1) to describe student, teacher, and school characteristics in order to ascertain the alternative learning contexts provided to the students, 2) to describe the available services to students, and 3) to describe the progress and development of students during their tenure at the alternative school.

Research Design

The evaluation report includes both qualitative and quantitative data and utilized several methodologies consisting of surveys, interviews, observations, and secondary data extraction. Data collected included information pertaining to school activities, services to students, and classroom climate/culture. The District's computerized database provides individual student demographic, cognitive and non-cognitive data.

Major Findings

Student Demographics

- During the 2006-2007 school year, Breckinridge Metro served a total of 368 students. The majority of students were male (72.6%) and African American (70.4%). Students were from at-risk backgrounds as 80.4% were from single parent homes, 75.3% were on free/reduced lunch, and many were living in areas of high unemployment, low-income, and racial isolation.

- Students were highly mobile in terms of school history. The average Breckinridge Metro student has attended 8 different JCPS schools and most came from schools with higher concentrations of poverty. Approximately 40% of students had attended the Louisville Metro Youth school indicating involvement in the juvenile justice system.
- About 50% of students were suspended at least once during 2005-2006 school year; however, half of the students were not suspended in 2005-2006.
- About 1/3 of students scored Novice in reading in 2005-2006. Another 27% scored at the Apprentice level. Only 7% scored Proficient/Distinguished.

Student Survey

- Approximately 76% of students agree that they feel safe and comfortable with teachers at the school. Also, 95% of students reported that they agree that school is important, and 90% agree that dropping out would be a big mistake.
- However, only 33% reported that their teachers really care about them as a person.
- Regarding feelings toward self, approximately 96% of students reported having a high sense of self worth, are able to do things as well as others, and take a positive attitude toward themselves. About 91% reported that they are satisfied with themselves, and 0% said that they felt like a failure.

Student Progress while at Breckinridge Metro

- The average number of days a student was enrolled at Breckinridge Metro was 71 days. However, the modal student was enrolled for the total school year, indicating that a large number of students do not transition back to their home school.
- There was a statistically significant increase in students' absences from 2005-2006 to 2006-2007.
- The number of students suspended at least once decreased 55% from 2005-2006 to 2006-2007.
- About 37% of students who scored Novice on the PAS in 2005-2006 increased to either Apprentice or Proficient in 2006-2007.
- 23.7% of students dropped out of the school by the end of the school year.

Teacher, Classroom, and School Data

- In order to identify teacher demographics, experience, and beliefs about teaching, a survey was administered to all teachers. A total of 25 surveys were returned.

- The modal teacher is White (84%), has at least a master's degree (79%), majored in special education (42%), and is certified to teach high school (95%).
- About 38% of teachers reported using direct instruction frequently or everyday.
- The classroom observation data showed that direct instruction was the most frequent instructional strategy utilized.
- Breckinridge Metropolitan uses the same curriculum and pacing guides that are offered in the regular high schools. Corrective reading programs, such as Read 180 and other remediation programs are not offered because there is not enough consistency in the student population.
- Mental health services are provided through Seven Counties and the Department of Juvenile Justice. Documentation of how many students served and the evaluation of the quality of services were not available.

Recommendations

- In order to address students' detachment from school and teachers, it is recommended that teachers increase the use of collaborative and individualized instructional approaches and the counselor to student ratio be decreased. These strategies would allow students more frequent opportunities to build trust and establish relationships with adults in the school.
- Systematic documentation by the school of the quantity and quality of mental health services would help evaluate whether students' social-emotional needs are being met.
- Because of the student demographics, it is recommended that teacher professional development include strategies centering on cultural competence in working with African American students.
- A clear transition protocol between regular and alternative schools may help address the low number of students transitioning back to regular schools.
- In order to help provide skills necessary for post high school, implementation of vocational education programs, and exposure to post secondary institutions would help move students toward a successful transition into life after high school.
- Finally, due to the seemingly ambiguous placement process coupled with the finding of students in the school with no prior suspensions, it may be valuable to implement a systematic intervention check to ensure that sufficient measures have been taken in the home school locations prior to placement in Breckinridge Metro.

Introduction: Breckinridge Metropolitan

Jefferson County Public Schools has adopted a philosophy that no student will be expelled. The strategy that JCPS uses to accomplish this is the provision of alternative school environments to serve individual students' needs. Breckinridge Metropolitan High School is an alternative high school designed to meet the needs of students who require placement in an alternative school environment. The school serves high school students who have been referred to the school primarily by other high schools, typically through the districts office of student services. Referrals also come from the department of juvenile justice and/or other state and county agencies. Mandatory placement in this school is typically the result of a JCPS code of conduct violation in the regular schools or as a result of a court mandate.

The goal of Breckinridge Metropolitan is for all students to learn the academic and social skills necessary to become responsible and productive members of society and eventually return to their regular school. Students' tests scores are linked to their former comprehensive high school as long as students were enrolled in their former high school for at least 100 days. Otherwise, their scores go into the district pool. This report summarizes information and progress of the student population served by Breckinridge Metropolitan High School in the 2006-2007 school year.

Background Literature on Alternative Schools for Disruptive Students

In order to provide a context with respect to current national and state alternative school issues, national research on alternative schools for disruptive students is presented. The purpose of this brief literature review is to provide various stakeholders with a broader context of information about alternative schools that are used to serve similar student populations. This review includes information regarding the history, purpose, growth, national trends, and characteristics of effective and ineffective alternative schools.

The Evolving Purpose of Alternative Schools

In her research on the first decade of public alternative schools, Raywid (1981) found that alternative options for public school students skyrocketed from 100 schools to over 10,000 between the late 1950's through the early 1960's. Alternative education sprouted as a movement to empower poor and minority students (Morrison et al, 2001). Mirroring changes in the wider political climate from the 1960's throughout the 1980's, alternative schools became less progressive, and operated out of a more narrow and conservative framework (Raywid, 1981; Young, 1990).

Beginning in the early 1980's, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention began an initiative promoting alternative schools for delinquent students based on the premise that schools could play a significant role in reducing youth crime (Barber, 1980; Cox, 1999). Ironically, though the original purpose of alternative schools for "at-risk students" was to provide an alternative learning environment for students who had difficulty in the traditional school environment, research indicates that they are increasingly being used as an act of punishment, exclusion, and containment for disruptive students (Dunbar, 2001; Lehr, Lanner & Lange, 2003; Morrison et al, 2001).

Growth of Alternative Schools for Disruptive Students

In response to current educational, political, economic and social forces, alternative schools are increasingly playing a more prominent role in the world of public education (Lange & Lehr, 2003). Throughout the 1990's to present, the current number of public alternative schools and enrollment of the at-risk students that fill them is on the rise. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Common Core of Data (CCD) indicate that alternative schools for at-risk students grew from 2,606 in 1994 to over 20,000 in 2002 (Lange and Sletten, 2002).

There is an agreement among researchers who examine issues related to alternative schools and school discipline that placement of disruptive students into alternative schools is a growing popular strategy schools are using to deal with students who are considered behavior problems (Banicky, 2000; Loflin, 2000; Lehr, Lanner & Lange, 2003). Moreover, the demand for more alternative schools serving disruptive students is clearly growing across the country (Aaron and Zweig, 2003; Dunbar, 2001; Loflin, 2000). Reflecting on current suspension and expulsion practices nationwide, some researchers recently forecast that the use of alternative school placement will continue to rise (Lehr, Lanner, and Lange, 2003; Morrison et al, 2001).

National Trends in Alternative Schools for Disruptive Students

Findings from a National Center of Education Statistics (NCES) study by Kliner, Porch and Farris (2002) confirm the growth of such schools and reveal several important national trends. Kliner et al. (2002) conducted a representative survey to determine school district practices in the use of alternative schools. Questionnaire data from 1,534 school districts during the 2000-2001 school year revealed that school districts most likely to have alternative schools for at-risk youth were large, located in the Southeast region, have a high minority enrollment and

high concentrations of poverty. Alternative schools were offered at the high school level by 92 % of districts, at the middle school level by 67 % of districts and at the elementary level by 21 % of districts. In many districts, the demand for alternative school placements outweighed the supply. In fact, 83% of districts with alternative schools reported putting students on waiting lists due to space and staffing limitations.

With respect to entrance and exit criteria, the majority of districts with alternative schools for at-risk youth placed students in the schools because the students physically attacked someone, possessed drugs, were truant, or engaged in disruptive verbal behavior. Of districts with alternative schools, 75% allowed students to transfer back to a base school while 1% did not allow transfers. The two key determinants for allowing students to transfer back to their base schools were improved student behavior/ attitudes and motivation to return. Key findings in regard to staffing, curriculum, and collaboration, revealed that large districts and districts with high minority enrollment and poverty concentration were more likely to report involuntary placement of teachers into alternative schools; 75% had policies requiring curriculum to meet individual student needs. The type of collaboration most widely reported was with the juvenile justice system (84%), mental health agencies (75%), police departments (70%) and child protective services (69%).

Because the development and implementation of alternative schools varies at the state, district and school level, no one standard list of trends exists. In a survey of 48 states regarding enrollment, funding, curriculum and staffing, several key findings emerged.

With respect to curriculum, while most states required alternative schools to follow state standards, more than a third of states had unclear language regarding the curriculum (Lehr, Lanner and Lange, 2003, p. 14). Enrollment criteria numbers suggest that alternative schools are

being used as a setting for suspended and expelled students which are projected to increase. With respect to funding, most alternative schools rely on state funding, but other sources widely used include local, federal and grant dollars. Findings regarding school staffing indicate that more than half of the states did not have staffing standards for alternative schools in their policy. Finally, the majority of states did not have clear guidance regarding the education of students with disabilities in alternative school settings (Lehr, Lanner and Lange, 2003, p.15). There is an increasing concern regarding the enrollment procedures and quality of services for special education students enrolled in alternative school settings.

Researchers have found several alternative school characteristics or conditions conducive to *positive* student outcomes. These include:

- Small class size/ low ratio
- Flexible/understanding teachers
- Individualized instruction
- Student involvement in decision making
- Family/parent involvement

Characteristics of alternative schools found to contribute to *negative* student outcomes include:

- Racial isolation
- Punitive focus
- Intensified social control
- Inadequate resources
- Lack of accountability
- Unchallenging curriculum
- Deviant peer networking/contagion

The current paper describes Breckinridge – Metro, one alternative school in the Jefferson County Public School district. Given the increasing demand for alternative schools, not only nationally, but locally, the paper serves to better understand the school's teachers, the learning environment provided to students, and the characteristics of students being served by the alternative school.

Evaluation Purpose & Questions

This alternative school evaluation report includes both qualitative and quantitative dimensions. The evaluators met with the principals to determine what research questions would most useful, and thus which questions/objectives would be given priority. The overarching objectives and evaluation questions that guided the evaluation were the following:

Objective 1: To describe the student characteristics, teacher characteristics, and school culture in order to ascertain the alternative learning contexts provided to students.

1. What are the characteristics of students served in the 2006-2007 school year in terms of demographics, mobility, academic, and non-academic data?
2. What are the characteristics of the teachers in terms of education, experience, and beliefs about teaching?
3. What is the overall school culture and climate as rated by teachers and students?
4. What is the overall classroom climate as rated by independent observers?

Objective 2: To describe the available services to students who attend the alternative school.

5. What are the characteristics of the school's scope of activities and services?

Objective 3: To describe the progress and development of students during their tenure at the alternative school.

6. What is the average length of tenure for a student at Breckinridge Metro?
7. Is there a change in attendance for students attending the Breckinridge Metro?
8. Is there a change in the reading achievement of students attending Breckinridge Metro?
9. Is there a change in suspensions of students attending Breckinridge Metro?
10. What is the return rate to regular schools and what percent return to Breckinridge Metro (recidivism)?

Evaluation Method

Various data sources of qualitative and quantitative data are used for the evaluation of Breckinridge Metropolitan. The District's computerized database provides individual student demographic, cognitive and non-cognitive data. The demographic data includes race, gender, school location, grade, free/reduced lunch status, and household structure. Other demographic data includes geographic information to identify the neighborhoods where the students reside

The cognitive data includes proficiency levels on the Predictive Assessment Series (PAS). The PAS is a series of equivalent assessments designed to match, predict, and improve the reading knowledge and skills tested by state standards and aligned to nationally-normed and state criterion test. Non-cognitive data provided by the district data base included attendance and discipline related information.

Qualitative data was collected throughout the formative data collection process via observation visits, staff interviews, and surveys conducted with teachers and students. This includes information pertaining to school activities, services to students, and classroom climate/culture. The specific evaluation measures, and samples used are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: *Evaluation Measures & Sample*

Measures	Sample	Description / Source
Cognitive		
PAS reading scores	78 students	Students enrolled 100+ days that have PAS score in 0506 and 0607/ district data base
Non-Cognitive		
Demographics	368 students	All students who attended during 06-07/ district data base
Geographic/Neighborhood	368 students	All students who attended during 06-07/ district data base
Mobility History	368 students	All students who attended during 06-07/ district data base
Feeder Schools	366 students	All students with available data/ district data base
Return rate/ Recidivism	143 students	All students enrolled on Nov 1 2006/ district database
Attendance	104 students	Students enrolled 100+ days/ district data base
Suspension/DJJ involvement	104 students	Students enrolled 100+ days/ district data base
Perceptions of self	22 students	Partially random sample of students/ survey
School Culture		
Student perception of school and teachers	22 students	Partially random sample of students/ survey
Classroom observations	3 classrooms	Classrooms selected by Principal/ observation instrument
Teacher perception of program	25 teachers	Teachers/ survey
Teacher characteristics	25 teachers	Teachers/ survey
School enrollment	171 students	1 st -8 th pupil months 06-07/ district data base

Evaluation Results

As an alternative school serving students who have been kicked out of mainstream schools, Breckinridge Metro is different than the “regular” high schools in various ways. Two important areas of difference to highlight include the purpose/vision of the school; and the enrollment pattern over the course of the year.

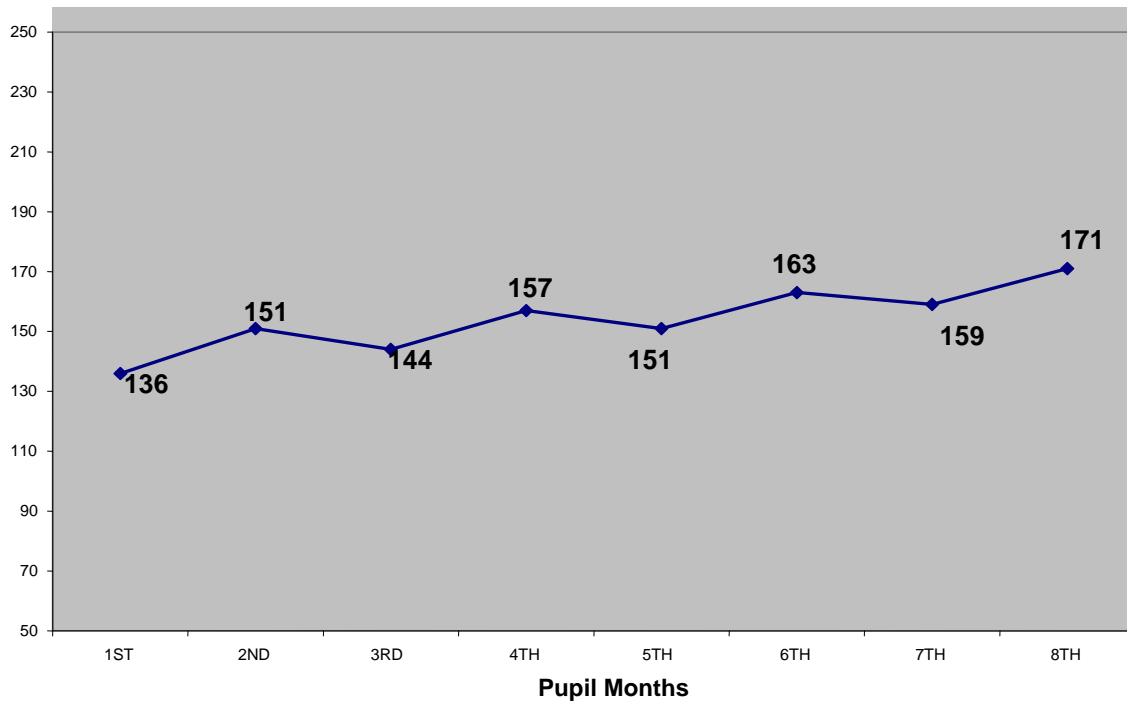
Purpose and Vision of Breckinridge Metro

The overall purpose of Breckinridge Metro is to keep students (who have been removed from other schools) in school. Breckinridge is operated on the philosophy that student and staff safety comes first, then instruction, all embedded within a highly structured environment. As stated in their school profile, the staff at Breckinridge Metro is committed to providing all students with the behavioral and academic skills necessary to reach their fullest potential and to become responsible life-long learners. Importantly, Breckinridge Metro has a policy of never closing the door on students who drop out and decide to return within the school year.

Monthly Enrollment

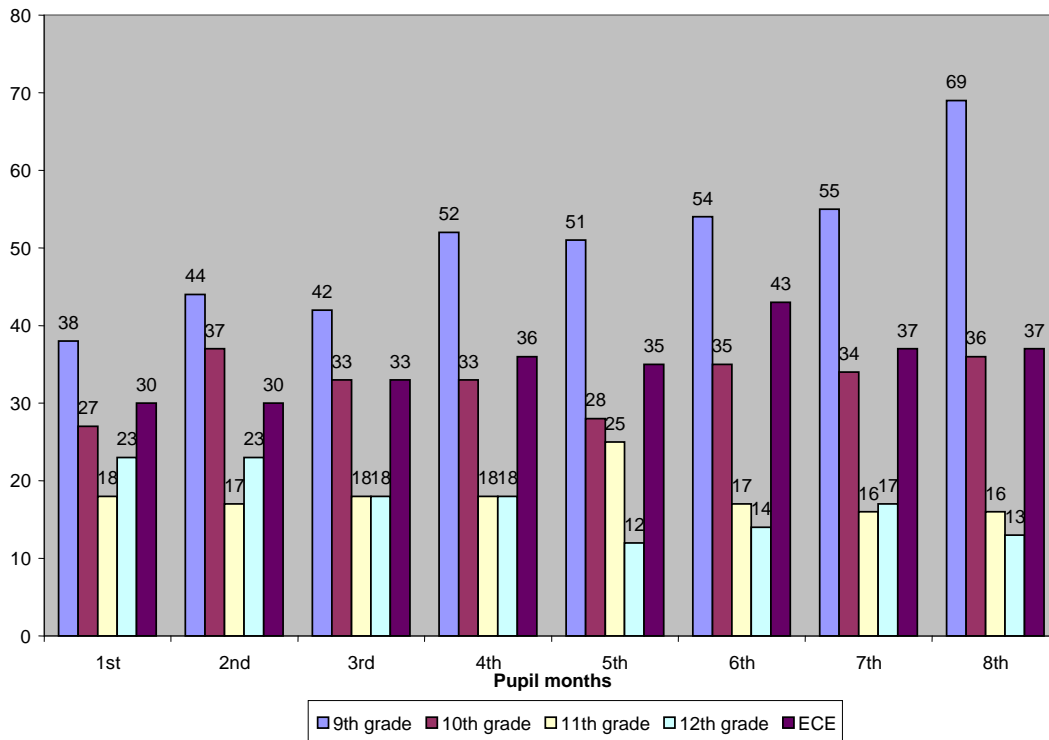
One of the biggest challenges faced by the school is the transient nature of the student population. While most schools enrollment remains stable across the school year student enrollment at Breckinridge Metro changes from month to month. Presented in Figure 1 is the student enrollment for the 1st-8th pupil months of 2006-2007. As can be seen, student enrollment steadily increases each month throughout the year. Data indicates a 26% increase in enrollment from the beginning to the end of the school year. This has important implications for staffing.

Figure 1: *Enrollment by Month*



Examining the enrollment trend by grade provides a more detailed picture with respect to grade level changes. The enrollment trend by grade level of student is presented in Figure 2. As shown in Figure 2, the student enrollment increases are largest overall for 9th grade students, as indicated by an 82% increase from first pupil month to the eight pupil month. Student enrollment increases are lowest for 11th grade students. Additionally, there is a 43% increase in the number of ECE students from the first pupil month to the 6th pupil month.

Figure 2: Enrollment per Month by Grade



Objective 1: To describe student characteristics, teacher characteristics, and school culture in order to ascertain the alternative learning contexts provided to students.

Student Characteristics

Q1: What are the characteristics of students served in the 2006-2007 school year in terms of demographics, mobility, academic, and non-academic data?

Student Demographics

During the 2006-2007 school year, Breckinridge Metropolitan served a total of 368 students. As shown in Table 2, the majority of students are male (72.6%), African-American (70.4%), and in ninth or tenth grade (66.6%). With respect to household structure and poverty, the students are at high risk as 80.4% live in single parent homes and 75.3% receive free/reduced lunch.

While the demographic data presented in Table 2 reveal the high risk status of the students served in terms of race, poverty and household status, data describing the general neighborhood status where students live can also provide insight. As shown on Table 2, 27% of students live in zip code areas 40203, 40210, 40212, and 14% live in zip code area 40211. These zip codes had the greatest frequency among the students. Data from the 2000 Census Bureau reveal that within these four zip code areas, there are high unemployment rates, a high percent of families living below the poverty line, and in some areas, are racially isolated. A geographic map of where students live is shown in Appendix A. Also, a detailed account of neighborhood child wellbeing data for the zip code areas listed in the table can be seen on Appendix B.

Table 2: *Profile of Participating Students in Breckinridge Metro (N =368)*

Variable	N	%
Gender		
Male	267	72.6
Female	101	27.4
Race		
Black	259	70.4
Other	6	1.6
White	103	28.0
Gender*Race		
Black Male	187	50.8
White Male	77	20.9
Other Male	3	0.8
Black Female	72	19.6
White Female	26	7.1
Other Female	3	0.8
Grade		
Ninth	153	41.6
Tenth	92	25.0
Eleventh	56	15.2
Twelfth	44	12.0
Self Contained ECE	23	6.3
Parent Household Structure		
Single	296	80.4
Two Parent	72	19.6
Lunch Status		
Free	253	68.8
Reduced	24	6.5
Paid	91	24.7
Neighborhood/Zip Code Resides		
40203, 40210, 40212	98	27%
40211	50	14%
Other Zips	220	60%

Feeder Schools/Mobility

Feeder School data was examined to investigate which elementary, middle, high, and other special schools students attended prior to being referred to Breckinridge Metropolitan. Data was available for 336 students. The top elementary schools, middle schools, high, and special schools attended by Breckinridge Metro students are presented in the Table 3. For each school, the percent of students who receive free/reduced lunch is shown. In total, students averaged attending 7.7 different JCPs schools throughout their school career up to this point. As evidenced by the percent poverty (i.e., Free/Reduce lunch) of the most frequently attended schools, students attending Breckinridge Metro are more likely to have attended elementary, middle and high schools with high concentrations of poverty than the district average. Importantly, the top 5 high schools where students have emerged from are among the district's highest needs schools. That is, these are schools with longstanding low achievement, high concentration of poverty, and high teacher turnover.

Table 3: *Regular School Locations of 06-07 Students Prior to Referral to Breckinridge Metro (N =336)*

School Name	Percent F/R Lunch	Number	Percent of Breckinridge Metro Student who attended...
Elementary			
Atkinson	91.2%	34	10.12%
Frayser	88.4%	28	8.33%
Byck	80.3%	27	8.04%
Lincoln	80.7%	24	7.14%
Jacob	90.9%	23	6.85%
Hazelwood	90.8%	22	6.55%
Wellington	76.8%	22	6.55%
Roosevelt-Perry	96.2%	21	6.25%
Young	91.0%	21	6.25%
Rutherford	88.1%	20	5.95%

Middle	Percent poverty	Number	Percent of Breckinridge Metro Student who attended...
Southern	89.9%	45	13.39%
Western	92.4%	45	13.39%
Meyzeek	52.6%	39	11.61%
Iroquois	77.3%	34	10.12%
Stuart	67.9%	33	9.82%
Highland	51.2%	32	9.52%
Noe	49.5%	28	8.33%
Thomas Jefferson	74.8%	28	8.33%
Carrithers	54.0%	27	8.04%
Lassiter	71.6%	25	7.44%
Frost	78.2%	24	7.14%
High	Percent poverty	Number	Percent of Breckinridge Metro Student who attended...
Iroquois	76.4%	30	8.93%
Seneca	42.8%	22	6.55%
Shawnee	78.6%	22	6.55%
Western	75.4%	19	5.65%
Pleasure Ridge Park	43.6%	18	5.36%
Valley	64.0%	17	5.06%
Atherton	49.2%	16	4.76%
Ballard	21.9%	16	4.76%
Doss	67.1%	15	4.46%
Eastern	24.9%	14	4.17%
Special Schools	Percent poverty	Number	Percent of Breckinridge Metro Student who attended...
Louisville Metro Youth	57.1%	137	40.77%
Kennedy Metro	87.7%	98	29.17%
Peace Academy	39.5%	70	20.83%
Waller Environmental Elem/Middle	88.6%	35	10.42%
Ten Broeck/KMI	32.4%	30	8.93%
Ten Broeck/Dupont	37.8%	26	7.74%
Buechel Metro	67.9%	24	7.14%
Ackerly/Bingham Guidance Elem	50.0%	22	6.55%
Ackerly/Bingman High	40.0%	21	6.25%
Liberty High	74.0%	21	6.25%
Louisville Day Treatment	43.5%	12	3.57%

To further provide a context regarding the students served at Breckinridge Metro this year, student mobility history data was analyzed. Student mobility history includes the number of times a student has changed schools during a school year. The mobility data presented in Table 4 represent the number of times students changed schools from August 1998 through May 2006, thus encompassing students change of schools since their early elementary school years in JCPS. On average, students withdrew from one school to enroll in another 6 times throughout their schooling career up to this point. The range is from 0 school changes to 24 school changes.

