



Program Evaluation: Center for Learning and Growth



Setting for Equine Therapy. Left picture: open field. Right picture: Corral with students and horses.

Document Information

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Evaluation Design

Questions:

1. Do stakeholders agree on the purpose of the program?
2. What is the experience like for students?
3. How are students selected for the program? Does the program follow the stated process for selection?
4. How do students enter the program at the Center for Learning and Growth and do they have individual goals for the duration of the program timeframe?
5. Do the activities that the staff members engage in support the stated goals of the program?
 - a. What activities do staff members do to support students?
 - b. What are the best practices for these programs?
6. How do students leave the program and return to the traditional setting? How are all stakeholders engaged in this process?
7. How successful is this program in terms of recidivism and as stated by students and parents?

Components: Conducted April and May 2019 (Research, Interviews, Data Collection, Observation)

EAB Research—best practices around alternative learning programs-gathered April 2019

1. What are best practices for providing specialized short-term behavior interventions for secondary students? What are alternative learning programs?
 - A. What programs do schools use to improve social-emotional development and decision-making at the secondary level?
 - B. What programs do school divisions use to provide behavior support so that students are successful in the traditional academic setting?
2. How do school divisions transition students back to their “base” schools?
 - A. What is the average timeframe for attendance in these programs?
 - B. What is the recidivism rate for these programs?
3. How do school divisions decide that students need this type of placement? Can you find sample? What is the admission criteria?

Interview Key stakeholders: This is the primary source of information for this evaluation. Gathered April - May 2019

1. Interview Central staff
2. Interview administrative staff
3. Interview teachers in the program and office staff
4. Phone interview of parents who have recently exited the program -NO CONTACT
5. Interview students who are currently in program – written responses provided
6. Interview counselor

Data to validate the program goals: Gathered April - May 2019

1. Average daily attendance of program participants and average number per day of program participants
2. Duration of program stay for participants (average)
3. Number of students sent from each base school
4. Reasons students are sent to the program by school
5. Recidivism rate for students
6. Look at recent drop-outs for program attendance DATA NOT FOUND
7. Academic outcomes: grades, credits earned while in attendance, work done/competencies attained

Observation of program: Two observations at the center and two observations of equine therapy, May 2019

Executive Summary

The Center for Learning and Growth provides a warm and welcoming environment for students who are not successful in the traditional school setting. Stakeholders have general agreement on the purpose of the program and the program uses many appropriate, research-driven strategies to engage students.

Students have a variety of experiences depending on the reason for their placement, the duration of the stay, the ability of staff to make connections to the student, the level of engagement of the student, and the level of support from base schools, parents, and other support structures. Students are selected for the program by the Student Services Officer after the hearing process. Stakeholder interviews reveal that transitions into and out of the program could be improved and conducted in a more clear and collaborative manner.

Alternative Learning Programs

Alternative learning programs across the nation are designed to educate students with academic, emotional, or other needs that cannot be met in the traditional school environment. Common reasons why students are placed in alternative learning programs include truancy and poor attendance, suspension, expulsion, emotional difficulties, poor grades, pregnancy, family stress, learning disabilities, and disruptive classroom behavior (NCEE, 2014). Alternative learning programs or schools usually have more flexibility in choosing curricula, have smaller class sizes, and employ different teaching methods in order to differentiate for students' academic or emotional needs.

In Virginia, the most recent report on regional alternative educational programs was conducted in 2008-2009. The average student to teacher ratio was 11:1 and the dropout rate for these students was 5.83 percent. These students achieved a 61% pass rate on the English SOL and a 47 percent pass rate on the mathematics SOL (VBOE, 2009).

A notable difference between these programs and the one operating in Albemarle County Public Schools is that the Center for Learning and Growth is not a regional program. Virginia Code defines the following components for alternative programs:

- annual assessment of placement;
- intensive, accelerated instructional program, with high standards for academic achievement and student behavior;
- low pupil-teacher ratio (average ratio is one teacher for every 10 students);
- collaborative efforts with parents and the community;
- a plan for transitioning the enrolled students into the regular program;
- program evaluation; and
- staff development and training.

These requirements are also reflected in Albemarle County Public Schools' policy on alternative schools, [policy IGBH](#). Because of the unique needs of these students, it is important for programs to have ongoing monitoring of student performance in order to progress. Another important aspect, particularly for juveniles who are re-entering the

school Division, is the intake meeting with collaborative