Table 4: *Mobility History of Students Since 1998 (N = 368)*

Mobility History (since 1998)	N	%
0	89	24.1%
1-3	103	27.9%
4-6	75	20.3%
7-9	47	12.7%
10-12	23	6.3%
13-15	20	5.5%
16+	12	3.3%

Prior Year Academic and Non- Academic Characteristics

In order to determine prior year (2005-2006) academic and non-academic characteristics of the students served at Breckinridge Metro this year, several factors were examined to help describe the student's background further. In terms of reading achievement, shown in Table 5, of all the students who took the PAS in reading, 34% scored in the Novice range, 27% scored Apprentice, while only 7% scored Proficient/Distinguished. With respect to suspensions, 40% of the students were suspended from school between 1-3 times. Regarding the reasons for suspension, the most frequent reasons included disruptive behavior, student to student fighting, failure to obey staff, and harassment, respectively. Interestingly, about half of the students were not suspended in 2005-2006. However, as presented in the mobility analysis, approximately 40%

of students had attended the Louisville Metro Youth school (JCPS school in the Department of Juvenile Justice), indicating involvement in the juvenile justice system.

Table 5: *Prior Year (2005-2006) Reading Level and Suspensions (N = 369)*

Variables	N	%
Academic		
PAS reading 2005-06		
Novice	126	34.1%
Apprentice	99	26.8%
Proficient-Distinguished	26	7.0%
Did not take PAS	118	32.0%
Non-Academic		
Number of Suspensions 2005-06		
0	183	49.6%
1-3	149	40.0%
4-6	33	9.0%
7+	4	1.0%

Q2: What are the characteristics of the teachers in terms of education, experience, and beliefs about teaching?

Teacher Characteristics

Teacher Education and Experience

In order to identify teacher demographics, experience, and beliefs about teaching, a survey was administered to all teachers. Of the 25 teachers who took the survey, 67% teach full time, 100% currently teach grades 9-12, and participated in professional development this year. The average high school teaching experience is 15 years. Furthermore, 36% teach more than one subject. As shown in Table 6, the modal teacher is White, has a master's degree, majored in special education, and is certified to teach high school.

Table 6: *Profile of Teachers in Breckinridge Metro (N = 25)**

Variable	N	%
Gender		
Female	12	48.0%
Male	13	52.0%
Race/ Ethnicity		
Black/ African-American (not Hispanic)	4	16.0%
White/ Caucasian (Not Hispanic)	21	84.0%
Education Level		
AA, AS, two-year degree	1	4.2%
Bachelor's degree or one year of coursework beyond BA	4	16.6%
Master's degree	10	41.7%
Rank 1	9	37.5%
Major		
Secondary Education	6	25.0%
Special Education	10	41.7%
Education (general)	3	12.5%
Other	7	20.8%
Certification (% Yes)		
Elementary school	8	36.4%
Middle school	13	59.1%
High school	21	95.5%
Other levels or special subjects	11	45.8%
Current Position		
Teacher	10	41.7%
ECE Teacher	10	41.7%
Assistant Teacher/ Instructional Assistant	1	4.2%
Other	3	12.5%

* N reflects teachers who took survey; missing data for some variables

Teacher Beliefs about Preparation and Teaching

As shown on Table 7, the majority of teachers reported that they feel prepared or very prepared to teach students who are from different socioeconomic backgrounds, and have behavior, emotional, or academic problems.

Table 7: *Teacher self-report of preparation (N = 24) ***

How well prepared do you feel to teach Students:	Somewhat Prepared	Prepared	Very Prepared
From different socio-economic backgrounds	2 (8.3%)	10 (41.7%)	12 (50.0%)
With behavior problems	2 (8.7%)	9 (39.1%)	12 (52.2%)
With emotional problems *	4 (16.7%)	12 (50.0%)	7 (29.2%)
With academic problems	3 (12.5%)	11 (45.8%)	10 (41.7%)

* 1 teacher responded they were not prepared to teach students with emotional problems

** Due to some missing responses, N varies slightly

With respect to instructional approaches, as can be seen on Table 8, approximately 38% of teachers reported using direct instruction and small group/collaborative activities frequently or everyday. Approximately 45% reported using technology and implementing classroom discussions frequently or everyday. Approximately 67% of teachers reported using independent work (i.e., work students do alone) for students. With respect to classroom discipline, approximately 52% of teachers report using discipline (i.e., referrals, in school suspension) rarely or only occasionally. Additionally, approximately 67% of teachers reported using student rewards frequently or everyday.

Table 8: *Teacher self-report of teaching practices (N = 24) ***

Teaching Practices	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Frequently	Everyday
Direct Instruction (lecture)	1 (4.2%)	7 (29.2%)	7 (29.2%)	8 (33.3%)	1 (4.2%)
Small group activities	1 (4.2%)	7 (29.2%)	7 (29.2%)	6 (25.0%)	3 (12.5%)
Independent student work	0 (0%)	2 (8.3%)	6 (25.0%)	11 (45.8%)	5 (20.8%)
Use of Technology	1 (4.2%)	7 (29.2%)	6 (25.0%)	5 (20.8%)	5 (20.8%)
Classroom discussions	1 (4.8%)	5 (23.8%)	5 (23.8%)	5 (23.8%)	5 (23.8%)
Disciplinary actions	3 (12.0%)	9 (39.1%)	6 (26.1%)	3 (13.0%)	2 (8.7%)
Use of student rewards	1 (4.2%)	5 (20.8%)	2 (8.3%)	7 (29.2%)	9 (37.5%)

** Due to some missing responses, N varies slightly

Q3: What is the overall school culture and climate as rated by students?

School Culture

Student Perception of School Culture and Themselves

In order to determine student perceptions of the schools' culture/ climate, as well as perceptions of themselves, a sample of students participated in a survey activity using "clicker" or press technology. The students were randomly selected by evaluators using computerized method, with the only criteria being that they have attended the school at least 12 weeks. This allowed ample time for students to answer questions about the school.

Due to the transient nature of the population and other factors (e.g., student not in attendance that day), not all students selected were available to take the survey, so some students on the original list were replaced with available students as selected by the principal. Table 9 identifies the demographic characteristics of students who completed the survey activity. As shown, the majority of students were male and African-American. With respect to grade level,

31% were in 10th grade, 22% in 11th, and 45% in 12th grade. In terms of enrollment, 31% attended the school between 3-6 months, 13% between 7-9 months, and 54% have attended the school for more than 9 months.

Table 9: *Student Survey Demographics* (N = 22)

Student Respondent Demographics	N	%
Gender		
Male	17	77.3
Female	5	22.7
Race		
African-American	15	68.2
Caucasian	6	27.3
Hispanic	0	0
Other	1	4.5
Current Grade		
8 th	0	0
9 th	0	0
10 th	7	31.8
11 th	5	22.7
12 th	10	45.5
Length of Time attending Breck Metro		
Less than 3 months	0	0
3-6 months	7	31.8
7-9 months	3	13.6
More than 9 months	12	54.5

The goal of the student survey was to ascertain student perceptions of the schools climate and of themselves. The survey has 4 subscales to measure (a) trust and respect for teachers, (b) identification with school, (c) community of learning, and (d) self-esteem. The items on the survey had been validated as they were taken from various instruments used in previous research. Reverse questioning was used in 3 of the 4 subscales. The items were presented on a 4 point Likert scale, where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, and 4 = strongly.

As shown on Table 10, approximately 76% of students agree that they feel safe and comfortable with teachers at the school. Also, 95% of students reported that they agree that

school is important in their life, and 90% agree that dropping out would be a big mistake. However, only 9% of students agreed that school is one of their favorite places to be.

Approximately 86% of students agreed that teachers encourage them to do their best, while only 33% reported that their teachers really care about them as a person. Regarding feelings toward self, approximately 96% of students reporting having a high sense of self worth, are able to do things as well as others, and take a positive attitude toward themselves. About 91% reported that they are satisfied with themselves, and 0% said that they felt like a failure.

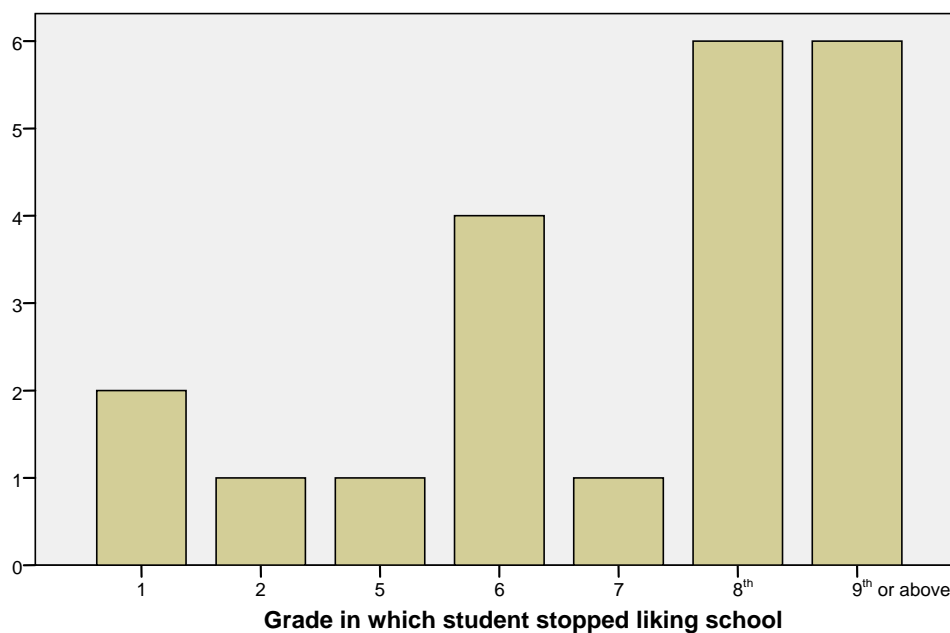
Table 10: *Breckinridge Metropolitan Student Survey Results* (N = 22)

Trust and Respect for Teachers (perception of teachers)	% Agree/Strongly Agree
The teachers here don't care what I think (R)	45.4
The teachers here always try to be fair.	47.6
I feel respected by teachers and staff at this school.	57.2
I feel safe and comfortable with the teachers in this school.	76.2
Identification with School	
School is one of my favorite places to be.	9.5
School is often a waste of time (R)	27.2
I can get a good job even if my grades are bad.	50.0
There are teachers or other adults in my school that I can talk to if I have a problem.	54.5
I like to participate in a lot of activities at schools.	59.1
Most of what I learn in school will be useful when I get a job.	68.2
School is one of the most important things in my life.	81.8
Dropping out of school before getting a high school diploma would be a huge mistake for me.	90.5
School is more important than most people think.	95.4
Community of Learners/Perception of Teachers	
My teachers really care about me as a person.	33.3
The adults in my school treat students fairly.	45.4
Teachers at my school treat students fairly.	45.5
Adults in my school building set a good example for students.	57.1
My teachers listen to my questions and concerns.	63.6
Teachers encourage me to do the best work I can.	86.3
Self-Esteem	
All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure (R)	0.0
I feel I do not have much to be proud of. (R)	0.0
At times I think I am no good at all. (R)	13.6
I feel useless at times (R)	22.7
I wish I could have more respect for myself (R)	23.8
I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.	95.5
I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	90.5
I am able to do things as well as most other people.	95.2
I take a positive attitude toward myself.	95.5
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	90.9

* Note: R indicates reversed question items

In addition to the items above, in order to determine the approximate time in their schooling history that they may have become disengaged with school, the students were asked the following question “If you do not like school, in which grade did you start NOT liking school?” As shown on Figure 3, 6 students (27%) reported they started disliking school in 8th grade and 6 students (27%) reported 9th grade or above. Additionally, 4 (18%) of the students reported 6th grade, and 2 reported 1st grade. These results are noteworthy because disengagement from school can increase the likelihood that students will act out behaviorally.

Figure 3: *Distribution of student responses to grade they started disliking school (N = 22)*



Q4: What is the overall classroom climate as rated by independent observers?***Classroom Climate***

In order to ascertain the school culture and environmental context in the evaluation, classroom observations were conducted by two evaluators using an observation instrument. The instrument called the Classroom Observation Summary was developed by the evaluators, piloted to ensure inter-rater reliability, and demonstrated high internal consistency in the current data set, Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$. The observation instrument consisted of 22 items that examined (a) *instructional orientation* – refers to the physical orientation in which instruction/learning is taking place (e.g., whole group, small group), (b) *instructional components* – refers to the specific components of instruction driven by the teacher and the classroom environment (e.g., use of higher order questions, uses praise or reinforcements), and (c) *student engagement* – refers explicitly to student involvement and attention in the classroom (e.g., proportion of class that is asking and answering questions, attentive to classroom activities).

Due to time and resources, observations were limited to 3 total classroom observations. The metric of the scale is designed for an observation that takes place for the entire class period (45-50 minute periods). Classrooms were selected to represent the range of ages, content areas, teacher experience/education levels, and teacher length of time at the school. Table 11 depicts the average scores across classroom observed at Breckinridge Metropolitan. For the Instructional Orientation, a 1 = not observed, 2 = rarely (average of 5 minutes per period), 3 = occasionally (average of 10-15 minutes per period), 4 = frequently (average of 16-30 minutes per period), and 5 = extensively (average of more than 30 minutes per period). As shown in Table 11, the most common instructional orientation was direct instruction. Small group learning was not observed

in any of the classes, and independent/individual work was observed for a small proportion of time.

For Instructional Components, items are each rated on a 5 point scale where 1= Low, 3= Moderate, and 5 = High (2 and 4 represent the midpoints, respectively). Overall, classrooms were rated highest in classroom management and respectful interactions between teacher and students and they were rated lowest in providing opportunities for interactive student/student dialogue and in connecting learning to students' past knowledge or previous experience.

Finally for Student Engagement, items are rated on a 5 point scale from 1 = None (0% of class), 2 = Few (1-25% of class), 3 = Some (26-50% of class), 4 = Most (51-99% of class), and 5 = All (100% of class). Overall, most students in the classes observed were attentive, and answered instructor-posed questions. However less than $\frac{1}{4}$ asked any questions during the classroom observations. This finding pointed to an inconsistency with teacher report where approximately 50% of teachers said they implement classroom discussions frequently or everyday.

Table 11: *Classroom Observation Results* (n = 3 classrooms)

Classroom Observation Summary	Mean	Std. Deviation
Instructional Orientation		
Small group/Cooperative/Collaborative Learning	1.00	0.00
Independent/Individual work	2.67	1.53
Direct Instruction (whole class lecture)	4.00	1.00
Instructional Components		
Provides opportunities for interactive student/student dialogue	2.00	1.00
Connects to students' past knowledge or previous experiences	2.00	1.73
Utilizes higher level questioning	2.33	1.53
Communicates to students what they are to learn as a result of the lesson, either written or verbally	2.33	0.58
Gives higher order feedback	2.67	0.58
Uses praise and/or reinforcements	2.67	0.58
Effective time management (no wasted time; materials are ready)	3.00	1.00
Re-teaches or restates lesson in a different way if the class does not understand	3.00	1.41
Activities are developmentally appropriate	3.33	0.58
Circulates around the classroom to check on students	3.67	0.58
Positive atmosphere among students	3.67	0.58
Enthusiastic instruction conveyed by the instructor	3.67	1.12
Provides opportunities for interactive instructor/student dialogue	4.00	1.00
Effective classroom management	4.67	0.58
Respectful interactions between instructor and Students	4.67	0.58
Student Engagement		
Students ask instructor questions	1.33	0.58
Students answer instructor questions	4.00	1.00
Students are attentive to teacher	4.33	0.58
Students are engaged in activities	4.33	0.58

Scales:

Instructional Orientation: 1 = not observed, 2 = rarely (average of 5 minutes per period), 3 = occasionally (average of 10-15 minutes per period), 4 = frequently (average of 16-30 minutes per period), and 5 = extensively (average of more than 30 minutes per period).

Instructional Components: 1= Low, 3= Moderate, and 5 = High

Student Engagement: 1 = None (0% of class), 2 = Few (1-25% of class), 3 = Some (26-50% of class), 4 = Most (51-99% of class), and 5 = All (100% of class).

Objective 2: To describe the available services to students who attend the alternative school.

Activities/Services to Students

Q 5: What are the characteristics of the school's scope of activities and services?

In order to determine specific services to students in each school, an interview with the principal was conducted, and whenever possible, supporting documentation was examined. Breckinridge Metropolitan uses the same curriculum and pacing guides that are offered in the regular high schools. Corrective reading programs, such as Read 180 and other remediation programs are not offered because there is not enough consistency in the student population. Programs that are implemented in the school take no more than one week to fit the mobility of the population.

In terms of mental health services, there is a full-time therapist on staff and services are also provided through Seven Counties and Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) to serve their individual clients who are also students in the school. Two therapists work with individual students, and some students participate in group counseling. Also, the DJJ employs two full-time probation officers/counselors that work with students in Breckinridge Metro. Through the combination of these resources, counseling sessions are available, although decisions about what services are available to which students are made on a case-by-case basis by the school staff – and there is no documentation of the number of students served. In an interview with school administration, it was shared that the school does not participate in mentoring programs such as Every1Reads due to the low teacher-pupil ratios and the fact students often are already meeting regularly with an external support person such as a social worker, counselor, or probation officer. The principal reported that the reason documentation and evaluation of services to students is absent is due to loss of data manager.

Objective 3: To describe the progress and development of students during their tenure at the alternative school.

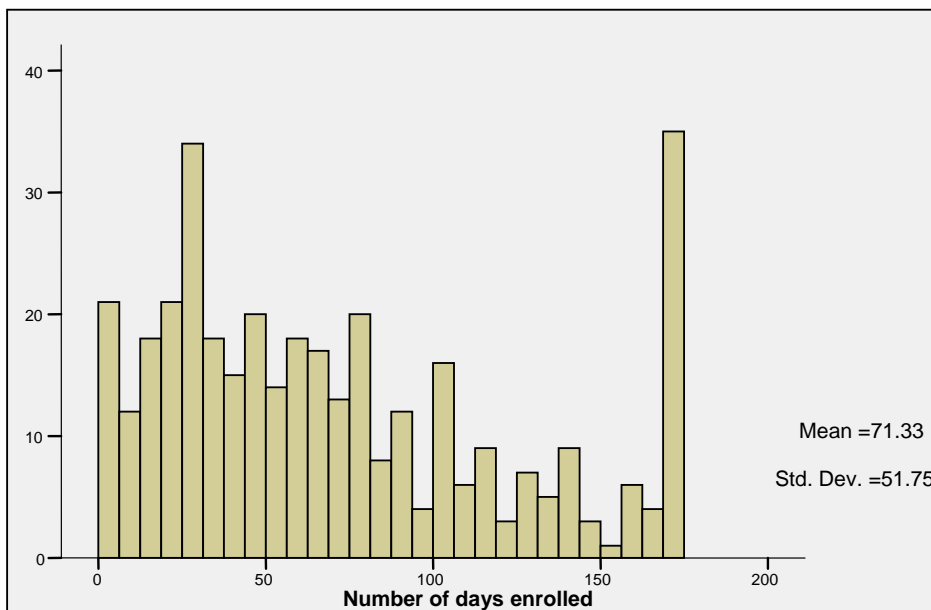
Progress of Students During Tenure

Q6: What is the average length of tenure for a student at Breckinridge Metro?

Student Length of Tenure (stay)

The average length of tenure ($n = 369$) for students in 2006-2007 was 71.33 (SD=51.7) days. While there is a wide distribution of enrollment for students, as shown on Figure 4 below, the modal enrollment at Breckinridge Metro for 173 days – the total school year. The next frequent length of stay at Breckinridge Metro is between 20-30 days. This indicates that a large number of students do not transition back to their home school within the school year.

Figure 4: *Distribution of Student Enrollment/length of tenure at Breckinridge Metro (N = 369)*



Q7: Is there a change in attendance for students attending Breckinridge Metro?***Student Attendance***

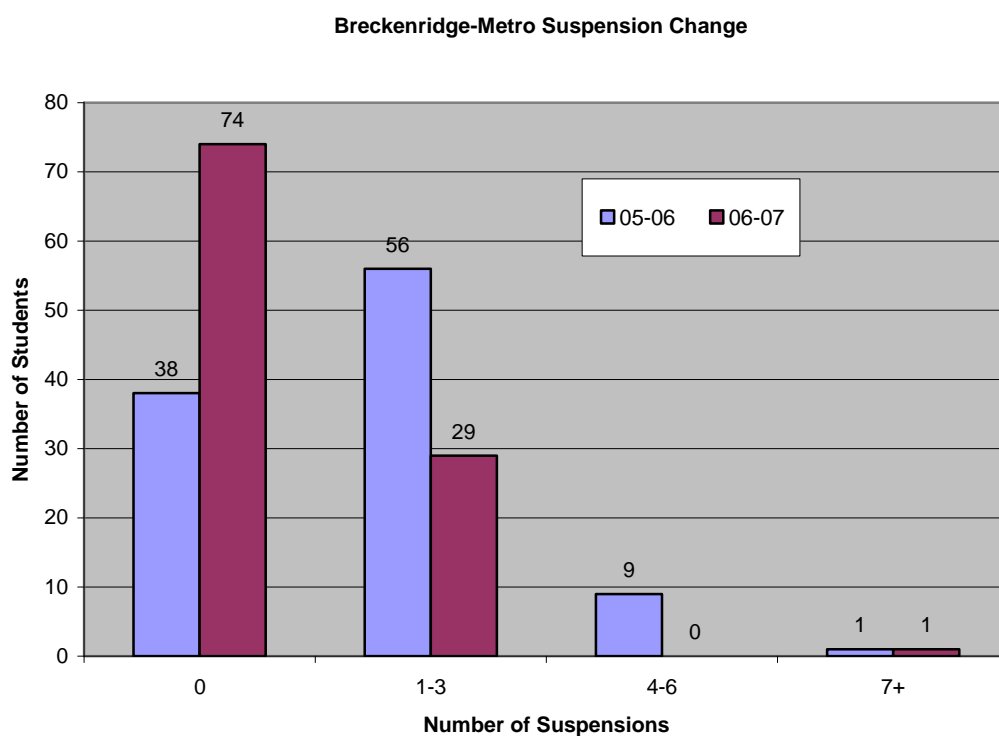
In order to assess the impact of the program on attendance, absenteeism data from students who attended Breckinridge for at least 100 or more days were analyzed (100 days = approximately 60% of school year). Of the students enrolled at least 100 days or more ($n = 104$), the average rate of absences in 2005-2006 was 28.9. During the 2006-2007 school year, the average rate of absences was 35.2, indicating a slight increase in the average number of absences from the previous school year. In order to determine if this increase in absences is statistically significant, a dependent sample t-test was conducted. The t-test results indicate that this is a statistically significant increase ($t = -3.04$, $p = .003$).

Q 8: Is there a change in suspensions of students attending Breck Metro?***Student Suspensions***

In order to assess the impact of the program on suspension, suspension data from students who attended Breckinridge for at least 100 or more days were analyzed. As shown in Table 12 and Figure 5, there was a 94% increase in the number of students who did not receive any suspension from 05-06 to 06-07. Further, there was a 48% decrease in the number of students who received between 1-3 suspensions, and a 100% decrease in the number of students receiving 4-6 suspensions. It is important to note here that during the interview with the principal, it was shared that it is the school's does not to suspend students, but rather to communicate with the police and/or DJJ when a violation has occurred.

Table 12: *Number of students receiving suspension(s) (n = 104)*

Suspensions Number	Number of Students		Change	
	05-06	06-07	N	%
0 suspensions	38	74	+36	+94.7%
1-3 suspensions	56	29	-27	-48.2%
4-6 suspensions	9	0	-9	-100%
7+ suspensions	1	1	0	-0%

Figure 5: *Change in Number of students receiving suspension (n = 104)*

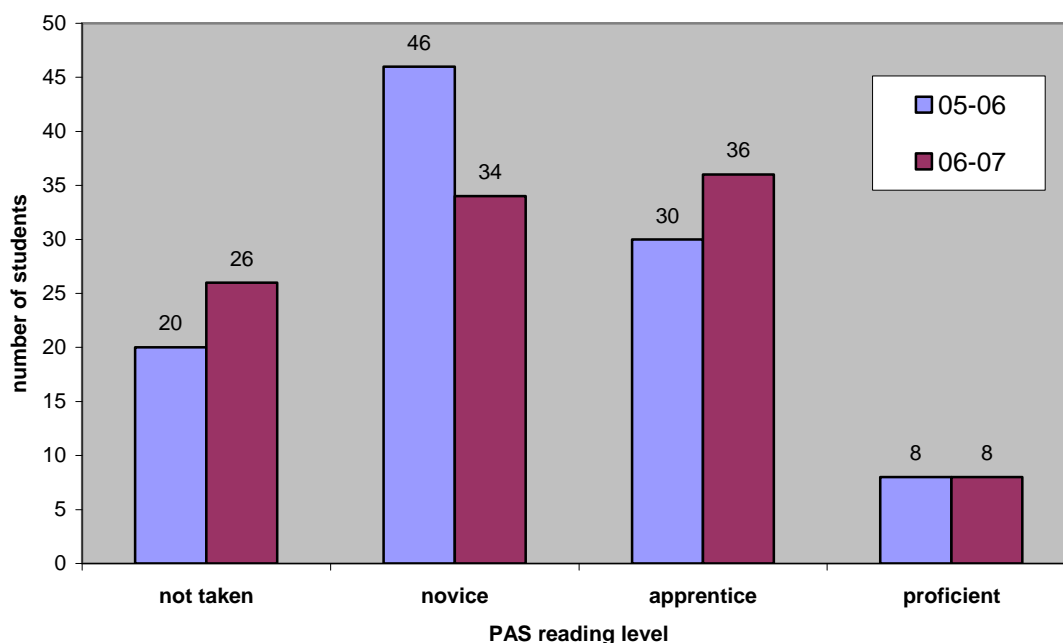
Q 9: Is there a change in the reading achievement of students attending Breck Metro?

Student Achievement

In order to assess the impact of the program on student reading achievement, PAS reading data from students who attended Breckinridge for at least 100 or more days were analyzed. As shown on Figure 6, of the students who took the PAS reading in both 2005-06 and 2006-07, there was a reduction in students scoring novice and an increase in student scoring at the apprentice level. Descriptive statistic crosstabs reveal that 14 students moved from novice to

apprentice, 20 students stayed at novice, and 4 students moved from novice to proficient. Of the students scoring proficient in 0506, 2 students remained at the proficient level, 3 scored apprentice, and 1 scored novice in 0607.

Figure 6: *Change in Proficiency Level on the PAS reading test (N = 104)*



Q10: What is the return rate to regular schools and what percent return to Breck Metro (recidivism)?

Return to Regular School and Recidivism

Data were extracted from three time points during the school year (November 1, February 1, and May 1) in order to assess the return rate to regular schools and the recidivism rate. On November 1, 2006, Breckinridge Metro had an enrollment of 143 students. On February 1, of the 143 students, there were 107 students still enrolled in a JCPS school. Of those 107 students, 85 students were still enrolled at Breckinridge Metro, 15 students were enrolled at a different

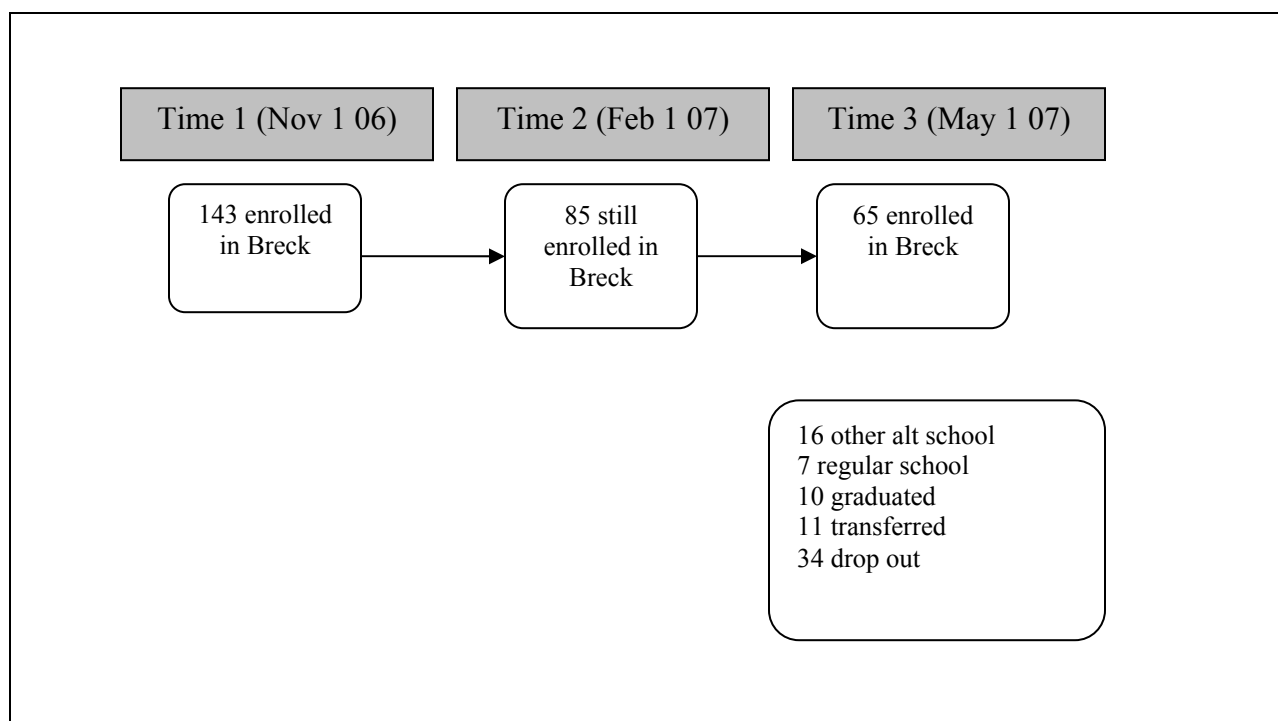
special school, and 6 students were enrolled at a regular high school. By the third time point, May 1, 87 of the original 143 students were still enrolled in a JCPS school. Of those 87, 65 students were still enrolled at Breckinridge, 16 students were enrolled at a different special school and 6 students were enrolled at regular high school.

In sum, a total of 7 students of the 143 (4.9%) made a transition to the regular high school and only 1 of the 7 (14.3%) returned to Breckinridge Metro. The majority of the 143 students were still enrolled at Breckinridge Metro (n = 65; 45.5%) or were enrolled at a different special school (n = 16; 11.1%). By the third time point, 56 of the 143 students were no longer enrolled in a JCPS school. It is important to note here that during an interview with the principal, he shared that many of the students who returned to their home school actually requested to return to Breckinridge Metro because it was easier for them to function. Moreover, the principal reported that there is sometimes contention between him and some mainstream principals that are not willing to take some student back. When student do return to their home school, the stigma associated with having attended Breckinridge Metro is often difficult to overcome. Consequently, these students are likely to be under heavy scrutiny by school staff at their home school.

Table 13: Summary of where students enrolled at Breck in Nov. 06' were in May 07' (n = 143)

Status of Student Cohort in May 2007	N	Percent
Continued enrollment at Breckinridge Metro	65	45.5%
Enrollment at a different special school	16	12.5%
Enrollment at a regular JCPS high school	7	4.2%
No longer enrolled in JCPS School	56	39.1%
Graduated	10	7.0%
Transfers		
Home school	2	1.3%
Non-public school	2	1.3%
Public school in other district	7	4.9%
Total Transferred	11	7.7%
Drop Outs		
Withdrawn from school for second time during current school year	9	6.3%
Under the court jurisdiction	5	3.4%
Drop Out (substantiated)	20	13.9%
Total coded as drop out	34	23.7%

Figure 7: Flow Chart of Cohort Status*



*numbers do not add up to total due to transition in/out Breckenridge within school year

Discussion

Several of the findings in this evaluation mirror results found in national/background literature. First, the majority of students served at Breckinridge Metro have experienced cumulative disadvantage through a combination of high risk factors in terms of demographics, geographic location, household structure, and schooling history. That is, most are African American, male, on free/reduced lunch, live in single parent households, live in poor, high crime neighborhoods, have experienced high school mobility rates, have been involved with Juvenile justice system, attended high poverty schools, and have low reading achievement. Interestingly, student survey data indicate that in spite of these issues, students report having a high sense of self-worth, high self-esteem, and view school as important; and that dropping out of school as a big mistake. Though students felt school was important, they also felt a sense of disconnection as 2/3 of respondents did not feel teachers cared about them as a person.

Second, Breckinridge Metro collaborates with the Department of Juvenile Justice, mental health agencies, and the police department (with a full time police officer on staff) and has a highly structured, highly secure environment. This reveals that they are meeting their primary goal of security and safety.

Third, in terms of transitions, similar to other alternative schools, students do not appear to be successfully transitioning back into the mainstream schools for a variety of reasons illuminated in the report. The cohort examined in this report was most likely to stay at Breckinridge Metro for the entire year, followed by drop outs and transitions to other alternative schools.

Contrary to other alternative schools around the country, the teachers at Breckinridge Metro are not placed there involuntary, and in fact apply to work there. Most of the teachers serving in the school have a masters degree or higher and report feeling prepared to teach students with

behavioral and emotional problems. While teachers report feeling prepared to teach students with behavioral, academic and emotional problems, the evaluation did not assess the extent to which they feel prepared to teach a largely minority male population.

In terms of characteristics identified as being conducive to positive student outcomes, Breckinridge Metro has several. These include small class sizes and student/teacher ratio, and flexible/understanding teachers. Research indicates that individualized instruction and parental involvement is important for positive student outcomes. While parent involvement was not assessed, observation and teacher survey data indicate that there needs to be more emphasis on individualized instruction. In terms of progress, data reveal that for students enrolled 100 or more days, there was a reduction in the number of students receiving suspensions, yet there was a statistically significant increase in school absences among students.

Limitations

This evaluation has several noteworthy limitations. First, with respect to the classroom observations, the observations only included three classrooms and thus should not be viewed as representative of the school. Second, while every effort was made to ensure random selection of students for the student surveys, a good number of students from the randomized list were unable to take the survey and thus were replaced by the principal. Coupled with the small student survey sample size, these results are not necessarily generalizable to the entire student population. Third, with respect to discipline data, though pre-post suspension data is reported, more specific office referral data is not reported. Fourth, this evaluation was not able to fully address the question related to characteristics and scope of student services due to lack of student service documentation in the school. This is likely due in part to the various outside agency service providers that serve individual students on their caseloads.

Recommendations

Based on the findings in this evaluation, several recommendations are presented. First, in light of the great need of the student body and collaboration with various agencies, careful documentation of services to students should be a priority. The data shows that students entering alternative schools have many risk factors including poverty and a high mobility rate. The student survey indicated the majority of students do not feel close to their teachers. Because of their high mobility history, these students may find it difficult to form attachments and trust with adults. Thus, decreasing the counselor to student ratio is important. While the school is staffed with a good deal of security personnel, the counselor/student ratio is very high.

Second, based on results revealing the widespread use of direct instructional approaches and independent student work with little two way interaction and dialogue in the classroom; we recommend that more collaborative, and individualized instructional approaches are implemented in the classroom. A more individualized instructional approach may also help students form stronger teacher-student relationships. Also, In order to help provide skills necessary for post high school, implementation of vocational education programs, and exposure to post secondary institutions would help move students toward a successful transition into life after high school.

Third, in light of the student population being served in this school, teacher professional development ought to include training that addresses the specific strategies that work best with the population, as well as professional development that centers on cultural competence in working with African American students.

Fourth, due to the seemingly ambiguous and sometimes contentious placement process coupled with finding of students in the school with no prior suspensions, it may be valuable to

implement a deliberate and systematic intervention check to ensure that sufficient measures have been taken in the home school locations prior to placement in Breckinridge Metro before students could be placed in the school (aside from court mandated cases). This would also aid in documenting clearly the reasons for placement *and* prior efforts taken by the feeder school to address the students' needs.

Fifth, due to very small number of students who successfully transition back into the mainstream schools, we recommend that a deliberate plan is developed and implemented to help students move into, and remain in their home schools. This would include necessitate effort on the part of both home schools and Breckinridge Metro, as well as with student advocates or liaisons to help increase systemic effectiveness. Finally, it would be useful to follow up longitudinally with students to assess outcomes over time.

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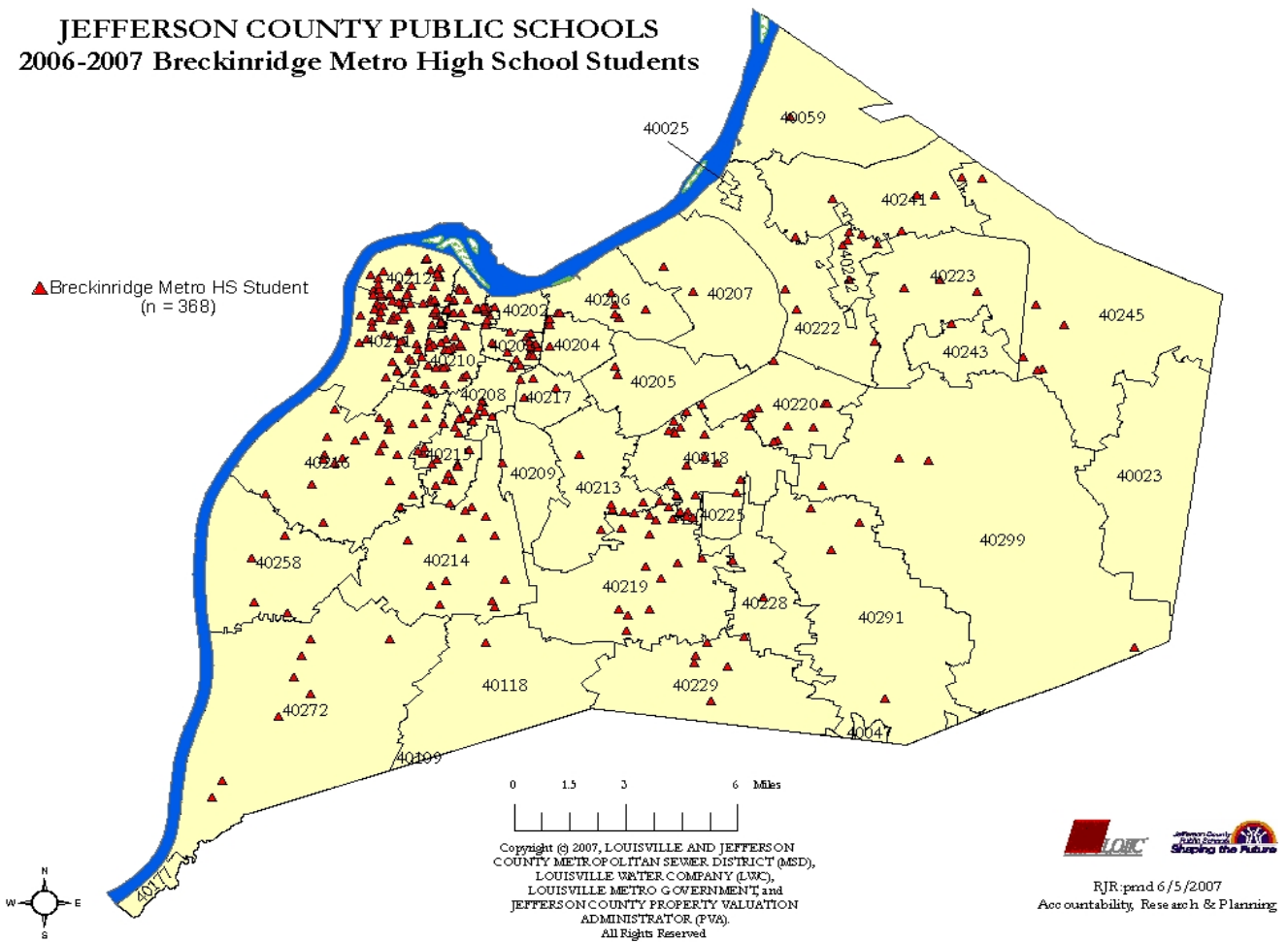
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Appendix A Geographic Map of Participants

JEFFERSON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2006-2007 Breckinridge Metro High School Students



Appendix B
Neighborhood Fact Sheets

Appendix C
Comprehensive School Plan 2007-2008



Dr. Sheldon Berman, Superintendent

Program Evaluation (2006-2007)

Alternative Schools Evaluation Buechel Metropolitan

Maurice Risner
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Harold Russell, Outgoing principal
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Principal

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August 2007

**Department of Accountability, Research and Planning
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Executive Summary

Overview

Alternative schools represent the fastest growing sector in education, yet research and evaluations on alternative learning environments are just beginning. Buechel Metropolitan High School, located in Louisville, KY, is an alternative school for students are removed from their school for a behavioral violation. The overall purpose of Buechel- Metro is to keep students in school. The objectives of the evaluation were 1) to describe student, teacher, and school characteristics in order to ascertain the alternative learning contexts provided to the students, 2) to describe the available services to students, and 3) to describe the progress and development of students during their tenure at the alternative school.

Research Design

The evaluation report includes both qualitative and quantitative data and utilized several methodologies consisting of surveys, interviews, observations, and secondary data extraction. Data collected included information pertaining to school activities, services to students, and classroom climate/culture. The District's computerized database provides individual student demographic, cognitive and non-cognitive data.

Major Findings

Student Demographics

- During the 2006-2007 school year, Buechel Metropolitan served a total of 566 students the majority of students are male (75.4%), African-American (78.3%), and in ninth or tenth grade (79.2%). With respect to household structure and poverty, the students are at high risk as 86.1% live in single parent homes and 72% receive free/reduced lunch, and many were living in areas of high unemployment, low-income, and racially isolated.
- Students were highly mobile in terms of school history. The average Buechel Metro student has attended 7 different JCPS schools and most came from schools with higher

concentrations of poverty. Approximately 24% of students had attended the Louisville Metro Youth school indicating involvement in the juvenile justice system.

- About 55% of students were suspended at least once during 2005-2006 school year; however, 30% of the students were not suspended in 2005-2006.
- About 38% of students scored Novice in reading in 2005-2006. Another 33% scored at the Apprentice level. Only 9% scored Proficient/Distinguished.

Student Survey

- Approximately 36% of students agree that they feel safe and comfortable with teachers at the school and 55% agreed that their teachers really care about them as a person. Also, 86% of students reported that they agree that school is important, and 93% agree that dropping out would be a big mistake. Only 23% reported that adults in their school treat them fairly.
- Regarding feelings toward self, approximately 80% of students reported having a high sense of self worth, 100% said they are able to do things as well as others, and have a number of good qualities. About 96% reported that they are satisfied with themselves, and 3% said that they felt like a failure.

Student Progress while at Buechel Metro

- The average number of days a student was enrolled at Buechel Metro was 71 days. However, the modal student was enrolled for between 79-81 days.
- There was a slight increase in students' absences from 2005-2006 to 2006-2007.
- The number of students suspended between 1-3 times decreased 26% from 2005-2006 to 2006-2007.
- About 41% of students who scored Novice on the PAS in 2005-2006 increased to either Apprentice or Proficient in 2006-2007. However, 51% (32 students) stayed at novice.
- 24.8% of students dropped out of the school by the end of the school year.

Teacher, Classroom, and School Data

- In order to identify teacher demographics, experience, and beliefs about teaching, a survey was administered to all teachers. A total of 31 surveys were returned.
- The modal teacher is White (70%), has a master's degree and/or rank one (87%) and is certified to teach high school (100%).
- About 46% of teachers reported using direct instruction frequently or everyday.

- Buechel Metropolitan uses the same curriculum that is offered in the regular high schools. Corrective reading programs are offered, and the school has a particularly strong technology program.
- In terms of mental health services, the principal and school have elected to focus their time on instruction, and therefore services such as those offered by Seven Counties are only available through external programs. While there is a school counselor on staff, the principal reported that much of the counselor's time is taken up by paperwork and meetings associated with the intake process.

Recommendations

- In order to address students' detachment from school and teachers, it is recommended that teachers increase the use of collaborative and individualized instructional approaches and the counselor to student ratio be decreased. These strategies would allow students more frequent opportunities to build trust and establish relationships with adults in the school.
- Because of the student demographics, it is recommended that teacher professional development include strategies centering on cultural competence in working with African American students. Also, less than half of teachers felt prepared to work with students who have emotional and/or behavioral problems. Thus, increase professional development in these areas is also recommended.
- A clear transition protocol between regular and alternative schools may help increase the number of students transitioning back to regular schools. Increasing the communication between the alternative and regular school may also help lower the recidivism rate.
- In order to help provide skills necessary for post high school, an increase in vocational education programs, remedial instruction, and exposure to post secondary institutions would help move students toward a successful transition into life after high school.
- Finally, due to the seemingly ambiguous placement process coupled with the finding of students in the school with no prior suspensions, it may be valuable to implement a systematic intervention check to ensure that sufficient measures have been taken in the home school locations prior to placement in Buechel Metro. This may particularly be beneficial for the large number of ECE students that Buechel

Introduction: Buechel Metropolitan

Jefferson County Public Schools has adopted a philosophy that no student will be expelled. The strategy that JCPS utilizes to accomplish this is to provide diverse school environments to serve individual students' needs. Buechel Metropolitan High School is an alternative high school for behavior modification and is part of the Jefferson County Public School system. The school specializes in working with high school students who have demonstrated beyond control behavior problems in a regular high school. Students are referred to the school by the office of student services, juvenile court of state and county agencies. Many of the students have a history of juvenile court of state and county agency involvement.

The primary goal of Buechel is to improve the behavior of its students in order for them to experience academic success, improve their attendance, and earn a high school diploma. Ideally, students return to their regular school and eventually receive a diploma from their regular school. In addition to the core content, Buechel Metro offers other initiatives including a job-coop program and off-site vocational education. Students' tests scores are linked to their former comprehensive high school, as long as they were enrolled in their former school for at least 100 days or more. Otherwise, their scores go into the district pool. This report summarizes information and progress of the student population served by Buechel Metropolitan High School in the 2006-2007 school year.

Background Literature on Alternative Schools for Disruptive Students

In order to provide a context with respect to current national and state alternative school issues, national research on alternative schools for disruptive students is presented. The purpose of this brief literature review is to provide various stakeholders with a broader context of information about alternative schools that are used to serve similar student populations. This review includes information regarding the history, purpose, growth, national trends, and characteristics of effective and ineffective alternative schools.

The Evolving Purpose of Alternative Schools

In her research on the first decade of public alternative schools, Raywid (1981) found that alternative options for public school students skyrocketed from 100 schools to over 10,000 between the late 1950's through the early 1960's. Alternative education sprouted as a movement to empower poor and minority students (Morrison et al, 2001). Mirroring changes in the wider political climate from the 1960's throughout the 1980's, alternative schools became less progressive, and operated out of a more narrow and conservative framework (Raywid, 1981; Young, 1990).

Beginning in the early 1980's, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention began an initiative promoting alternative schools for delinquent students based on the premise that schools could play a significant role in reducing youth crime (Barber, 1980; Cox, 1999). Ironically, though the original purpose of alternative schools for "at-risk students" was to provide an alternative learning environment for students who had difficulty in the traditional school environment, research indicates that they are increasingly being used as an act of punishment, exclusion, and containment for disruptive students (Dunbar, 2001; Lehr, Lanner & Lange, 2003; Morrison et al, 2001).

Growth of Alternative Schools for Disruptive Students

In response to current educational, political, economic and social forces, alternative schools are increasingly playing a more prominent role in the world of public education (Lange & Lehr, 2003). Throughout the 1990's to present, the current number of public alternative schools and enrollment of the at-risk students that fill them is on the rise. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Common Core of Data (CCD) indicate that alternative schools for at-risk students grew from 2,606 in 1994 to over 20,000 in 2002 (Lange and Sletten, 2002).

There is an agreement among researchers who examine issues related to alternative schools and school discipline that placement of disruptive students into alternative schools is a growing popular strategy schools are using to deal with students who are considered behavior problems (Banicky, 2000; Loflin, 2000; Lehr, Lanner & Lange, 2003). Moreover, the demand for more alternative schools serving disruptive students is clearly growing across the country (Aaron and Zweig, 2003; Dunbar, 2001; Loflin, 2000). Reflecting on current suspension and expulsion practices nationwide, some researchers recently forecast that the use of alternative school placement will continue to rise (Lehr, Lanner, and Lange, 2003; Morrison et al, 2001).

National Trends in Alternative Schools for Disruptive Students

Findings from a National Center of Education Statistics (NCES) study by Kliner, Porch and Farris (2002) confirm the growth of such schools and reveal several important national trends. Kliner et al. (2002) conducted a representative survey to determine school district practices in the use of alternative schools. Questionnaire data from 1,534 school districts during the 2000-2001 school year revealed that school districts most likely to have alternative schools for at-risk youth were large, located in the Southeast region, have a high minority enrollment and

high concentrations of poverty. Alternative schools were offered at the high school level by 92 % of districts, at the middle school level by 67 % of districts and at the elementary level by 21 % of districts. In many districts, the demand for alternative school placements outweighed the supply. In fact, 83 % of districts with alternative schools reported putting students on waiting lists due to space and staffing limitations.

With respect to entrance and exit criteria, the majority of districts with alternative schools for at-risk youth placed students in the schools because the students physically attacked someone, possessed drugs, were truant, or engaged in disruptive verbal behavior. Of districts with alternative schools, 75 % allowed students to transfer back to a base school while 1% did not allow transfers. The two key determinants for allowing students to transfer back to their base schools were improved student behavior/ attitudes and motivation to return. Key findings in regard to staffing, curriculum, and collaboration, revealed that large districts and districts with high minority enrollment and poverty concentration were more likely to report involuntary placement of teachers into alternative schools; 75 % had policies requiring curriculum to meet individual student needs. The type of collaboration most widely reported was with the juvenile justice system (84 %), mental health agencies (75 %), police departments (70 %) and child protective services (69 %).

Because the development and implementation of alternative schools varies at the state, district and school level, no one standard list of trends exists. In a survey of 48 states regarding enrollment, funding, curriculum and staffing, several key findings emerged.

With respect to curriculum, while most states required alternative schools to follow state standards, more than a third of states had unclear language regarding the curriculum (Lehr, Lanner and Lange, 2003, p. 14). Enrollment criteria numbers suggest that alternative schools are

being used as a setting for suspended and expelled students which are projected to increase. With respect to funding, most alternative schools rely on state funding, but other sources widely used include local, federal and grant dollars. Findings regarding school staffing indicate that more than half of the states did not have staffing standards for alternative schools in their policy. Finally, the majority of states did not have clear guidance regarding the education of students with disabilities in alternative school settings (Lehr, Lanner and Lange, 2003, p.15). There is an increasing concern regarding the enrollment procedures and quality of services for special education students enrolled in alternative school settings.

Researchers have found several alternative school characteristics or conditions conducive to *positive* student outcomes. These include:

- Small class size/ low ratio
- Flexible/understanding teachers
- Individualized instruction
- Student involvement in decision making
- Family/parent involvement

Characteristics of alternative schools found to contribute to *negative* student outcomes include:

- Racial isolation
- Punitive focus
- Intensified social control
- Inadequate resources
- Lack of accountability
- Unchallenging curriculum
- Deviant peer networking/contagion

The current paper describes Buechel Metropolitan, one alternative school in the Jefferson County Public School district. Given the increasing demand for alternative schools, not only nationally, but locally, the paper serves to better understand the school's teachers, the learning environment provided to students, and the characteristics of students being served by the alternative school.

Evaluation Purpose & Questions

This alternative school evaluation report includes both qualitative and quantitative dimensions. The evaluators met with the principals to determine what research questions would most useful, and thus which questions/objectives would be given priority. The overarching objectives and evaluation questions that guided the evaluation were the following:

Objective 1: To describe the student characteristics, teacher characteristics, and school culture in order to ascertain the alternative learning contexts provided to students.

1. What are the characteristics of students served in the 2006-2007 school year in terms of demographics, mobility, academic, and non-academic data?
2. What are the characteristics of the teachers in terms of education, experience, and beliefs about teaching?
3. What is the overall school culture and climate as rated by teachers and students?
4. What is the overall classroom climate as rated by independent observers?

Objective 2: To describe the available services to students who attend the alternative school.

5. What are the characteristics of the school's scope of activities and services?

Objective 3: To describe the progress and development of students during their tenure at the alternative school.

6. What is the average length of tenure for a student at Buechel Metro?
7. Is there a change in attendance for students attending the Buechel Metro?
8. Is there a change in the reading achievement of students attending Buechel Metro?
9. Is there a change in suspensions of students attending Buechel Metro?
10. What is the return rate to regular schools and what percent return to Buechel Metro (recidivism)?

Evaluation Method

Various data sources of qualitative and quantitative are used for the evaluation of Buechel Metropolitan. The District's computerized database provides individual student demographic, cognitive and non-cognitive data. The demographic data includes race, gender, school location, grade, free/reduced lunch status, and household structure. Other demographic data includes geographic information to identify the neighborhoods where the students reside.

The cognitive data includes proficiency levels on the Predictive Assessment Series (PAS). The PAS is a series of equivalent assessments designed to match, predict, and improve the reading knowledge and skills tested by state standards and aligned to nationally-normed and state criterion test. Non-cognitive data provided by the district data base included attendance and discipline related information.

Qualitative data was collected throughout the formative data collection process via observation visits, staff interviews, and surveys conducted with teachers and students. This includes information pertaining to school activities, services to students, and classroom climate/culture. The specific evaluation measures, and samples used are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: *Evaluation Measures, Sample Sizes and Description*

Measures	Sample	Description/Source
Cognitive		
PAS reading	131 students	Students enrolled 100+ days that have PAS score in 0506 and 0607/ district data base
Non-Cognitive		
Demographics	561 students	All students who attended during 06-07/ district data base (- 5 missing data)
Geographic/Neighborhood	566 students	All students who attended during 06-07/ district data base
Mobility History	561 students	All students who attended during 06-07/ district data base (- 5 missing data)
Feeder Schools	543 students	All students with available data / district data base
Attendance	131 students	Students enrolled 100+ days/ district data base
Return rate/ Recidivism	213 students	All students enrolled on Nov 1 2006/ district database
Suspension/DJJ involvement	131 students	Students enrolled 100+ days/ district data base
Perceptions of self	30 students	Partially random sample of students/ survey
School Culture		
Student perception of school and teachers	30 students	Partially random sample of students/ survey
Classroom observations	4 classrooms	Classrooms selected by Principal/ observation instrument
Teacher perception of program	31 teachers	Teachers/ survey
Teacher characteristics	31 teachers	Teachers/ survey
School enrollment	261 students	1 st -8 th pupil months 06-07/ district data base

Evaluation Results

As an alternative school serving students who have been kicked out of mainstream schools, Buechel Metro is different than the “regular” high schools in various ways. Two important areas of difference to highlight include the purpose/vision of the school; and the enrollment pattern over the course of the year.

Purpose and Vision of Buechel Metropolitan

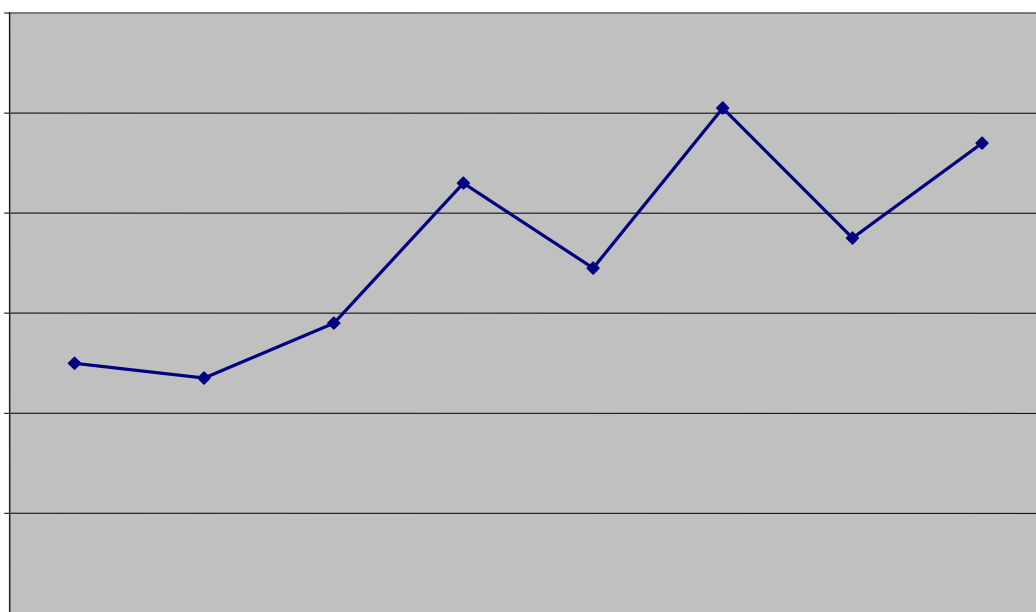
Buechel Metropolitan High School is an alternative school for students who require a more structured environment. The overall purpose of Buechel Metro is to keep students (who have been removed from other schools) in school towards graduation. Buechel is operated on the philosophy that student and staff safety comes first, then instruction, all embedded within a highly structured environment. The overall philosophy is that all students can be successful. Buechel is operated on the belief that for kids to be successful, they have to learn self-control so Buechel maintains an environment that is consistent in rules and regulations. As students become successful academically and behaviorally under these conditions, the policy is to have them return to their regular schools. As stated in their school profile, the primary goals of Buechel Metro are “to improve the behavior of its students in order for them to experience academic success, improve their attendance, earn a return to their regular school, and eventually receive a diploma from that school.”

Monthly Enrollment

One of the biggest challenges faced by the school is the transient nature of the student population. While most schools enrollment remains stable across the school year, student enrollment at Buechel Metro changes from month to month. Presented in Figure 1 is the student enrollment for the 1st-8th pupil months of 2006-2007. As can be seen, student enrollment steadily

increases between the 2nd and 4th month, and rises and falls each month thereafter. Data indicates a 21% increase in enrollment from the beginning to the end of the school year. These enrollment changes have important implications for staffing.

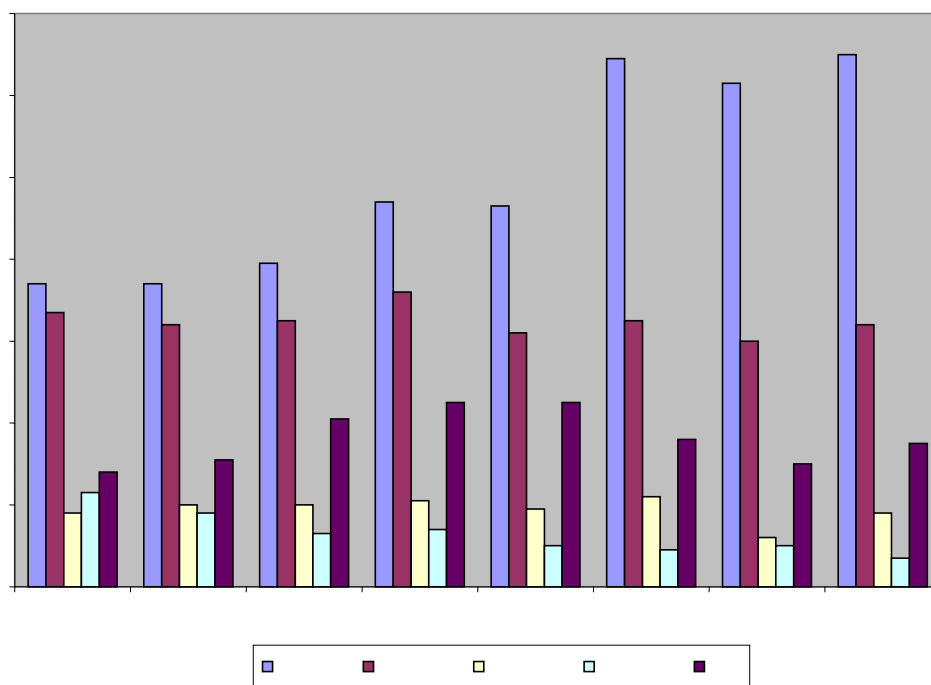
Figure 1: *Buechel Enrollment by Pupil Month (2006-2007)*



Examining the enrollment trend by grade provides a more detailed picture with respect to grade level changes. The enrollment trend by grade level of student is presented in Figure 2. As shown in Figure 2, the student enrollment increases are largest overall for 9th grade students, as indicated by a 76% increase from first pupil month to the eight pupil month. Student enrollment increases are lowest for 11th grade students. Additionally, there is a 61% increase in the number of ECE students from the first pupil month to the 5th pupil month. This finding is consistent with information shared during the principal interview. That is, the principal shared that one of the

primary challenges facing the school is the large number of ECE students being sent there, as ECE intake and exit process involves numerous meetings and a good deal of paperwork.

Figure 2: *Buechel Enrollment by Grade per Pupil Month (2006-2007)*



Objective 1: To describe student characteristics, teacher characteristics, and school culture in order to ascertain the alternative learning contexts provided to students.

Student Characteristics

Q1: What are the characteristics of students served in the 2006-2007 school year in terms of demographics, mobility, academic, and non-academic data?

Student Demographics

During the 2006-2007 school year, Buechel Metropolitan served a total of 566 students, however demographic data was available for 561 students. As shown in Table 2, the majority of students are male (75.4%), African-American (78.3%), and in ninth or tenth grade (79.2%). With respect to household structure and poverty, the students are at high risk as 86.1% live in single parent homes and 72% receive free/reduced lunch.

While the demographic data presented in Table 2 reveal the high risk status of the students served in terms of race, poverty and household status, data describing the general neighborhood status where students live can also provide insight. As shown on Table 2, 26% of students live in zip code areas 40203, 40210, 40212, and 14% live in zip code area 40211. These zip codes had the greatest frequency among the students. Data from the 2000 Census Bureau reveal that within these four zip code areas, there are high unemployment rates, a high percent of families living below the poverty line, and in some areas, are racially isolated. A geographic map of where students live is shown in Appendix A. Also, a detailed account of neighborhood child wellbeing data for the zip codes areas listed in the table can be seen on Appendix B.

Table 2: *Profile of Participating Students in Buechel Metropolitan 2006-2007 (N =561)*

Variable	N	%
Gender		
Male	423	75.4
Female	138	24.6
Race		
Black	439	78.3
Other	15	2.6
White	107	19.1
Gender*Race		
Black Male	326	58.1
White Male	84	14.9
Other Male	13	2.3
Black Female	113	20.0
White Female	23	4.1
Other Female	2	0.3
Grade		
Ninth	277	49.4
Tenth	167	29.8
Eleventh	56	10.0
Twelfth	57	10.2
Self Contained ECE	4	0.7
Parent Household Structure		
Single Parent	483	86.1
Two Parent	78	13.9
Lunch Status		
Free	369	65.8
Reduced	35	6.2
Paid	157	28.0
Neighborhood/Zip Code Resides		
40203, 40210, 40212	148	26.3%
40211	80	14.1%
Other Zips	333	59.6%

Feeder Schools/ Mobility

In order to examine previous attendance history, data was examined to investigate which elementary, middle, high, and other special schools students attended prior to being referred to Buechel Metropolitan. Data was available for 543 students. The top elementary schools, middle schools, high, and special schools attended by Buechel Metro students are presented in Table 3. For each school, the percent of students who receive free/reduced lunch is shown. In total, students averaged attending 7.2 different JCPS schools throughout their school career, up to this point. As evidenced by the percent poverty (i.e., Free/Reduce lunch) of the most frequently attended schools, students attending Buechel Metro are more likely to have attended elementary and middle schools with high concentrations of poverty than the district average. Importantly, the top 4 elementary and middle schools where students have emerged from are among the districts highest needs schools. That is, these are schools with longstanding low achievement, high concentration of poverty, and high teacher turnover.

Table 3: *Regular School Locations of 06-07 Students Prior to Referral to Buechel Metro (N =543)*

School Name	% F/R Lunch	Number	Percent of Buechel Metro Student who attended...
Elementary Schools			
Atkinson	91.2%	41	7.55%
Lincoln	80.7%	36	6.63%
Jacob	90.9%	34	6.26%
Frayser	88.4%	33	6.08%
Hazelwood	90.8%	32	5.89%
Byck	80.3%	31	5.71%
Maupin	78.9%	29	5.34%
Young	91.0%	29	5.34%
Cane Run	84.5%	28	5.16%
Chenoweth	53.9%	27	4.97%
Middle Schools			
	% Poverty	Number	Percent of Buechel Metro Student who attended...
Southern	89.9%	61	11.23%
Westport	92.4%	58	10.68%
Western	92.4%	57	10.50%
Meyzeek	52.6%	55	10.13%
Newburg	50.4%	55	10.13%
Highland	51.2%	52	9.58%
Noe	49.5%	50	9.21%
Stuart	67.9%	50	9.21%
Farnsley	67.4%	46	8.47%
Myers	57.8%	46	8.47%
High Schools			
	% Poverty	Number	Percent of Buechel Metro Student who attended...
Seneca	42.8%	47	8.66%
Iroquois	76.4%	44	8.10%
Fern Creek	44.9%	43	7.92%
Pleasure Ridge Park	43.6%	39	7.18%
Eastern	24.9%	36	6.63%
Shawnee	78.6%	35	6.45%
Waggener	57.5%	33	6.08%
Western	75.4%	31	5.71%
Ballard	21.9%	30	5.52%
Atherton	49.2%	29	5.34%
Special Schools			
	% Poverty	Number	Percent of Buechel Metro Student who attended...
Louisville Metro Youth Center	57.1%	135	24.86%

Kennedy Metro	87.7%	132	24.31%
Peace Academy	39.5%	49	9.02%
Ten Broeck/KMI	32.4%	39	7.18%
Liberty	74.0%	31	5.71%
Ten Broeck/Dupont	37.8%	25	4.60%
South Park TAPP	63.4%	23	4.24%
Ackerly/Bingham Guidance Elem	40.0%	18	3.31%
Waller Environmental Elem/Middle	88.6%	17	3.13%
Ahrens Educational Resource	17.6%	9	1.66%

To further provide a context regarding the students served at Buechel Metro this year, student mobility history data was analyzed. Student mobility history includes the number of times a student has withdrawn from one school and enrolled into another school during a school year. The mobility data presented in Table 4 represent the number of times students changed schools from August 1998 through May 2006, thus encompassing students change of schools since their early elementary school years in JCPS. On average, students withdrew from one school to enroll in another 4.4 times throughout their schooling career up to this point. The range is from 0 school changes to 26 school changes.

Table 4: *Mobility History of Students Since 1998 (N = 561)*

Mobility History (since 1998)		
0	107	18.9%
1-3	246	43.4%
4-6	117	20.6%
7-9	52	9.2%
10-12	28	4.9%
13-15	7	1.2%
16+	9	1.6%

Prior Year Academic and Non- Academic Characteristics

In order to determine prior year (2005-2006) academic and non-academic characteristics of the students served at Buechel Metro this year, several factors were examined to help describe the student's background further. In terms of reading achievement, shown in Table 5, of all the students who took the PAS in reading, 38% scored in the Novice range, 33% scored Apprentice, while only 9% scored proficient/distinguished.

With respect to suspensions, 54% of the students were suspended from school between 1-3 times. Interestingly, approximately 30% of the students were not suspended in 2005-2006. However, as presented in the mobility analysis, approximately 25% of students had attended the Louisville Metro Youth school (JCPS school in the Department of Juvenile Justice), indicating involvement in the juvenile justice system, and 25% had attended the middle level alternative school, Kennedy Metro.

Table 5: *Prior Year (2005-2006) Reading Level and Suspensions (N = 566)*

Variables	N	%
Academic		
PAS reading 2005-06		
Novice	216	38.2%
Apprentice	190	33.6%
Proficient-Distinguished	52	9.2%
Did not take PAS	108	19.1%
Non-Academic		
Number of Suspensions 2005-06		
0	165	29.2%
1-3	311	54.9%
4-6	81	14.3%
7+	9	1.6%

Q2: What are the characteristics of the teachers in terms of education experience and beliefs about teaching?

Teacher Characteristics

Teacher Education and Experience

In order to identify teacher demographics, experience, and beliefs about teaching, a survey was administered to all teachers. Of the 31 teachers who took the survey, 64% teach full time, and 72% currently teach grades 9-12. At the time of this survey, 65% were teaching full time while 35% were part time. The average number of years of high school teaching experience is 26. As shown in Table 6, the modal teacher is White (70%), male (61%), and is certified to teach high school (100%).

Table 6: *Profile of Teachers at Buechel Metropolitan High (N =31)**

Teacher Variable	N	%
Gender		
Female	12	38.7%
Male	19	61.3%
Race/ Ethnicity		
Black/ African-American (not Hispanic)	9	30%
White/ Caucasian (Not Hispanic)	21	70%
Education Level		
Bachelor's degree	3	9.7%
Master's degree	17	54.8%
Rank 1	10	32.3%
Education specialist or professional diploma beyond Master's degree	1	3.2%
Major		
Elementary Education	1	3.2%
Secondary Education	13	41.9%
Special Education	5	16.1%
Psychology	1	3.2%
Education (general)	7	22.6%
Other	4	12.9%
Certification (% Yes)		
Elementary school	8	25.8%
Middle school	21	67.7%
High school	31	100.0%
Other levels or special subjects	6	20.7%
Mean Number of Years Experience	Mean	SD
Elementary School (PreK-5 th grade)	26	0.7
Middle School (6 th -8 th grade)	26	3.0
High School (9 th -12 th grade)	26	19.8
College and above	26	1.5
Total Number of Years Experience	31	0.7
Current Position		
Teacher	21	67.7%
ECE Teacher	8	25.8%
Other	2	6.5%

* N reflects teachers who took survey; missing data for some variables

Teacher Beliefs about Preparation and Teaching

As shown on Table 7, the majority of teachers reported that they feel prepared or very prepared to teach students who are of different socioeconomic backgrounds, while approximately 42% reported being very prepared to teach students with behavior and emotional problems. Further, 61% reported feeling prepared/very prepared to teach students with academic problems.

Table 7: *Teacher self-report of preparation (N = 31) **

How well prepared do you feel to teach Students:	A little Prepared	Somewhat Prepared	Prepared	Very Prepared
From different socio-economic backgrounds	1 (3.2%)	2 (6.5%)	13 (41.9%)	15 (48.4%)
With behavior problems	1 (3.2%)	9 (29.0%)	8 (25.8%)	13 (41.9%)
With emotional problems	4 (12.9%)	12 (38.7%)	8 (25.8%)	13 (41.9%)
With academic problems	1 (3.2%)	5 (16.1%)	9 (29.0%)	10 (32.2%)

With respect to instructional approaches, as shown on Table 8, approximately 46% of teachers reported using direct instruction frequently or everyday. Conversely, approximately 55% reported using small group collaborative activities rarely or occasionally. Approximately 43% reported using technology frequently or everyday, and approximately 39% reported implementing classroom discussions frequently or everyday. Approximately 77% of teachers reported using independent work (i.e., work students do alone). With respect to classroom discipline, approximately 40% of teachers report using discipline (i.e., referrals, in school suspension) rarely or only occasionally. Additionally, approximately 24.1% of teachers reported using student rewards frequently or everyday.

Table 8: *Teacher self-report of teaching practices (N = 31)*

Teaching Practices	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Frequently	Everyday
Direct Instruction (lecture)	5 (16.7%)	3 (10.0%)	8 (26.7%)	7 (23.3%)	7 (23.3%)
Small group activities	3 (10.3%)	13 (44.8%)	6 (20.7%)	4 (13.8%)	3 (10.3%)
Independent student work	3 (10.0%)	4 (13.3%)	4 (13.3%)	10 (33.3%)	13 (43.3%)
Use of Technology	3 (10.0%)	6 (20.0%)	8 (26.7%)	5 (16.7%)	8 (26.7%)
Classroom discussions	2 (7.1%)	4 (14.3%)	11 (39.3%)	8 (28.6%)	3 (10.7%)
Disciplinary actions	8 (26.7%)	4 (13.3%)	8 (26.7%)	5 (16.7%)	4 (13.3%)
Use of student rewards	4 (13.8%)	5 (17.2%)	13 (44.8%)	2 (6.9%)	5 (17.2%)

Q3: What is the overall school culture and climate as rated by students?

School Culture

Student Perception of School Culture and Themselves

In order to determine student perceptions of the schools' culture/ climate, as well as perceptions of themselves, a sample of students participated in a survey activity using "clicker" or press technology. The students were randomly selected by evaluators using computerized method, with the only criteria being that they have attended the school at least 12 weeks. This allowed ample time for students to answer questions about the school.

Due to the transient nature of the population and other factors (e.g., student not in attendance that day), while most students randomly selected were available, a few were not, so some students on the original list were replaced with available students. Table 9 identifies the demographic characteristics of students who completed the survey activity. As shown, the majority of students were male and African-American. With respect to grade level, 26% were in 10th grade, 30% in 11th, and 17% in 12th grade. In terms of length of enrollment, 20% had been

enrolled than 3 months, 16.7% attended the school between 3-6 months, 13% between 7-9 months, and 50% have attended the school for more than 9 months.

Table 9: *Student Survey Demographics* (N = 30)

Student Respondent Demographics	N	%
Gender		
Male	23	76.7
Female	7	23.3
Race		
African-American	26	86.7
Caucasian	2	6.7
Hispanic	0	0
Other	2	6.7
Current Grade		
8 th	0	0
9 th	8	26.7
10 th	8	26.7
11 th	9	30.0
12 th	5	16.7
Length of Time attending Buechel		
Less than 3 months	6	20.0
3-6 months	5	16.7
7-9 months	4	13.3
More than 9 months	15	50.0

The goal of the student survey was to ascertain student perceptions of the schools climate and of themselves. The survey has 4 subscales to measure (a) trust and respect for teachers, (b) identification with school, (c) community of learning, and (d) self-esteem. The items on the survey had been validated as they were taken from various instruments used in previous research. Reverse questioning was used in 3 of the 4 subscales. The items were presented on a 4 point likert scale, where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, and 4 = strongly.

As shown on Table 10, approximately 37 % of students agree that they feel safe and comfortable with teachers at the school, and 57% reported they agree that teachers don't care about what they think. Also, 86% of students reported that they agree that school is important in

their life, and 93% agree that dropping out would be a big mistake. However, only 38% of students agreed that school is one of their favorite places to be. Approximately 77% of students agreed that teachers encourage them to do their best, while only 30% reported that their teachers treat them fairly. Regarding feelings toward self, 100% of students reported having a number of good qualities, and are able to do things as well as others. About 97% reported that they are satisfied with themselves, and 3% said that they felt like a failure.

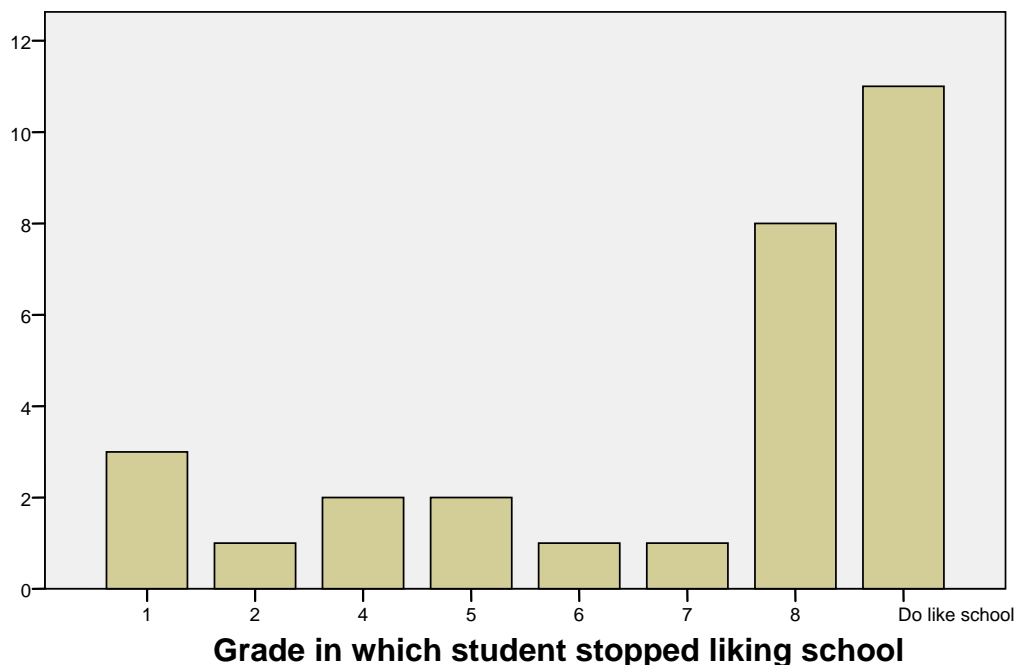
Table 10: *Buechel Metropolitan Student Survey Results* (N = 30)

Trust and Respect for Teachers	% Agree/Strongly Agree
I feel respected by teachers and staff at this school.	34.4
I feel safe and comfortable with the teachers in this school.	36.7
The teachers here always try to be fair.	50.0
The teachers here don't care what I think (R)	57.1
Identification with School	
School is often a waste of time (R)	30.0
School is one of my favorite places to be.	37.9
I can get a good job even if my grades are bad.	43.3
I like to participate in a lot of activities at schools.	50.0
There are teachers or other adults in my school that I can talk to if I have a problem.	53.3
Most of what I learn in school will be useful when I get a job.	83.3
School is one of the most important things in my life.	86.2
School is more important than most people think.	86.2
Dropping out of school before getting a high school diploma would be a huge mistake for me.	93.4
Community of Learners/Perception of Teachers	
The adults in my school treat students fairly.	23.3
Teachers at my school treat students fairly.	30.0
Adults in my school building set a good example for students.	36.7
My teachers really care about me as a person.	55.1
My teachers listen to my questions and concerns.	56.7
Teachers encourage me to do the best work I can.	76.7
Self-Esteem	
All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure (R)	3.3
I feel I do not have much to be proud of. (R)	10.0
At times I think I am no good at all. (R)	16.7
I feel useless at times (R)	27.5

I wish I could have more respect for myself (R)	33.3
I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.	80.0
I take a positive attitude toward myself.	90.0
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	96.6
I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	100.0
I am able to do things as well as most other people.	100.0

* *Note: R indicates reversed question items*

In addition to the items above, in order to determine the approximate time in their schooling history that they may have become disengaged with school, the students were asked the following question “If you do not like school, in which grade did you start NOT liking school?” As shown on Figure 3, while 3 students reported they started disliking school in first grade, 27% reported that they began disliking school in 8th grade or above. This is noteworthy, as disengagement from school increases the likelihood that students will act out behaviorally. Interestingly, 30% (11) reported that they do like school.

Figure 3: *Distribution of student responses to grade they started disliking school (N = 30)*

Q4: What is the overall classroom climate as rated by independent observers?

Classroom Climate

In order to ascertain the school culture and environmental in the evaluation, 4 classroom observations were conducted by two evaluators using an observation instrument. The instrument called the Classroom Observation Summary was developed by the evaluators, piloted to ensure inter-rater reliability, and demonstrated high internal consistency in the current data set, Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$. The observation instrument consisted of 22 items that examined (a) *instructional orientation* – refers to the physical orientation in which instruction/learning is taking place (e.g., whole group, small group), (b) *instructional components* – refers to the

specific components of instruction driven by the teacher and the classroom environment (e.g., use of higher order questions, uses praise or reinforcements), and (c) *student engagement* – refers explicitly to student involvement and attention in the classroom (e.g., proportion of class that is asking and answering questions, attentive to classroom activities).

The metric of the scale is designed for an observation that takes place for the entire class period (45-50 minute periods). Classrooms were selected to represent the range of ages, content areas, teacher experience/education levels, and teacher length of time at the school. Table 11 depicts the average scores across classroom observed at Buechel Metropolitan and are presented from lowest to highest score. For the Instructional Orientation, a 1 = not observed, 2 = rarely (average of 5 minutes per period), 3 = occasionally (average of 10-15 minutes per period), 4 = frequently (average of 16-30 minutes per period), and 5 = extensively (average of more than 30 minutes per period). As depicted in the table, the most common instructional orientation was direct instruction with between 5 and 15 minutes of small group and independent work during the class.

For Instructional Components, items are each rated on a 5 point scale where 1= Low, 3= Moderate, and 5 = High (2 and 4 represent the midpoints, respectively). Overall, classrooms were rated highest in classroom management and respectful interactions between teacher and students and they were rated lowest in giving higher level feedback and using higher level questioning.

Finally for Student Engagement, items are rated on a 5 point scale from 1 = None (0% of class), 2 = Few (1-25% of class), 3 = Some (26-50% of class), 4 = Most (51-99% of class), and 5 = All (100% of class). Overall, most students were attentive and engaged in the activities, but fewer students were involved in asking questions and answering questions posed by the

instructor. These findings reveal that much of the communication in classrooms is one way (i.e., teacher to student) and not much dialogue between teacher and students is occurring.

Table 11: *Classroom Observation Results* (n = 4 classrooms)

Classroom Observation Summary	Mean	Std. Deviation
Instructional Orientation		
Independent/Individual work	2.25	1.89
Small group/Cooperative/Collaborative Learning	2.50	1.73
Direct Instruction (whole class lecture)	3.50	1.29
Instructional Components		
Gives higher order feedback	1.75	0.96
Utilizes higher level questioning	2.00	1.41
Provides opportunities for interactive student/student dialogue	2.50	1.92
Communicates to students what they are to learn as a result of the lesson, either written or verbally	2.75	1.26
Connects to students' past knowledge or previous experiences	3.25	0.50
Uses praise and/or reinforcements	3.50	1.73
Enthusiastic instruction conveyed by the instructor	3.50	1.73
Effective time management (no wasted time; materials are ready)	3.50	1.73
Re-teaches or restates lesson in a different way if the class does not understand	3.75	0.96
Activities are developmentally appropriate	3.75	0.96
Circulates around the classroom to check on students	4.00	1.41
Positive atmosphere among students	4.00	0.82
Effective classroom management	4.25	1.50
Respectful interactions between instructor and Students	4.50	1.00
Student Engagement		
Students ask instructor questions	3.00	0.82
Students answer instructor questions	3.75	1.26
Students are attentive to teacher	4.25	0.96
Students are engaged in activities	4.25	0.96

Scales:

Instructional Orientation: 1 = not observed, 2 = rarely (average of 5 minutes per period), 3 = occasionally (average of 10-15 minutes per period), 4 = frequently (average of 16-30 minutes per period), and 5 = extensively (average of more than 30 minutes per period).

Instructional Components: 1= Low, 3= Moderate, and 5 = High

Student Engagement: 1 = None (0% of class), 2 = Few (1-25% of class), 3 = Some (26-50% of class), 4 = Most (51-99% of class), and 5 = All (100% of class).

Objective 2: To describe the available services to students who attend the alternative school.

Activities/Services to Students

Q 5: What are the characteristics of the school's scope of activities and services?

In order to determine specific services to students, an interview with the principal was conducted, and whenever possible, supporting documentation was examined. At Buechel Metropolitan, the same curriculum is offered as in the regular high schools. Corrective reading programs are offered (Read 180 and non-reader programs) and the principal sends teachers to professional development trainings every year on reading. Buechel has a particularly strong technology program as indicated by their seven technology teachers. Buechel also has a technical program that is available to students in which groups of students are sent to Iroquois High School for technical enrichment. Buechel also has a large co-op program where students balance school and employment. Overall, there are two vocational teachers on staff.

In terms of mental health services, the principal and school have elected to focus their time on instruction, and therefore services such as those offered by Seven Counties are only available through external programs. While there is a school counselor on staff, the principal reported that much of the counselors time is taken up by paperwork and meetings associated with the intake process (particularly for the large numbers of ECE students that come in and out). Further, there are no mental health personnel on board. Evaluations of previous programs or services such as those offered by a drug and alcohol specialist were found to be ineffective in helping students, and thus the focus of the school has been on maximizing instructional time.

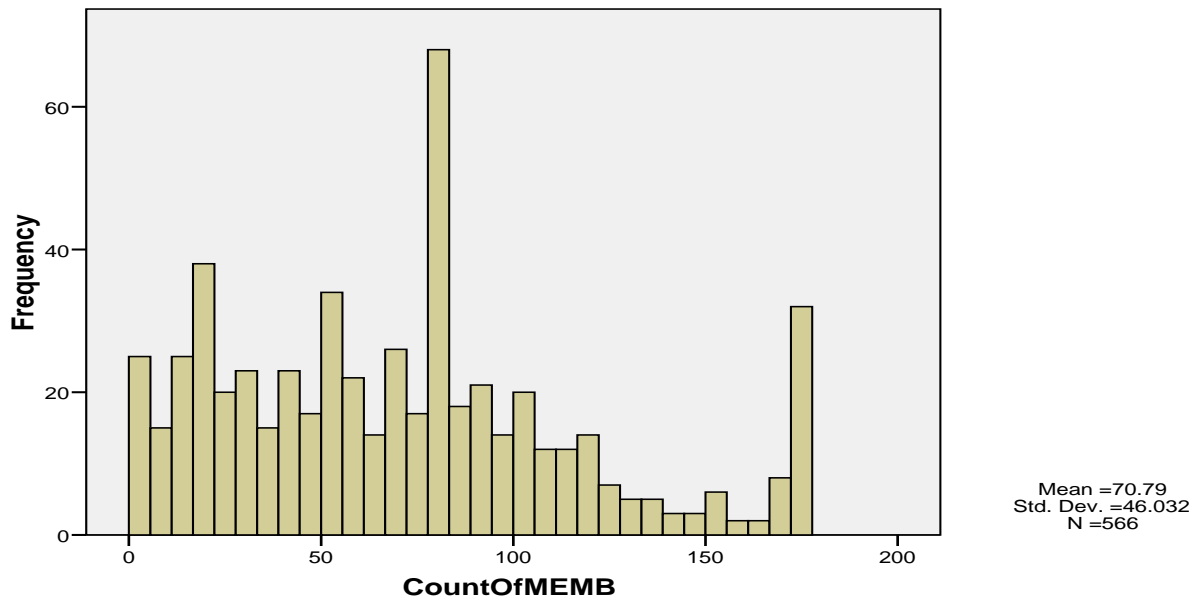
Objective 3: To describe the progress and development of students during their tenure at the alternative school.

Q6: What is the average length of tenure for a student at Buechel Metro?

Student Length of Tenure (stay)

The average length of tenure (n = 566) for students in 2006-2007 was 70.79 (SD=46.0) days. While there is a wide distribution of enrollment for students, as shown on Figure 4 below, the modal enrollment at Buechel is between 79-81 days. As can be seen in Figure 4, there is also a group of students who are enrolled for between 2-50 days, while another smaller group is enrolled for the entire year.

Figure 4: *Distribution of Student Enrollment/length of tenure at Buechel (N = 566)*



Q7: Is there a change in attendance for students attending Buechel-Metro?***Student Attendance***

In order to assess the impact of the program on attendance, absenteeism data from students who attended Buechel for at least 100 or more days were analyzed (100 days = approximately 60% of school year). Of the students enrolled at least 100 days or more ($n = 131$), the average rate of absences in 2005-2006 was 31.1. During the 2006-2007 school year, the average rate of absences was 34.0, indicating a slight increase in the average number of absences from the previous school year. A dependent sample t-test was conducted to determine if this increase is statistically significant. Results reveal that this increase is not statistically significant ($t = -1.23$, $p = .22$).

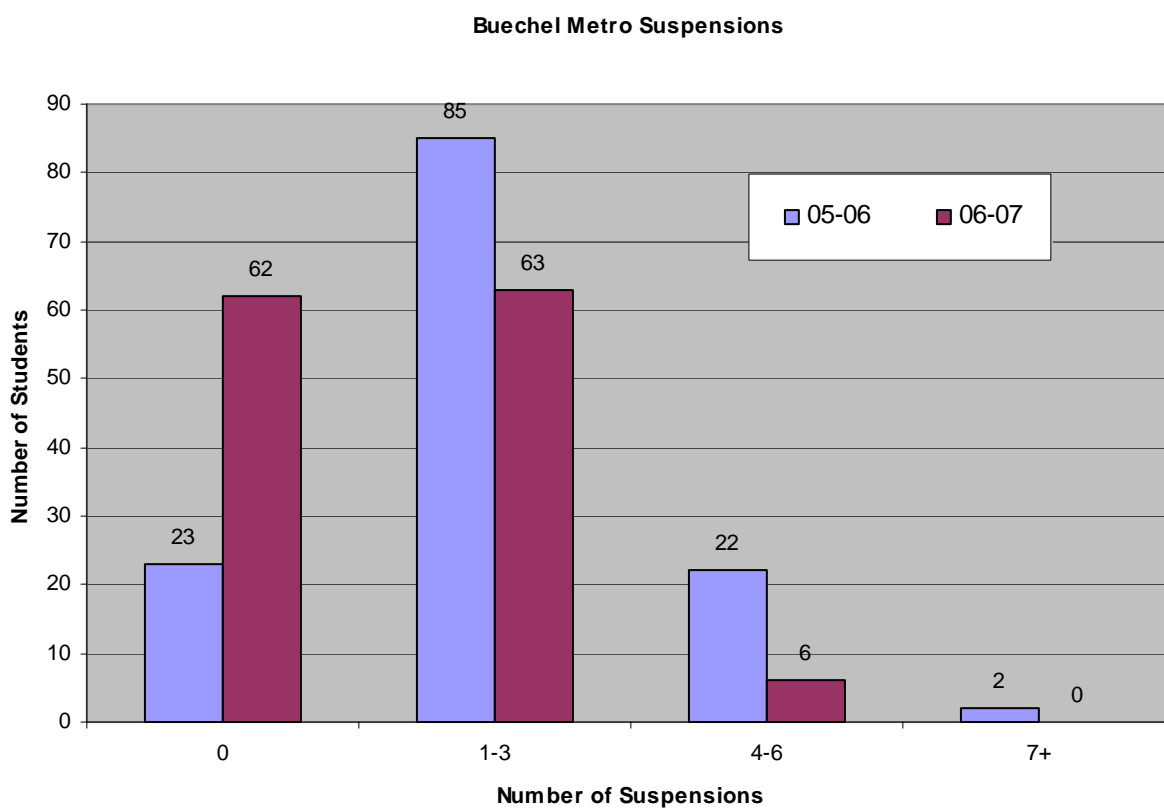
Q 8: Is there a change in suspensions of students attending Buechel?***Student Suspensions***

In order to assess the impact of the program on suspension, suspension data from students who attended Buechel for at least 100 or more days were analyzed. As shown in Table 12 and Figure 5, there was a 169% increase in the number of students who did not receive any suspension from 05-06 to 06-07. Further, there was a 25% decrease in the number of students who received between 1-3 suspensions, and a 71% decrease in the number of students receiving 4-6 suspensions. It is important to note here that during the interview with the principal, it was shared that the school does not like to suspend students, but in some more severe cases, they do use suspension. These findings reveal that for students who have attended at least 100 or more days, there is a large reduction in their suspension rate, particularly for students who are considered recidivists (i.e., received 4-6 suspensions).

Table 12: Number of students receiving suspension(s) (n = 131)

Number of suspensions	05-06	06-07	Change	
			N	%
0 suspensions	23	62	+39	+169.5%
1-3 suspensions	85	63	-22	-25.8%
4-6 suspensions	21	6	-15	-71.4%
7+ suspensions	2	0	-2	-100.0%

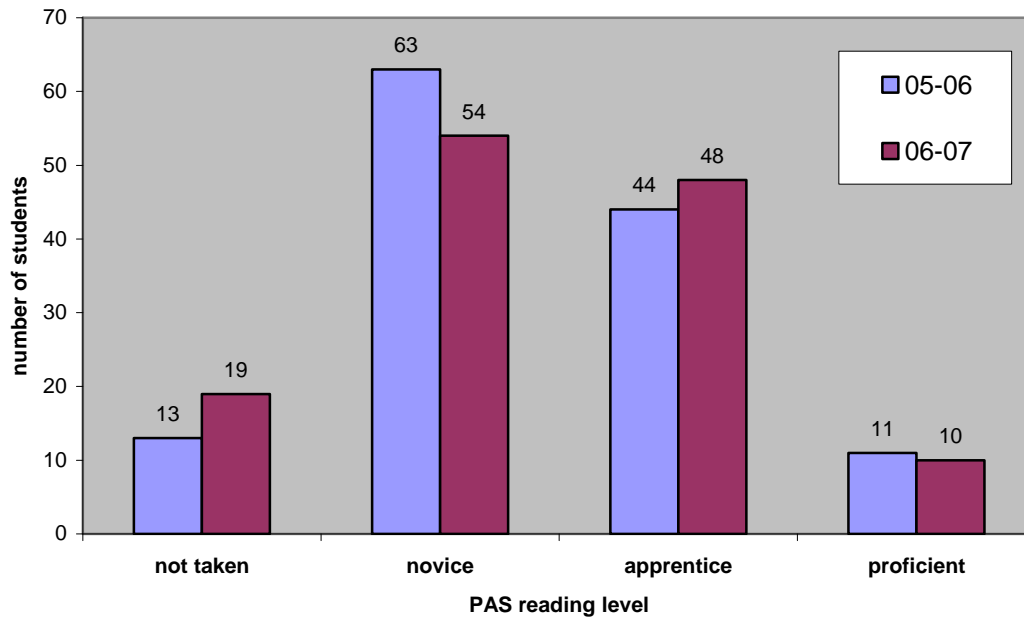
Figure 5: Change in Number of students receiving suspension (n = 131)



Q 9: Is there a change in the reading achievement of students attending Buechel?***Student Achievement***

In order to assess the impact of the program on student reading achievement, PAS reading data from students who attended Buechel for at least 100 or more days (n = 131) were analyzed. As shown on Figure 6, of the students who took the PAS reading in both 2005-06 and 2006-07 (n = 112), there was a reduction in students scoring novice and a slight increase in student scoring at the apprentice level. Descriptive statistics crosstabs reveal that 23 students moved from novice to apprentice, and 3 students moved from novice to proficient. So, about 41% of students who scored Novice on the PAS in 2005-2006 increased to either Apprentice or Proficient in 2006-2007. However, 51% (32 students) stayed at novice. Of the students scoring proficient in 0506, 3 students remained at the proficient level, 1 scored apprentice, and 2 scored novice in 0607. These results indicate that a good number of students who attended Buechel for 100 or more days have increased their reading ability levels.

Figure 6: *Change in Proficiency Level on the PAS reading test*
(N=131)



Q10: What is the return rate to regular schools and what percent return to Buechel Metro (recidivism)?***Return to Regular School and Recidivism***

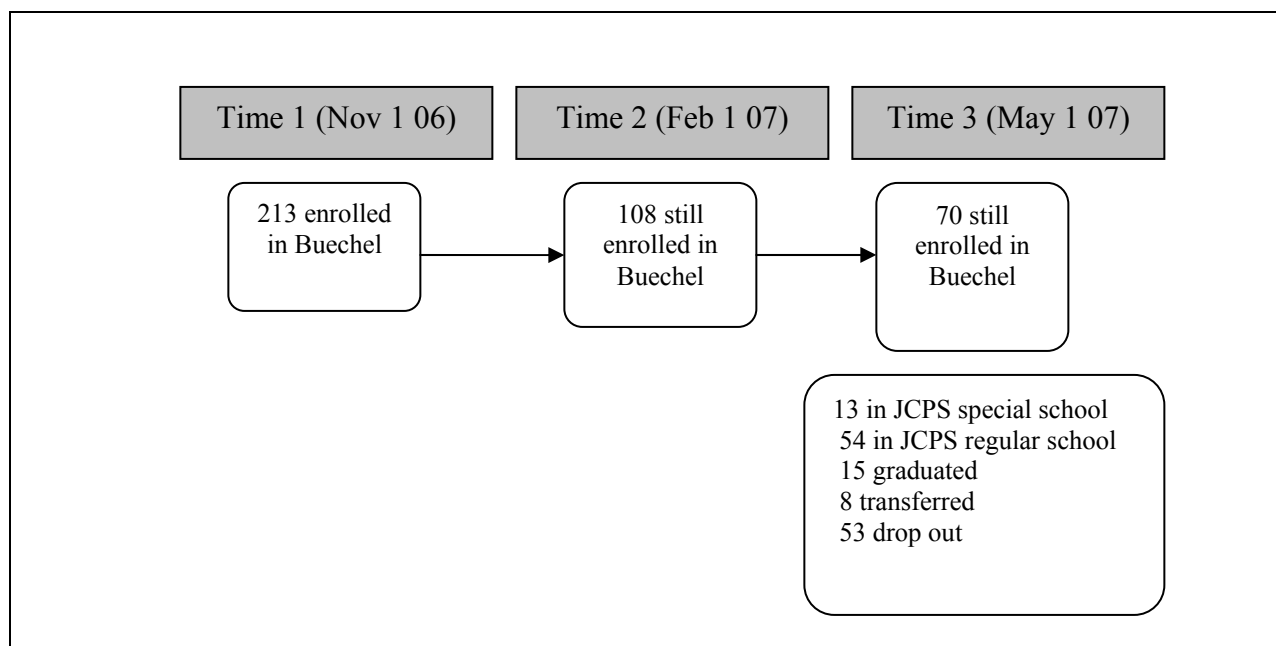
Data were extracted from three time points during the school year (November 1, February 1, and May 1) in order to assess the return rate to regular schools and the recidivism rate. On November 1, 2006, Buechel Metro had an enrollment of 213 students. On February 1, of the 213 students, there were 165 students still enrolled in a JCPS school. Of those 165 students, 108 students were still enrolled at Buechel Metro, 5 students were enrolled at a different special school, and 52 students were enrolled at a regular high school. By the third time point, May 1, 137 of the original 213 students were still enrolled in a JCPS school. Of those 137, 70 students were still enrolled at Buechel, 13 students were enrolled at a different special school and 54 students were enrolled at regular high school.

In sum, a total of 213 students of the 65 (31%) made a transition to the regular high school. However, 7 of the 65 (11%) have returned to Buechel Metro or another alternative school by the third time point (May 1, 2007) and 5 students withdrew. Many of the 213 students were still enrolled at Buechel Metro (n = 70; 33%) or were enrolled at a regular school (n = 54; 25%). By the third time point, 76 of the 213 students were no longer enrolled in a JCPS school. See Table 13 and Figure 7 for summary.

Table 13. *Summary of where students enrolled at Buechel Metro in November 2006 were in May 2007(N = 213)*

Status of Student Cohort in May 2007	N	Percent
Continued enrollment at Buechel Metro	70	32.9%
Enrollment at a different special school	13	6.1%
Enrollment at a regular JCPS high school	54	25.3%
No longer enrolled in JCPS School	76	35.6%
Graduated	15	7.0%
Transferred		
Home school	0	0.0%
Non-public school	1	0.5%
Public school in other district	7	3.3%
Total Transferred	8	3.8%
Drop Outs		
Withdrawn from school for second time during current school year	2	0.9%
Under the court jurisdiction	0	0.0%
Withdrawn, no further information	9	4.2%
Drop Out (substantiated)	42	19.7%
Total coded as drop out	53	24.8%

Figure 7: *Flow Chart of Cohort Status**



*numbers do not add up to total due to transition in/out Buechel within school year

Discussion

Several of the findings in this evaluation mirror results found in national/background literature. First, the majority of students served at Buechel Metro have experienced cumulative disadvantage through a combination of high risk factors in terms of demographics, geographic location, household structure, and schooling history. That is, most are African American, male, on free/reduced lunch, live in single parent households, live in poor, high crime neighborhoods, have experienced high school mobility rates, have been involved with Juvenile justice system, attended high poverty schools, and have low reading achievement. Interestingly, student survey data indicate that in spite of these issues, all students report having a high sense of self-worth, , and most view school as important; and that dropping out of school as a big mistake. Though students felt school was important, they also felt a sense of disconnection as half of respondents did not feel teachers cared about them as a person.

Second, Buechel Metro is staffed with security personnel and collaborates with the Department of Juvenile Justice and the police department when necessary. The highly structured, highly secure environment reveals that they are meeting their primary goal of security and safety.

Third, in terms of transitions, about one quarter of the students transitioned back into the mainstream schools. About one quarter of the cohort examined in this report stayed at Buechel Metro for the entire year, and 25% dropped out. Thus, results are mixed in terms of transition outcomes.

Contrary to many other alternative schools around the country, the teachers at Buechel Metro are not placed there involuntary. Most of the teachers serving in the school are White, have a masters degree or higher and are certified to teach high school. While most teachers report

feeling prepared to teach students with academic problems, less than half reported feeling prepared to teach students with behavioral and emotional problems, the evaluation did not assess the extent to which they feel prepared to teach a largely minority male population.

In terms of characteristics identified as being conducive to positive student outcomes, the small class sizes and student/teacher ratio is evident at Buechel Metro. In terms of student progress, data reveal that for students enrolled 100 or more days, there was a reduction in the number of students receiving suspensions, yet there was a small increase in school absences among students. Also, a substantial number of students (41%) increased their reading level from novice to either apprentice or proficient.

Limitations

This evaluation has several noteworthy limitations. First, with respect to the classroom observations, the observations only included four classrooms and thus should not be viewed as representative of the school. Second, while every effort was made to ensure random selection of students for the student surveys, a good number of students from the randomized list were unable to take the survey. Coupled with the small student survey sample size, these results are not necessarily generalizable to the entire student population. Third, with respect to discipline data, though pre-post suspension data is reported, more specific office referral data is not reported.

Recommendations

Based on the findings in this evaluation, several recommendations are presented. First, the data shows that students entering alternative schools have many risk factors including poverty and a high mobility rate. Because of their high mobility history, these students may find it difficult to form attachments and trust with adults. While the school is staffed with a good deal of security personnel, the counselor/student ratio is very high. Thus, decreasing the counselor to

student ratio is important, and partnering with agencies to provide mental health services is also recommended. Additionally, in order to help provide skills necessary for post high school, an increase in vocational education programs/partnerships, and exposure to post secondary institutions would help move students toward a successful transition into life after high school.

Second, based on results revealing the widespread use of direct instructional approaches and independent student work with little two way interaction and dialogue in the classroom; we recommend that more collaborative, and individualized instructional approaches are implemented in the classroom. A more individualized instructional approach may also help students form stronger teacher-student relationships.

Third, in light of the student population being served in this school, teacher professional development ought to include training that addresses the specific strategies that work best with the population, particularly for students with emotional and behavioral disorders, as well as professional development that centers on cultural competence in working with African American students.

Fourth, due to the seemingly ambiguous and sometimes contentious placement process coupled with finding of students in the school with no prior suspensions, it may be valuable to implement a deliberate and systematic intervention check to ensure that sufficient measures have been taken in the home school locations prior to placement in Buechel Metro before students could be placed in the school (aside from court mandated cases). This would also aid in documenting clearly the reasons for placement *and* prior efforts taken by the feeder school to address the students needs.

Fifth, due to very small number of students who successfully transition back into the mainstream schools, we recommend that a deliberate plan is developed and implemented to help

students move into, and remain in their home schools. This would include necessitate effort on the part of both home schools and Buechel Metro, as well as with student advocates or liaisons to help increase systemic effectiveness. Finally, it would be useful to follow up longitudinally with students to assess outcomes over time.

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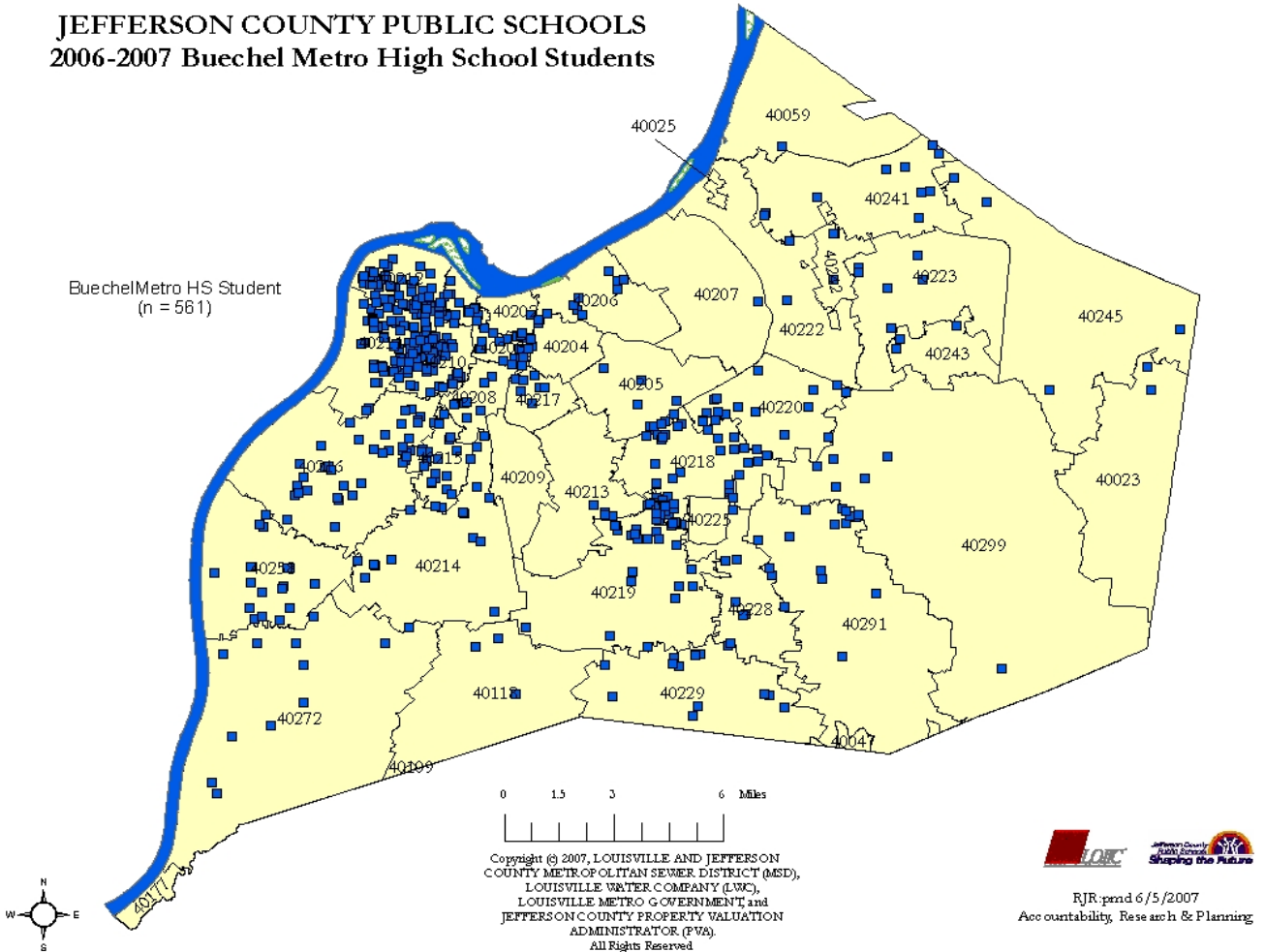
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Appendix A Geographic Map of Participants

JEFFERSON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2006-2007 Buechel Metro High School Students



Appendix B
Neighborhood Fact Sheets

Appendix C
Comprehensive School Plan 2007-2008



Dr. Sheldon Berman, Superintendent

Program Evaluation

(2006-2007)

Alternative Schools Evaluation

Kennedy Metropolitan

Maurice Risner
Program Director

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August 2007

Department of Accountability, Research and Planning
Dr. Robert J. Rodosky, Executive Director

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Executive Summary

Overview

Alternative schools represent the fastest growing sector in education, yet research and evaluations on alternative learning environments are just beginning. Kennedy Metropolitan High School, located in Louisville, KY, is an alternative school for students who are removed from school for a behavioral violation. The overall purpose of Kennedy Metro is to keep students in school. The objectives of the evaluation were 1) to describe student, teacher, and school characteristics in order to ascertain the alternative learning contexts provided to the students, 2) to describe the available services to students, and 3) to describe the progress and development of students during their tenure at the alternative school.

Research Design

The evaluation report includes both qualitative and quantitative data and utilized several methodologies consisting of surveys, interviews, observations, and secondary data extraction. Data collected included information pertaining to school activities, services to students, and classroom climate/culture. The District's computerized database provides individual student demographic, cognitive and non-cognitive data.

Major Findings

Student Demographics

- During the 2006-2007 school year, Kennedy Metro served a total of 402 students. The majority of students were male (73.1%) and African American (67.3%). Students were from at-risk backgrounds as 78.6% were from single parent homes, 83.5% were on free/reduced lunch, and many were living in areas of high unemployment, low-income, and racial isolation.
- Students were highly mobile in terms of school history. The average Kennedy Metro student has attended 5 different JCPS schools and most came from schools with higher

concentrations of poverty. Approximately 6.8% of students had attended the Louisville Metro Youth school indicating involvement in the juvenile justice system.

- About 46.3% of students were suspended at least once during 2005-2006 school year; however, over 1/3 (37.6%) of the students were not suspended in 2005-2006.
- About 1/3 of students (31%) scored Novice in reading in 2005-2006. Another 41% scored at the Apprentice level. Approximately 15% scored Proficient/Distinguished.

Student Survey

- Approximately 36% of students agree that they feel safe and comfortable with teachers at the school. Also, 52% of students reported that they agree that school is important, and 91% agree that dropping out would be a big mistake.
- However, only 9% reported that their teachers really care about them as a person.
- Regarding feelings toward self, approximately 66% of students reported having a high sense of self worth, 77% said they are able to do things as well as others, and 85% take a positive attitude toward themselves. About 91% reported that they are satisfied with themselves, and 18% said that they felt like a failure.

Student Progress while at Kennedy- Metro

- The average number of days a student was enrolled at Kennedy Metro was 62 days. The modal student was enrolled for 27 days. The range of membership was from 1 day – 174 days, the whole school year.
- There was no change in students' absences (average rate of absence was 32 days) from 2005-2006 to 2006-2007.
- The number of students suspended at least once increased 23% from 2005-2006 to 2006-2007.
- About 62% of students who scored Novice on the PAS in 2005-2006 increased to either Apprentice or Proficient in 2006-2007.
- About 46% of students were returned to a JCPC middle school by the end of the school year.

Teacher, Classroom, and School Data

- In order to identify teacher demographics, experience, and beliefs about teaching, a survey was administered to all teachers. A total of 18 surveys were returned.

- The modal teacher is White (77.8%) and has at least a master's degree (55%), and is 22% are certified to teach middle school.
- About 65% of teachers reported using direct instruction frequently or everyday.
- The classroom observation data showed that direct instruction was the most frequent instructional strategy utilized.
- Kennedy Metropolitan uses the same curriculum and pacing guides that are offered in the regular middle schools. In order to address individual reading levels, all students at Kennedy begin their school day in literacy blocks in the morning. Two resource teachers are employed at the school to work with students in reading one-on-one and in daytime
- Seven Counties employs 2 individuals that visit Kennedy 2-3 times per week to provide counseling and individual sessions.
- In terms of discipline, Kennedy relies on several procedures including short term in school suspension (ISAP), long term ISAP, suspension, physical management, and seclusion in time out rooms.

Recommendations

- In order to address students' detachment from school and teachers, it is recommended that teachers increase the use of collaborative and individualized instructional approaches and the counselor to student ratio be decreased. . These strategies would allow students more frequent opportunities to build trust and establish relationships with adults in the school.
- Systematic documentation by the school of the quantity and quality of mental health services and of the use of time-out rooms and physical restraint/management would help evaluate whether students' social-emotional needs are being met. Implementation of strategies to increase student's self-regulation and intrinsic motivation in terms of managing their own behavior may be beneficial.
- Because of the student demographics, it is recommended that teacher professional development include strategies centering on cultural competence in working with African American students.
- A clear transition protocol between regular and alternative schools may help increase the number of students transitioning back to regular schools.
- Finally, due to the seemingly ambiguous placement process coupled with the finding of students in the school with no prior suspensions, it may be valuable to implement a systematic intervention check to ensure that sufficient measures have been taken in the home school locations prior to placement in Kennedy Metro.

Introduction: Kennedy Metropolitan

Jefferson County Public Schools has adopted a philosophy that no student will be expelled. The strategy that JCPS utilizes to accomplish this task is to provide diverse school environments to serve individual students' needs. Kennedy Metropolitan Middle School is an alternative middle school for behavior modification and is part of the Jefferson County Public School system. The school specializes in dealing with middle school students that have demonstrated behavioral problems at their home school. The students are referred by Pupil Personnel, Juvenile Court, or state and county agencies. The primary goals of the school are to affect the behavior of the students so they may experience academic success, improve attendance and return to their home school. It is the school's philosophy that all students can learn through smaller class size, a cohesive staff, and acceptable behavior rewards. Once these necessary skills are achieved, the student will return to his/her home school and hopefully exhibit success academically and socially. This report summarizes information and progress of the student population served by Kennedy Metropolitan Middle School in the 2006-2007 school year.

Background Literature on Alternative Schools for Disruptive Students

In order to provide a context with respect to current national and state alternative school issues, national research on alternative schools for disruptive students is presented. The purpose of this brief literature review is to provide various stakeholders with a broader context of information about alternative schools that are used to serve similar student populations. This review includes information regarding the history, purpose, growth, national trends, and characteristics of effective and ineffective alternative schools.

The Evolving Purpose of Alternative Schools

In her research on the first decade of public alternative schools, Raywid (1981) found that alternative options for public school students skyrocketed from 100 schools to over 10,000 between the late 1950's through the early 1960's. Alternative education sprouted as a movement to empower poor and minority students (Morrison et al, 2001). Mirroring changes in the wider political climate from the 1960's throughout the 1980's, alternative schools became less progressive, and operated out of a more narrow and conservative framework (Raywid, 1981; Young, 1990).

Beginning in the early 1980's, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention began an initiative promoting alternative schools for delinquent students based on the premise that schools could play a significant role in reducing youth crime (Barber, 1980; Cox, 1999). Ironically, though the original purpose of alternative schools for "at-risk students" was to provide an alternative learning environment for students who had difficulty in the traditional school environment, research indicates that they are increasingly being used as an act of punishment, exclusion, and containment for disruptive students (Dunbar, 2001; Lehr, Lanner & Lange, 2003; Morrison et al, 2001).

Growth of Alternative Schools for Disruptive Students

In response to current educational, political, economic and social forces, alternative schools are increasingly playing a more prominent role in the world of public education (Lange & Lehr, 2003). Throughout the 1990's to present, the current number of public alternative schools and enrollment of the at-risk students that fill them is on the rise. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Common Core of Data (CCD) indicate that alternative

schools for at-risk students grew from 2,606 in 1994 to over 20,000 in 2002 (Lange and Sletten, 2002).

There is an agreement among researchers who examine issues related to alternative schools and school discipline that placement of disruptive students into alternative schools is a growing popular strategy schools are using to deal with students who are considered behavior problems (Banicky, 2000; Loflin, 2000; Lehr, Lanner & Lange, 2003). Moreover, the demand for more alternative schools serving disruptive students is clearly growing across the country (Aaron and Zweig, 2003; Dunbar, 2001; Loflin, 2000). Reflecting on current suspension and expulsion practices nationwide, some researchers recently forecast that the use of alternative school placement will continue to rise (Lehr, Lanner, and Lange, 2003; Morrison et al, 2001).

National Trends in Alternative Schools for Disruptive Students

Findings from a National Center of Education Statistics (NCES) study by Kliner, Porch and Farris (2002) confirm the growth of such schools and reveal several important national trends. Kliner et al. (2002) conducted a representative survey to determine school district practices in the use of alternative schools. Questionnaire data from 1,534 school districts during the 2000-2001 school year revealed that school districts most likely to have alternative schools for at-risk youth were large, located in the Southeast region, have a high minority enrollment and high concentrations of poverty. Alternative schools were offered at the high school level by 92 % of districts, at the middle school level by 67 % of districts and at the elementary level by 21 % of districts. In many districts, the demand for alternative school placements outweighed the supply. In fact, 83 % of districts with alternative schools reported putting students on waiting lists due to space and staffing limitations.

With respect to entrance and exit criteria, the majority of districts with alternative schools for at-risk youth placed students in the schools because the students physically attacked someone, possessed drugs, were truant, or engaged in disruptive verbal behavior. Of districts with alternative schools, 75% allowed students to transfer back to a base school while 1% did not allow transfers. The two key determinants for allowing students to transfer back to their base schools were improved student behavior/ attitudes and motivation to return. Key findings in regard to staffing, curriculum, and collaboration, revealed that large districts and districts with high minority enrollment and poverty concentration were more likely to report involuntary placement of teachers into alternative schools; 75% had policies requiring curriculum to meet individual student needs. The type of collaboration most widely reported was with the juvenile justice system (84%), mental health agencies (75%), police departments (70%) and child protective services (69%).

Because the development and implementation of alternative schools varies at the state, district and school level, no one standard list of trends exists. In a survey of 48 states regarding enrollment, funding, curriculum and staffing, several key findings emerged.

With respect to curriculum, while most states required alternative schools to follow state standards, more than a third of states had unclear language regarding the curriculum (Lehr, Lanner and Lange, 2003, p. 14). Enrollment criteria numbers suggest that alternative schools are being used as a setting for suspended and expelled students which are projected to increase. With respect to funding, most alternative schools rely on state funding, but other sources widely used include local, federal and grant dollars. Findings regarding school staffing indicate that more than half of the states did not have staffing standards for alternative schools in their policy. Finally, the majority of states did not have clear guidance regarding the education of students

with disabilities in alternative school settings (Lehr, Lanner and Lange, 2003, p.15). There is an increasing concern regarding the enrollment procedures and quality of services for special education students enrolled in alternative school settings.

Researchers have found several alternative school characteristics or conditions conducive to *positive* student outcomes. These include:

- Small class size/ low ratio
- Flexible/understanding teachers
- Individualized instruction
- Student involvement in decision making
- Family/parent involvement

Characteristics of alternative schools found to contribute to *negative* student outcomes include:

- Racial isolation
- Punitive focus
- Intensified social control
- Inadequate resources
- Lack of accountability
- Unchallenging curriculum
- Deviant peer networking/contagion

The current paper describes Kennedy Metro, one alternative school in the Jefferson County Public School district. Given the increasing demand for alternative schools, not only nationally, but locally, the paper serves to better understand the school's teachers, the learning environment provided to students, and the characteristics of students being served by the alternative school.

Evaluation Purpose & Questions

This alternative school evaluation report includes both qualitative and quantitative dimensions. The evaluators met with the principals to determine what research questions would most useful, and thus which questions/objectives would be given priority. The overarching objectives and evaluation questions that guided the evaluation were the following:

Objective 1: To describe the student characteristics, teacher characteristics, and school culture in order to ascertain the alternative learning contexts provided to students.

- (a) What are the characteristics of students served in the 2006-2007 school year in terms of demographics, mobility, academic, and non-academic data?
- (b) What are the characteristics of the teachers in terms of education, experience, and beliefs about teaching?
- (c) What is the overall school culture and climate as rated by teachers and students?
- (d) What is the overall classroom climate as rated by independent observers?

Objective 2: To describe the available services to students who attend Kennedy Metro.

- (e) What are the characteristics of the school's scope of activities and services?

Objective 3: To describe the progress and development of students during their tenure at Kennedy Metro

- (f) What is the average length of tenure for a student at Kennedy Metro?
- (g) Is there a change in attendance for students attending the Kennedy Metro?
- (h) Is there a change in the reading achievement of students attending Kennedy Metro?
- (i) Is there a change in suspensions of students attending Kennedy Metro?
- (j) What is the return rate to regular schools and what percent return to Kennedy Metro (recidivism)?

Evaluation Method

Various data sources of qualitative and quantitative data are used for the evaluation of Kennedy Metropolitan. The District's computerized database provides individual student demographic, cognitive and non-cognitive data. The demographic data includes race, gender, school location, grade, free/reduced lunch status, and household structure. Other demographic data includes geographic information to identify the neighborhoods where the students reside

The cognitive data includes proficiency levels on the Predictive Assessment Series (PAS). The PAS is a series of equivalent assessments designed to match, predict, and improve the reading knowledge and skills tested by state standards and aligned to nationally-normed and state criterion test. Non-cognitive data provided by the district data base included attendance and discipline related information.

Qualitative data was collected throughout the formative data collection process via observation visits, staff interviews, and surveys conducted with teachers and students. This includes information pertaining to school activities, services to students, and classroom climate/culture. The specific evaluation measures, and samples used are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: *Evaluation Measures & Sample*

Measures	Sample	Description / Source
Cognitive		
PAS reading scores	65 students	Students enrolled 100+ days that have PAS score in 05-06 and 06-07/ district data base
Non-Cognitive		
Demographics	401 students	All students who attended during 06-07*/ district data base
Geographic/Neighborhood	401 students	All students who attended during 06-07*/ district data base
Mobility History	402 students	All students enrolled who attended in 06-07/ district data base
Feeder Schools	367 students	All students with available data/ district data base
Attendance	65 students	Students enrolled 100+ days/ district data base
Suspension/DJJ involvement	65 students	Students enrolled 100+ days/ district data base
Return rate/ Recidivism	85 students	All students enrolled on Nov 1 2006/ district database
Perceptions of self	22 students	Partially random sample of students/ survey
School Culture		
Student perception of school and teachers	22 students	Partially random sample of students/ survey
Classroom observations	6 classrooms	Classrooms selected by Principal/ observation instrument
Teacher perception of program	18 teachers	Teachers/ survey
Teacher characteristics	18 teachers	Teachers/ survey
School enrollment	207 students	1 st -8 th pupil months 06-07/ district data base

**missing data for one student*

Evaluation Results

As an alternative school serving students who have been kicked out of mainstream schools, Kennedy Metro is different than the “regular” middle schools in various ways. Two important areas of difference to highlight include the purpose/vision of the school; and the enrollment pattern over the course of the year.

Purpose and Vision of Kennedy Metro

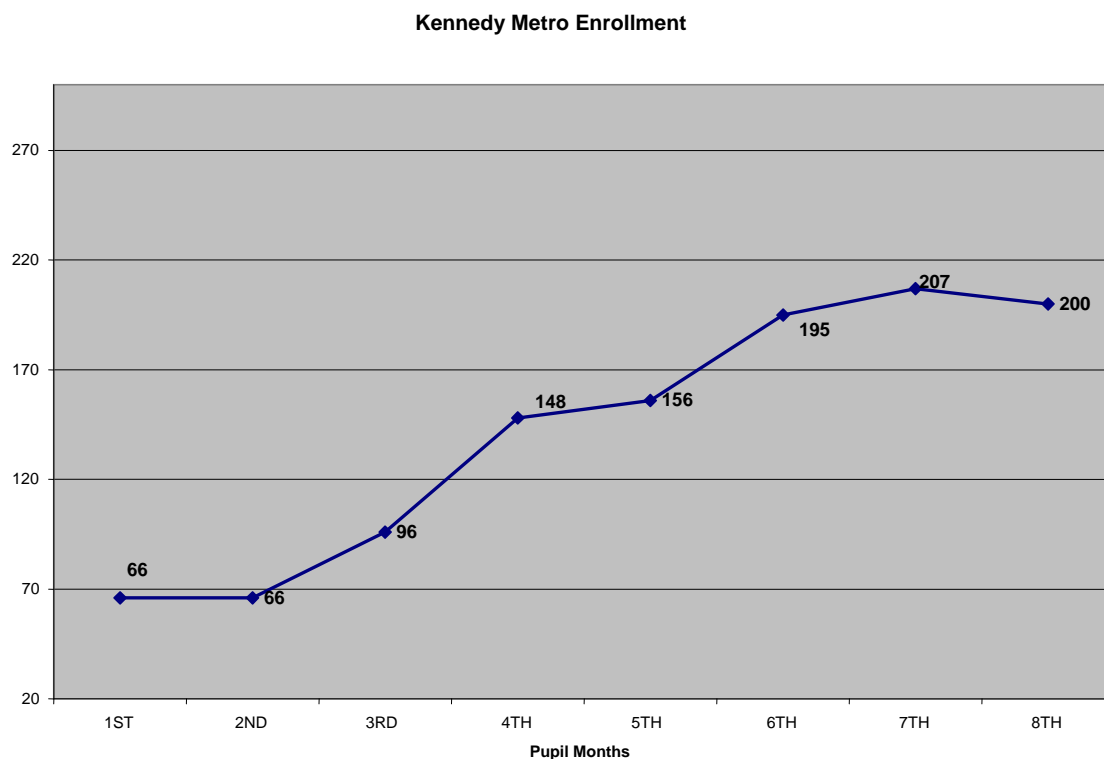
The primary purpose of Kennedy Metro is to modify student behavior through rewards/incentives in order to improve attendance and successfully send students back in their regular home school as soon as possible. The program was designed so that students stay a minimum of 12 weeks depending on the offense. Every 6 weeks, there is a period of time students are released back into the regular school and then a new group of students come in to the school. Kennedy works to empower its students to develop self-worth, respect for others, and the ability to take responsibility for their own behavior and attitude toward learning. It is the school policy that students who enroll at Kennedy Metro Middle School meets with school personnel along with the student’s parent/guardian to discuss the program at Kennedy. In addition to the core content, Kennedy offers additional initiatives to further support their students including extended school services, computer-enhanced instruction, pro-social character education, and opportunities to participate in athletics.

Monthly Enrollment

One of the biggest challenges faced by the school is the transient nature of the student population. While most schools enrollment remains stable across the school year student enrollment at Kennedy Metro changes from month to month. Presented in Figure 1 is the student enrollment for the 1st-8th pupil months of 2006-2007. As can be seen, student enrollment

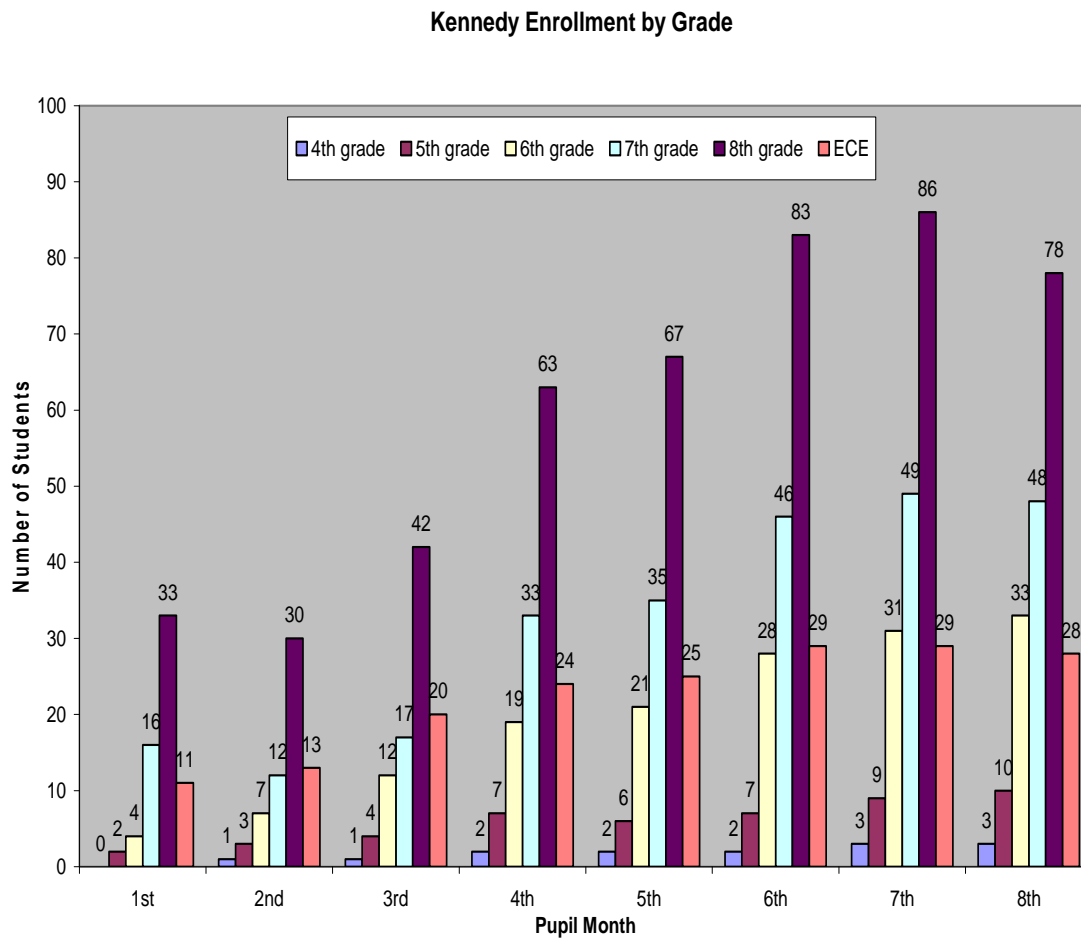
increases each month throughout the year. Data indicates a 203% increase in enrollment from the beginning to the end of the school year. This has important implications for staffing.

Figure 1: 2006-2007 Enrollment by Pupil Month



Examining the enrollment trend by grade provides a more detailed picture with respect to grade level changes. The enrollment trend by grade level of student is presented in Figure 2. As shown in Figure 2, the majority of students enrolled throughout the year are 8th graders. The enrollment increases are largest overall for 7th grade students, as indicated by a 200% increase from first pupil month to the eight pupil month. Student enrollment increases are lowest for 5th grade students. Additionally, there is a 154% increase in the number of ECE students from the first pupil month to the 8th pupil month.

Figure 2: Enrollment per Month by Grade



Objective 1: To describe student characteristics, teacher characteristics, and school culture in order to ascertain the alternative learning contexts provided to students.
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Student Characteristics

Q1: What are the characteristics of students served in the 2006-2007 school year in terms of demographics, mobility, academic, and non-academic data?

Student Demographics

During the 2006-2007 school year, Kennedy Metropolitan served a total of 402 students. As shown in Table 2, the majority of students are male (73.1%), African-American (67.3%), and in eighth grade (43.9%). Descriptive crosstabs reveal that approximately 47% are Black males, 20% are Black females and 20% white males. With respect to household structure and poverty, the students are at high risk as 78.6% live in single parent homes and 90% receive free/reduced lunch.

While the demographic data presented in Table 2 reveal the high risk status of the students served in terms of race, poverty and household status, data describing the general neighborhood status where students live can also provide insight. As shown on Table 2, 24.2% of students live in zip code areas 40203, 40210, 40212, and 14.5% live in zip code area 40211. These zip codes had the greatest frequency among the students. Data from the 2000 Census Bureau reveal that within these four zip code areas, there are high unemployment rates, a high percent of families living below the poverty line, and in some areas, are racially isolated. A geographic map of where students live is shown in Appendix A. Also, a detailed account of neighborhood child wellbeing data for the zip code areas listed in the table can be seen on Appendix B.

Table 2: *Profile of Participating Students in Kennedy - Metro (N =401)**

Variable	N	%
Gender		
Male	293	73.1
Female	108	26.9
Race		
Black	270	67.3
Other	26	6.5
White	105	26.2
Gender*Race		
Black Male	190	47.4
White Male	81	20.2
Other Male	22	5.5
Black Female	80	20.0
White Female	24	5.9
Other Female	4	1.0
Grade		
Fourth	3	0.7
Fifth	14	3.5
Sixth	57	14.2
Seventh	91	22.7
Eighth	176	43.9
Ninth	2	0.5
Self Contained ECE	58	14.5
Parent Household Structure		
Single	315	78.6
Two Parent	86	21.4
Lunch Status		
Free	335	83.5
Reduced	29	7.2
Paid	37	9.2
Neighborhood/Zip Code Resides		
40203, 40210, 40212	97	24.2
40211	58	14.5
Other Zips	246	61.3

**Data missing for one student*

Feeder Schools/Mobility

Feeder School data was examined to investigate which elementary, middle, and other special schools students attended prior to being referred to Kennedy Metropolitan. Data was available for 367 students. The top elementary schools, middle schools, and special schools attended by Kennedy Metro students are presented in Table 3. For each school, the percent of students who receive free/reduced lunch is shown. In total, students averaged attending 5.3 different JCPS schools throughout their school career up to this point. As evidenced by the percent poverty (i.e., Free/Reduce lunch) of the most frequently attended schools, students attending Kennedy Metro are more likely to have attended elementary and middle schools with high concentrations of poverty. Importantly, the top 2 elementary and middle schools where students have emerged from are among the districts highest needs schools. That is, these are schools with longstanding low achievement, high concentration of poverty, and high teacher turnover.

Table 3: *Regular School Locations of 06-07 Students Prior to Referral to Kennedy Metro (N =367)*

School Name	% F/R Lunch	Number	Percent of Kennedy Metro Student who attended...
Elementary			
Hazelwood	90.8%	30	8.17%
Atkinson	91.2%	29	7.90%
Auburndale	72.5%	29	7.90%
McFerran	79.2%	29	7.90%
Jacob	90.9%	25	6.81%
Semple	83.3%	25	6.81%
Trunnell	66.2%	25	6.81%
Byck	80.3%	22	5.99%
Wheatley	78.5%	22	5.99%
Young	91.0%	22	5.99%
Middle			
	% Poverty	Number	Percent of Kennedy Metro Student who attended...
Southern	89.9%	39	10.63%
Thomas Jefferson	74.8%	28	7.63%
Noe	49.5%	26	7.08%
Crosby	24.6%	25	6.81%
Stuart	67.9%	25	6.81%
Myers	57.8%	24	6.54%
Westport	59.3%	24	6.54%
Kammerer	36.9%	23	6.27%
Newburg	50.4%	22	5.99%
Iroquois	77.3%	20	5.45%
Special Schools			
	Percent Poverty	Number	Percent of Kennedy Metro Student who attended...
PEACE ACADEMY SCHOOL	39.5%	28	7.63%
LOUISVILLE METRO YOUTH CENTER	87.7%	25	6.81%
AHRENS EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE	17.6%	18	4.90%
TEN BROECK/DUPONT	37.8%	16	4.36%
SOUTH PARK TAPP	63.4%	13	3.54%
ACKERLY/BINGHAM HIGH	40.0%	8	2.18%
TEN BROECK/KMI	32.4%	8	2.18%
WESTPORT TAPP	54.9%	8	2.18%

ACKERLY/BINGHAM GUIDANCE ELEM	50.0%	7	1.91%
BROOKLAWN	23.5%	7	1.91%

To further provide a context regarding the students served at Kennedy Metro this year, student mobility history data was analyzed. Student mobility history includes the number of times a student has changed schools during a school year. The mobility data presented in Table 4 represent the number of times students changed schools from August 1998 through May 2006, thus encompassing students change of schools since they began school in JCPS. On average, students withdrew from one school to enroll in another 3.2 times throughout their schooling career up to this point. The range is from 0 school changes to 22 school changes.

Table 4: *Mobility History of Students Since 1998 (N = 402)*

Mobility History (since 1998)	N	%
0	123	30.6
1-3	190	47.2
4-6	56	13.9
7-9	21	5.2
10-12	8	1.9
13-15	2	0.5
16+	2	0.5

Prior Year Academic and Non- Academic Characteristics

In order to determine prior year (2005-2006) academic and non-academic characteristics of the students served at Kennedy Metro this year, several factors were examined to help describe the student's background further. In terms of reading achievement, shown in Table 5, of all the students who took the PAS in reading, 31% scored in the Novice range, 41% scored Apprentice, while 15% scored proficient/distinguished.

With respect to suspensions, 46% of the students were suspended from school between 1-3 times and 13% were suspended between 4-6 times. Regarding the reasons for suspension, the

most frequent reasons included disruptive behavior; bus disturbance and student to student fighting, respectively. Interestingly, 38% of the students were not suspended in 2005-2006.

Table 5: *Prior Year (2005-2006) Reading Level and Suspensions (N =402)*

Variables	N	%
Academic		
PAS reading 2005-06		
Novice	125	31.1
Apprentice	166	41.3
Proficient-Distinguished	62	15.4
Did not take PAS	49	12.2
Non-Academic		
Number of Suspensions 2005-06		
0	151	37.6
1-3	186	46.3
4-6	54	13.4
7+	11	2.7

Q2: What are the characteristics of the teachers in terms of education, experience and beliefs about teaching?

Teacher Characteristics

Teacher Education and Experience

In order to identify teacher demographics, experience, and beliefs about teaching, a survey was administered to all teachers. Of the 18 teachers who took the survey, 100% teach full time, 30% currently teach grades 5-8, and 100% participated in professional development this year. Furthermore, 16.7% teach more than one subject. Also, the average middle school teaching experience of the teachers is 5.4 years. During an interview the principal remarked that this year (06-07) he brought in approximately 10 new teachers and about 14 new staff total, and that he was proud of the collegiality among the school staff. As shown in Table 6, the modal teacher is White, has a master's degree, and is certified to teach middle school.

Table 6: *Profile of Teachers in Kennedy Metro (N =18)**

Variable	N	%
Gender		
Female	8	44.4%
Male	10	55.6%
Race/ Ethnicity		
Black/ African-American (not Hispanic)	3	16.7%
White/ Caucasian (Not Hispanic)	14	77.8%
Asian or Pacific Islander	1	5.6%
Education Level		
AA, AS, two-year degree	1	5.6%
Bachelor's degree or one year of coursework beyond BA	1	5.6%
Master's degree	10	55.6%
Rank 1	5	27.8%
Major		
Elementary Education	1	5.6%
Secondary Education	4	22.2%
Special Education	4	22.2%
Education (general)	1	5.6%
Other	8	44.4%
Certification (% Yes)		
Elementary school	8	53.3%
Middle school	16	100.0%
High school	12	80.0%
Other levels or special subjects	10	55.6%
Current Position		
Teacher	11	61.1%
ECE Teacher	6	33.3%
Resource Teacher	1	5.6%

Teacher Beliefs about Preparation and Teaching

As shown on Table 7, the majority of teachers reported that they feel prepared or very prepared to teach students who are from different socioeconomic backgrounds, and have behavior, emotional, or academic problems.

Table 7: *Teacher self-report of preparation and teaching practices (N = 18)*

How well prepared do you feel to teach Students:	Somewhat Prepared	Prepared	Very Prepared
From different socio-economic backgrounds	1 (5.6%)	11 (61.1%)	6 (33.3%)
With behavior problems	4 (22.2%)	8 (44.4%)	6 (33.3%)
With emotional problems *	5 (27.8%)	8 (44.4%)	4 (22.2%)
With academic problems	0 (0%)	11 (61.1%)	7 (38.9%)

* 1 teacher responded they were not prepared to teach students with emotional problems

With respect to instructional approaches, as can be seen on Table 8, approximately 65% of teachers reported using direct instruction frequently or everyday and 50% reported using small group/collaborative activities frequently or everyday. Approximately 53% reported using technology and 76% report implementing classroom discussions frequently or everyday. Approximately 65% of teachers reported using independent work (i.e., work students do alone) for students. With respect to classroom discipline, approximately 41.2% of teachers report using discipline (i.e., referrals, in school suspension) frequently or everyday. Additionally, approximately 41% of teachers reported using student rewards sometimes.

Table 8: *Teacher self-report of preparation and teaching practices (N = 18)*

Teaching Practices	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Frequently	Everyday
Direct Instruction (lecture)	2 (11.8%)	4 (23.5%)	0 (0%)	8 (47.1%)	3 (17.6%)
Small group activities	2 (12.5%)	2 (12.5%)	4 (25.0%)	4 (25.0%)	4 (25.0%)
Independent student work	1 (5.9%)	3 (17.6%)	2 (11.8%)	5 (29.4%)	6 (35.3%)
Use of Technology	2 (11.8%)	3 (17.6%)	3 (17.6%)	6 (35.3%)	3 (17.6%)
Classroom discussions	0 (0%)	1 (5.9%)	3 (17.6%)	10 (58.8%)	3 (17.6%)
Disciplinary actions	1 (5.9%)	5 (29.4%)	4 (23.5%)	5 (29.4%)	2 (11.8%)
Use of student rewards	2 (11.8%)	2 (11.8%)	7 (41.3%)	3 (17.6%)	3 (17.6%)

Q3: What is the overall school culture and climate as rated by students?

School Culture

Student Perception of School Culture and Themselves

In order to determine student perceptions of the schools' culture/ climate, as well as perceptions of themselves, a sample of students participated in a survey activity using “clicker” or press technology. The students were randomly selected by evaluators using computerized method, with the only criteria being that they have attended the school at least 12 weeks. This allowed ample time for students to answer questions about the school.

Due to several factors (e.g., student not in attendance that day), not all students selected from the computerized random list were available to take the survey, so a few students on the original list were replaced with available students. Table 9 identifies the demographic characteristics of students who completed the survey activity. As shown, the majority of students were male (68%) and African-American (85%). With respect to grade level, 68% were

in 8th grade, 13% in 7th, and 13% in 5th grade. In terms of enrollment, 18% attended the school for less than 3 months, 31% between 3-6 months, and 50% have attended the school for more than 9 months.

Table 9: *Student Survey Demographics* (N = 22)

Student Respondent Demographics	N	%
Gender		
Male	15	68.2
Female	7	31.8
Race		
African-American	18	85.7
Caucasian	0	0
Hispanic	0	0
Other	3	14.3
Current Grade		
5 th or lower	3	13.6
6 th	1	4.5
7 th	3	13.6
8th	15	68.2
Length of Time attending Kennedy		
Less than 3 months	4	18.2
3-6 months	7	31.8
7-9 months	0	0
More than 9 months	11	50.0

The goal of the student survey was to ascertain student perceptions of the schools climate and of themselves. The survey has 4 subscales to measure (a) trust and respect for teachers, (b) identification with school, (c) community of learning, and (d) self-esteem. The items on the survey had been validated as they were taken from various instruments used in previous research. Reverse questioning was used in 3 of the 4 subscales. The items were presented on a 4 point likert scale, where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, and 4 = strongly.

As shown on Table 10, only 18% of students agree that the teachers always try to be fair, while 36% report that they feel safe and comfortable with teachers at the school. Also, 54% of students agreed that “the teachers don’t care what I think.” In terms of identification with

school, 68% of students reported that they agree that school is more important than most people think, and 90% agree that dropping out of school before getting a diploma would be a big mistake. However, only 13% of students agreed that school is one of their favorite places to be, and only 4% agree that the adults in school treat them fairly. Approximately 55% of students agreed that teachers encourage them to do their best, while only 9% reported that their teachers really care about them as a person. Regarding feelings toward self, approximately 67% of students reporting having a high sense of self worth, 77% agree they are able to do things as well as others, and 86% agree they take a positive attitude toward themselves. About 90% reported that they are satisfied with themselves, and 18% said that they felt like a failure.

Table 10: Kennedy Metropolitan Student Survey Results (N = 22)

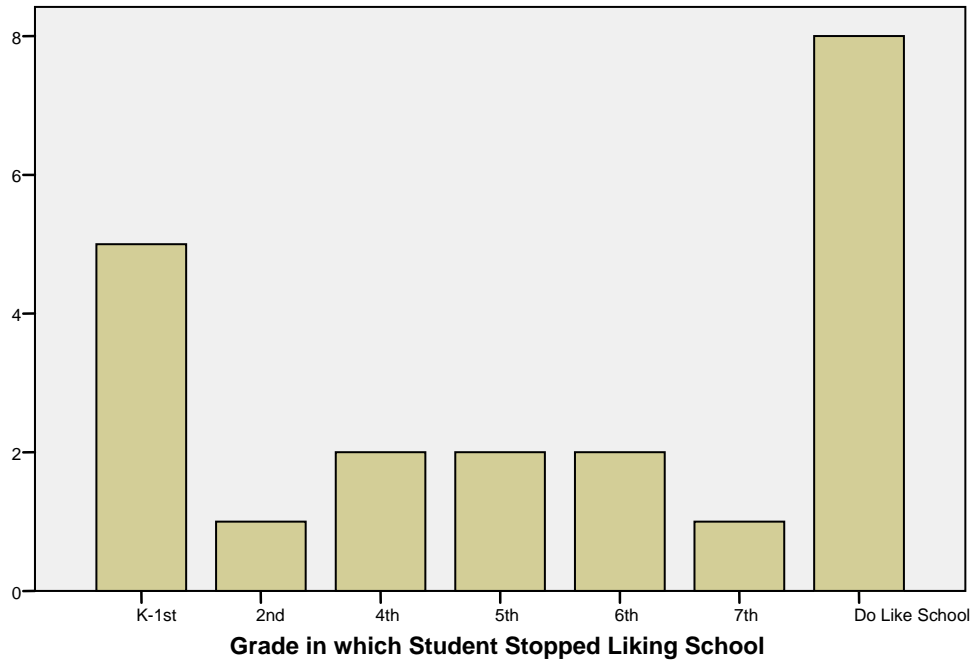
Trust and Respect for Teachers (perception of teachers)	% Agree/Strongly Agree
The teachers here always try to be fair.	18.1
I feel respected by teachers and staff at this school.	22.7
I feel safe and comfortable with the teachers in this school.	36.3
The teachers here don't care what I think (R)	54.5
Identification with School	
School is one of my favorite places to be.	13.6
I can get a good job even if my grades are bad.	31.4
There are teachers or other adults in my school that I can talk to if I have a problem.	33.3
School is often a waste of time (R)	45.4
School is one of the most important things in my life.	52.3
I like to participate in a lot of activities at schools.	54.6
Most of what I learn in school will be useful when I get a job.	57.1
School is more important than most people think.	68.2
Dropping out of school before getting a high school diploma would be a huge mistake for me.	90.5
Community of Learners/Perception of Teachers	
The adults in my school treat students fairly.	4.5
Teachers at my school treat students fairly.	9.0
My teachers really care about me as a person.	9.0
Adults in my school building set a good example for students.	9.0
My teachers listen to my questions and concerns.	45.5
Teachers encourage me to do the best work I can.	54.5
Self-Esteem	
All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure (R)	18.2
I feel I do not have much to be proud of. (R)	19.1
At times I think I am no good at all. (R)	19.1
I feel useless at times (R)	38.1
I wish I could have more respect for myself (R)	47.6
I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.	66.6
I am able to do things as well as most other people.	77.2
I take a positive attitude toward myself.	85.7
I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	86.4
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	90.5

* Note: R indicates reversed question items

In addition to the items above, in order to determine the approximate time in their schooling history that they may have become disengaged with school, the students were asked the following question “If you do not like school, in which grade did you start NOT liking

school?” As shown on Figure 3, 8 students (36%) reported they do like school while 5 students (23%) reported that they stopped liking school in K – 1st grade.

Figure 3: *Distribution of student responses to grade they started disliking school (N = 22)*



Q4: What is the overall classroom climate as rated by independent observers?***Classroom Climate***

In order to ascertain the school culture and environmental context in the evaluation, 6 classroom observations were conducted by three evaluators using an observation instrument. The instrument called the Classroom Observation Summary was developed by the evaluators, piloted to ensure inter-rater reliability, and demonstrated high internal consistency in the current data set, Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$. The observation instrument consisted of 22 items that examined (a) *instructional orientation* – refers to the physical orientation in which instruction/learning is taking place (e.g., whole group, small group), (b) *instructional components* – refers to the specific components of instruction driven by the teacher and the classroom environment (e.g., use of higher order questions, uses praise or reinforcements), and (c) *student engagement* – refers explicitly to student involvement and attention in the classroom (e.g., proportion of class that is asking and answering questions, attentive to classroom activities).

The metric of the scale is designed for an observation that takes place for the entire class period (45-50 minute periods). Classrooms were selected to represent the range of ages, content areas, teacher experience/education levels, and teacher length of time at the school. Table 11 shows the average scores across classroom observed at Kennedy Metropolitan and is presented from lowest to highest score. For the Instructional Orientation, a 1 = not observed, 2 = rarely (average of 5 minutes per period), 3 = occasionally (average of 10-15 minutes per period), 4 = frequently (average of 16-30 minutes per period), and 5 = extensively (average of more than 30 minutes per period). As depicted in the Table 11, the most common instructional orientation was direct instruction, making up between 15 and 30 minutes of the class period. The next most

common grouping was individual seat work comprising of 5 to 15 minutes of the class period.

The least common orientation was small group comprising of 0 to 5 minutes of the class period.

For Instructional Components, items are each rated on a 5 point scale where 1= Low, 3= Moderate, and 5 = High. Overall, classrooms were rated highest in time management, and developmentally appropriate activities; they were rated lowest in using praise and/or reinforcements in the classroom.

Finally for Student Engagement, items are rated on a 5 point scale from 1 = None (0% of class), 2 = Few (1-25% of class), 3 = Some (26-50% of class), 4 = Most (51-99% of class), and 5 = All (100% of class). Overall, classroom struggled with student engagement with about half of the students being engaged and attentive to the classroom activities and half of students disengaged. This was also the case when examining students who participated in asking and answer instructor questions; about half of students asked and answered questions and about half did not participate interactively.

Table 11: *Classroom Observation Results* (n = 6 classrooms)

Classroom Observation Summary	Mean	Std. Deviation
Instructional Orientation		
Small group/Cooperative/Collaborative Learning	1.67	1.63
Independent/Individual work	2.67	1.63
Direct Instruction (whole class lecture)	3.67	1.75
Instructional Components		
Uses praise and/or reinforcements	1.83	0.41
Positive atmosphere among students	2.17	0.75
Utilizes higher level questioning	2.17	1.17
Communicates to students what they are to learn as a result of the lesson, either written or verbally	2.33	1.03
Gives higher order feedback	2.33	1.37
Provides opportunities for interactive instructor/student dialogue	2.50	1.52
Provides opportunities for interactive student/student dialogue	2.50	1.38
Effective classroom management	2.67	0.52
Circulates around the classroom to check on students	3.00	1.27
Connects to students' past knowledge or previous experiences	3.00	1.90
Enthusiastic instruction conveyed by the instructor	3.00	1.27
Re-teaches or restates lesson in a different way when students don't understand	3.33	1.21
Activities are developmentally appropriate	3.33	0.52
Effective time management (no wasted time; materials are ready)	3.33	0.52
Respectful interactions between instructor and Students	3.33	1.03
Student Engagement		
Students ask instructor questions	2.83	0.75
Students are attentive to teacher	3.00	0.63
Students answer instructor questions	3.00	0.89
Students are engaged in activities	3.00	0.63

Scales:

Instructional Orientation: 1 = not observed, 2 = rarely (average of 5 minutes per period), 3 = occasionally (average of 10-15 minutes per period), 4 = frequently (average of 16-30 minutes per period), and 5 = extensively (average of more than 30 minutes per period).

Instructional Components: 1= Low, 3= Moderate, and 5 = High

Student Engagement: 1 = None (0% of class), 2 = Few (1-25% of class), 3 = Some (26-50% of class), 4 = Most (51-99% of class), and 5 = All (100% of class).

Objective 2: To describe the available services to students who attend the alternative school.

Activities/Services to Students

Q 5: What are the characteristics of the school's scope of activities and services?

In order to determine specific services to students in each school, an interview with the principal was conducted, and whenever possible, supporting documentation was examined. At Kennedy Metropolitan, the same curriculum is offered as in the regular schools. In order to address individual reading levels, all students at Kennedy begin their school day in literacy blocks in the morning. Two resource teachers are employed at the school to work with students in reading one-on-one and in daytime extended school services (ESS).

In terms of discipline, the principal explained that Kennedy relies on several procedures: (1) short term time out that gives students approximately 25 min to “cool down” do some work and then return to their regular class; (2) when students become aggressive then they are assigned to In school suspension room (ISAP) for longer term (i.e., day or day and a half depending on offense). The ISAP room is staffed by a security guard; (3) Students who are physically managed/restrained during the school day are secluded inside a “calming” or time out room (located inside the ISAP classroom). There are two time out rooms that are very small rooms with hard walls. Students remain inside the rooms until calmed down and at the discretion of the staff personnel in the ISAP room.

With respect to mental health and social services, a variety of programs are available to students including a boys' program, girls' program, anger management, SPAVA, and programs through Seven Counties and the metro police department. Seven Counties employs 2 individuals that visit Kennedy 2-3 times per week to provide counseling and individual sessions. In addition

to the mental health services, an athletic program is also provided for students (basketball). The principal, assistant principal, and the home/school coordinator are also available to students for counseling sessions. Due to lack of documentation, evaluators were unable to identify the exact number of students who receive services and participate in activities.

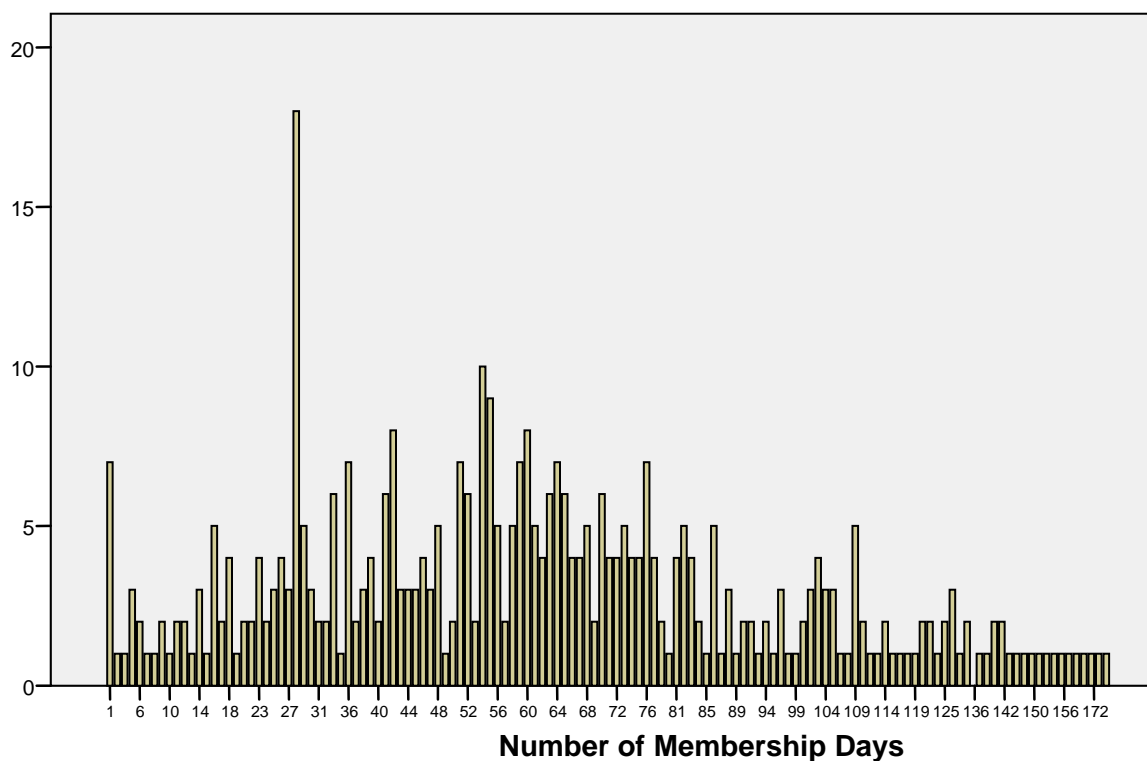
Objective 3: To describe the progress and development of students during their tenure at the alternative school.

Progress of Students During Tenure

Q6: What is the average length of tenure for a student at Kennedy Metro?

Student Length of Tenure (stay)

The average length of tenure (n = 402) for students in 2006-2007 was 62.35 (SD=35.92) days. While there is a wide distribution of enrollment for students, as shown on Figure 4, the modal enrollment at Kennedy Metro for 27 days. The next frequent length of stay at Kennedy Metro is 53 days. The range was from 1 day – 174 days, the whole school year.

Figure 4: *Distribution of Student Enrollment/length of tenure at Kennedy Metro (N = 402)*

Q7: Is there a change in attendance for students attending Kennedy Metro?

Student Attendance

In order to assess the impact of the program on attendance, absenteeism data from students who attended Kennedy for at least 100 or more days were analyzed (100 days = approximately 60% of school year). Of the students enrolled at least 100 days or more ($n = 65$), the average rate of absences in 2005-2006 was 32.5. During the 2006-2007 school year, the average rate of absences was 32.6, indicating stability in average number of absences from the previous school year to the current.

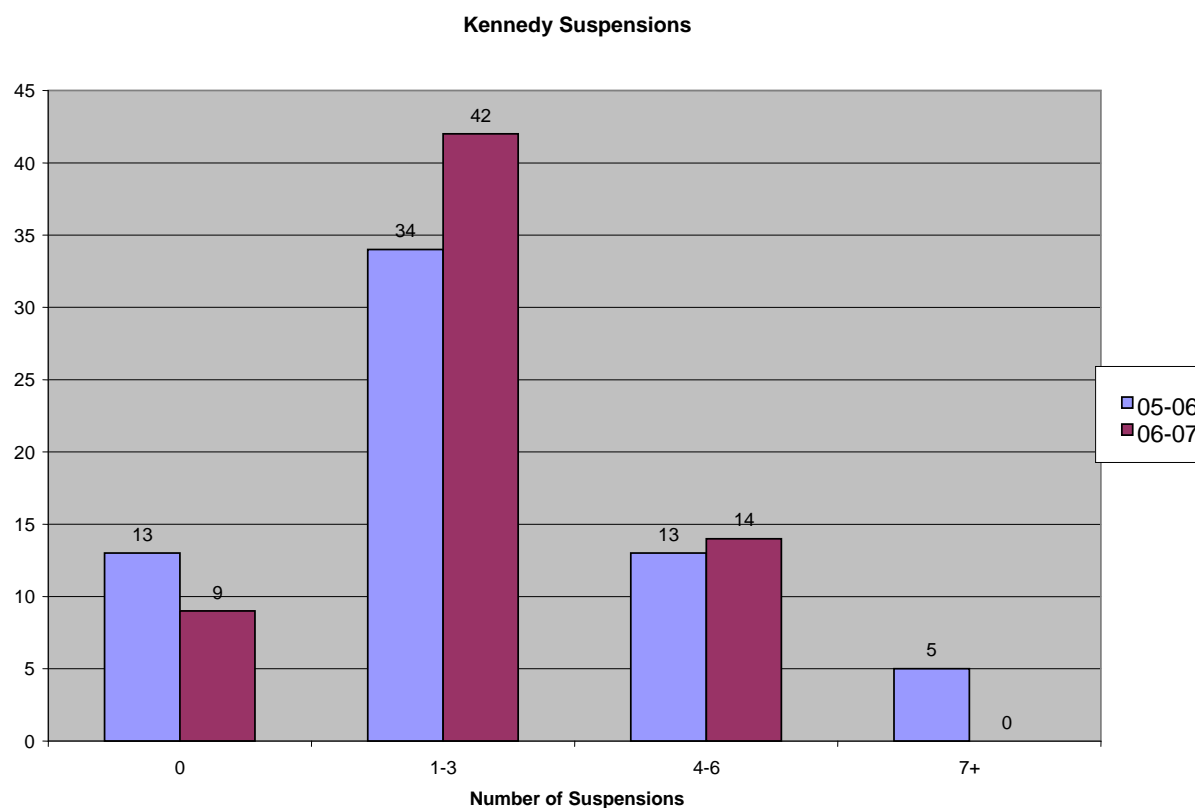
Q 8: Is there a change in suspensions of students attending Kennedy Metro?***Student Suspensions***

In order to assess the impact of the program on suspension, suspension data from students who attended Kennedy for at least 100 or more days were analyzed. As shown in Table 12 and Figure 5, there was a 31% decrease in the number of students who did not receive any suspension from 05-06 to 06-07. Further, there was a 24% increase in the number of students who received between 1-3 suspensions, and an 8% increase in the number of students receiving 4-6 suspensions. However, all of the students who received 7 or more suspensions in 05-06 (n = 5; 8%) did not receive any in 06-07.

Table 12: Number of students receiving suspension(s) (n = 65)

Suspensions Number	Number of Students		Change	
	05-06	06-07	N	%
0 suspensions	13	9	-4	-30.8%
1-3 suspensions	34	42	+8	+23.5%
4-6 suspensions	13	14	+1	+7.7%
7+ suspensions	5	0	-5	-100%

Figure 5: Change in Number of students receiving suspension (n = 65)



Q 9: Is there a change in the reading achievement of students attending Kennedy Metro?

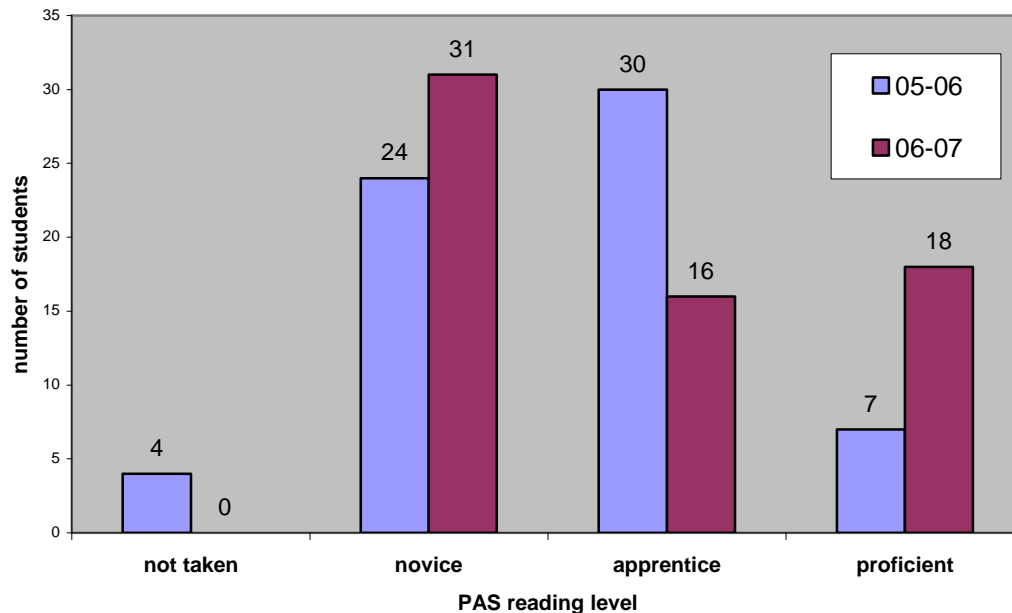
Student Achievement

In order to assess the impact of the program on student reading achievement, PAS reading data from students who attended Kennedy for at least 100 or more days were analyzed.

As shown on Figure 6, of the students who took the PAS reading in both 2005-06 and 2006-07,

there was an increase in students scoring novice and an increase in student scoring proficient. Descriptive statistic crosstabs reveal that 7 students moved from novice to apprentice, and 2 students moved from novice to proficient. So, About 62% of students who scored novice on the PAS in 2005-2006 increased to either apprentice or proficient in 2006-2007. However, 15 students stayed at the novice level. Of the students scoring proficient in 05-06, 5 students remained at the proficient level, and 2 scored at the apprentice level in 06-07.

Figure 6: *Change in Proficiency Level on the PAS reading test (N = 65)*



Q10: What is the return rate to regular schools and what percent return to Kennedy Metro (recidivism)?***Return to Regular School and Recidivism***

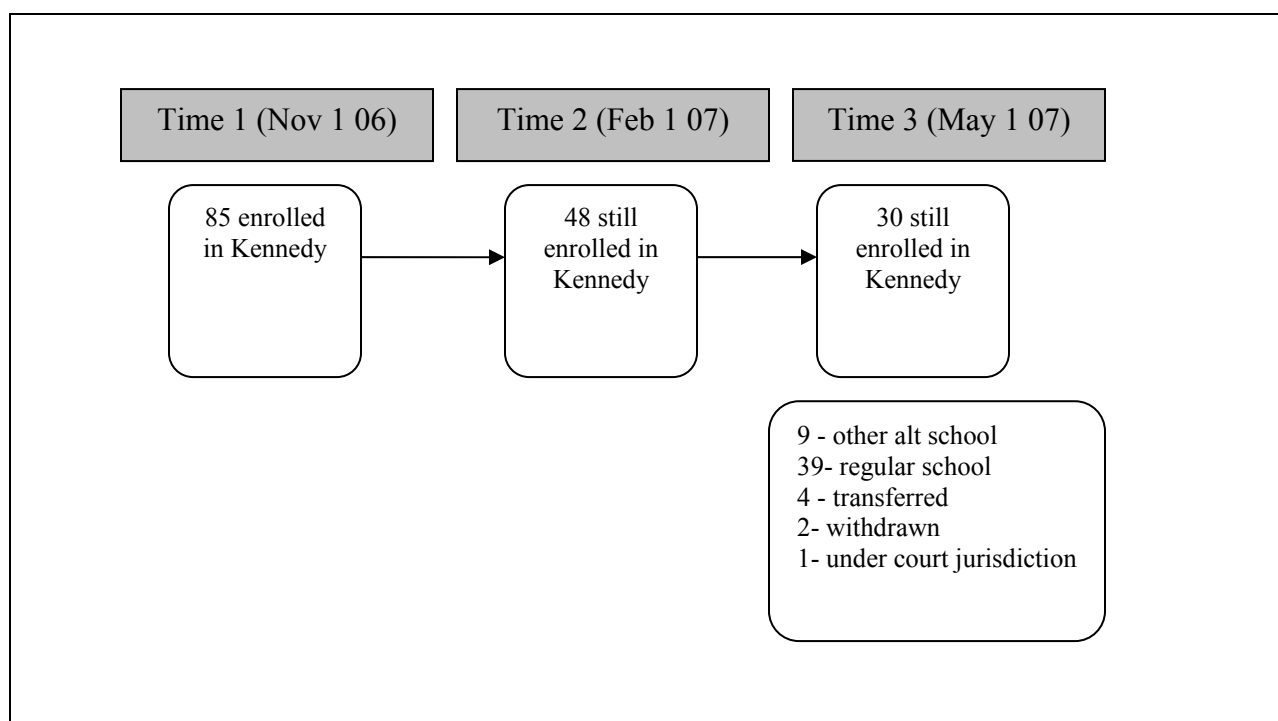
Data were extracted from three time points during the school year (November 1, February 1, and May 1) in order to assess the return rate to regular schools and the recidivism rate. On November 1, 2006, Kennedy Metro had an enrollment of 85 students. On February 1, of the 85 students, there were 75 students still enrolled in a JCPS school. Of those 75 students, 48 students were still enrolled at Kennedy Metro, 4 students were enrolled at a different special school, and 23 students were enrolled at a regular middle school. By the third time point, May 1, 78 of the original 85 students were still enrolled in a JCPS school. Of those 78, 30 students were still enrolled at Kennedy, 9 students were enrolled at a different special school and 39 students were enrolled at regular middle school.

In sum, a total of 44 students of the 85 (52%) made a transition to the regular middle school and only 5 of the 44 (11%) returned to Kennedy Metro. About one third of the 85 original students were still enrolled at Kennedy Metro (n = 30; 35%) and almost half were enrolled at a regular middle school (n = 39; 46%). It is noteworthy that the principal remarked during an interview that “many students want to stay at Kennedy (once it is time to return to their home school) but we can’t keep them here – they want the structure, small environment and attention they receive.” By the third time point, 7 of the 85 students were no longer enrolled in a JCPS school. See Table 13 and Figure 7 for summary.

Table 13. Summary of where students enrolled at Kennedy Metro in November 2006 were in May 2007(N =85)

Status of Student Cohort in May 2007	N	Percent
Continued enrollment at Kennedy Metro	30	35.3%
Enrollment at a different special school	9	10.6%
Enrollment at a regular JCPS high school	39	45.9%
No longer enrolled in JCPS School	7	8.2
Transfers	4	4.7%
Withdrawn with no further information	2	2.4%
Under the court jurisdiction	1	1.2%

Figure 7: Flow Chart of Cohort Status



Discussion

Several of the findings in this evaluation mirror results found in national/background literature. First, the majority of students served at Kennedy Metro have experienced cumulative disadvantage through a combination of high risk factors in terms of demographics, geographic location, household structure, and schooling history. That is, most are African American, on free/reduced lunch, live in single parent households, live in poor, high crime neighborhoods, have experienced high school mobility rates, attended high poverty schools, and have low reading achievement. Student survey data indicate that while some students may be struggling with self-esteem issues, many report being satisfied with themselves as a person. In terms of views toward school, about half of the students view school as important; and almost all (90%) reported that dropping out of school as a big mistake. However, students also felt a sense of disconnection as about half of students did not feel teachers cared about them as a person.

Second, Kennedy Metro collaborates with a mental health agency and the police department and has a highly structured, highly secure environment. This is visible in the school by way of high security guard presence and metal detectors. Thus, the school appears to be meeting the goal of ensuring physical security and safety.

Third, in terms of transitions, about half of the students were sent back into the mainstream schools. While this report was not able to determine how successful the transitions were, examination of the high school level alternative schools reveal that many students attending them emerged from Kennedy Metro.

Contrary to other alternative schools around the country, the teachers at Kennedy Metro are not placed there involuntary, and in fact apply to work there. Most of the teachers serving in the school have a masters degree or higher and report feeling prepared to teach students middle

school. The majority of teachers report feeling prepared to teach students with behavioral, academic and emotional problems, however, the evaluation did not assess the extent to which they feel prepared to teach a largely minority population.

In terms of characteristics identified as being conducive to positive student outcomes, Kennedy – Metro has several including small class sizes and student/teacher ratio, and well prepared collegial teaching staff. In terms of progress, data reveal that for students enrolled 100 or more days, there was a substantial increase in the number of students moving from Novice reading level to apprentice and/or proficient. Student absence rate did not change, and the number of students being suspended increased by about $\frac{1}{4}$.

Limitations

This evaluation has several noteworthy limitations. First, with respect to the classroom observations, the observations included six classrooms in one day and thus should not be viewed as representative of the school. Second, while every effort was made to ensure random selection of students for the student surveys, several students from the randomized list were unable to take the survey. Coupled with the small student survey sample size, these results are not necessarily generalizable to the entire student population. Third, with respect to discipline data, though pre-post suspension data is reported, more specific office referral data is not reported. Fourth, this evaluation was not able to fully address the question related to characteristics and scope of student services due to lack of student service documentation in the school.

Recommendations

Based on the findings in this evaluation, several recommendations are presented. First, in order to address students' detachment from school and teachers, it is recommended that teachers increase the use of collaborative and individualized instructional approaches and increase student

involvement in decision making at the classroom level. These approaches may also help students form stronger teacher-student relationships

Second, in light of the great need of the student body and collaboration with outside agencies systematic documentation by the school of the quantity and quality of mental health services should be a priority, as it would help evaluate whether students' social-emotional needs are being met. Additionally, the student survey indicated many students do not feel close to their teachers. Because of their high mobility history, these students may find it difficult to form attachments and trust with adults. Thus, decreasing the counselor to student ratio is important. While the school is staffed with a good deal of security personnel, the counselor/student ratio is very high.

Third, in terms of discipline, the implementation of strategies to increase student's self-regulation and intrinsic motivation in terms of managing their own behavior would be beneficial. Further, it is recommended that the use of time-out rooms be minimized as there is no evidence in the literature that they are effective in improving student behavior, and in fact, may be harmful to students. Due to the solitary nature of the time-out rooms, if the schools choose to continue to utilize this discipline practice, it is recommended that de-escalation techniques are used first, and that the use of the rooms be documented, including information on which students are placed in the rooms and the amount of time in the room.

Fourth, in light of the student population being served in this school, teacher professional development ought to include training that addresses the specific strategies that work best with the population, as well as professional development that centers on cultural competence in working with African American students.

Fifth, due to the seemingly ambiguous and sometimes contentious placement process coupled with the fact that placement at Kennedy is the most serious consequence on the continuum of middle school discipline, it may be valuable to implement a deliberate and systematic intervention check to ensure that sufficient measures have been taken in the home school locations prior to placement in Kennedy Metro before students could be placed in the school. This would also aid in documenting clearly the reasons for placement *and* prior efforts taken by the feeder school to address the students' needs.

Sixth, due to the large number of students who transition back into the mainstream schools, we recommend that a deliberate plan is developed and implemented to help students move into, and remain in their home schools. This would include necessitate effort on the part of both home schools and Kennedy Metro, and should include an established transition protocol to help increase systemic effectiveness. Finally, it would be useful to follow up longitudinally with students to assess outcomes over time.

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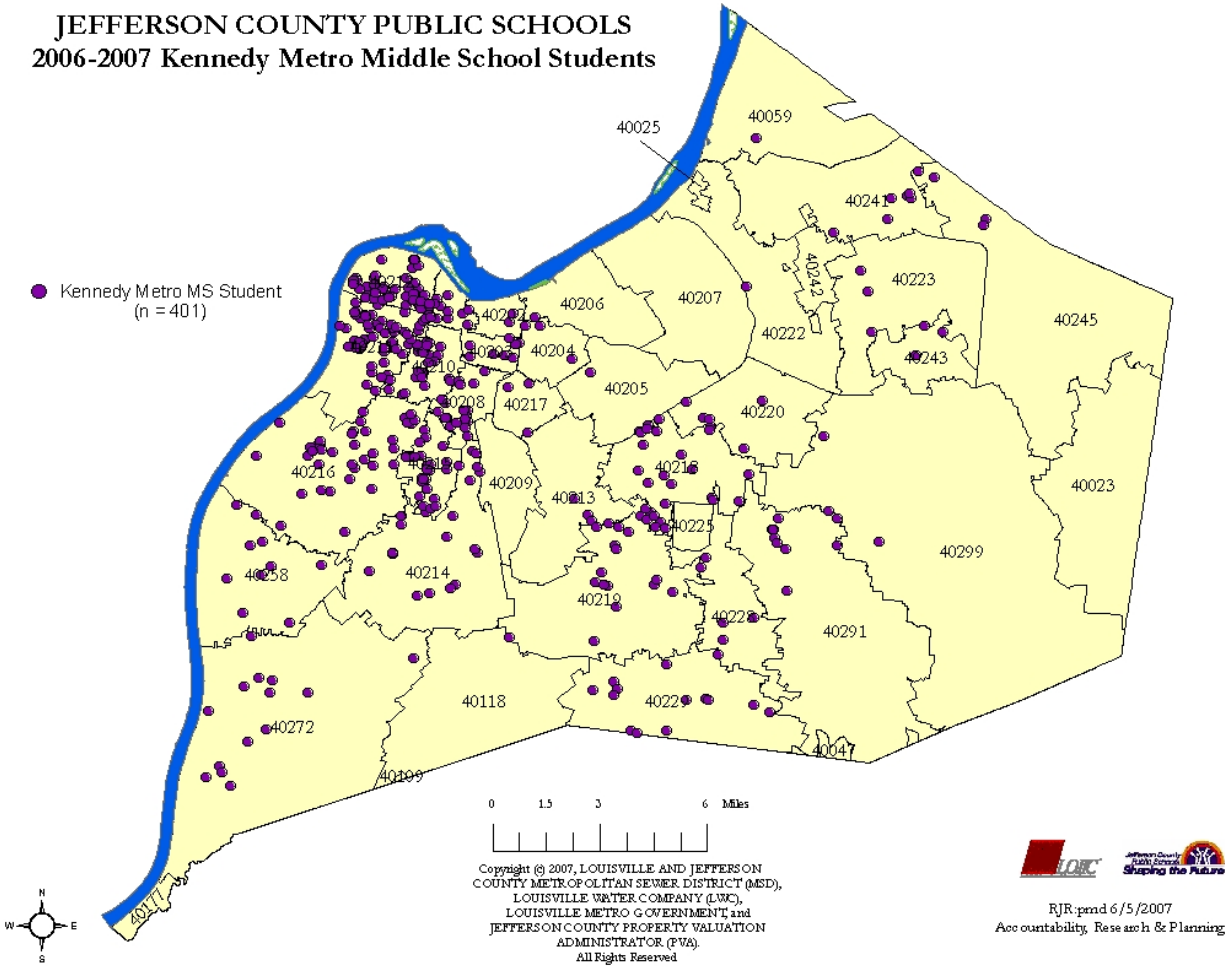
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Appendix A

Geographic Map of Participants

JEFFERSON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2006-2007 Kennedy Metro Middle School Students



Appendix B
Zip Code/Neighborhood Fact Sheets

Appendix C

**Kennedy Metro
2007-2008 Comprehensive School Plan**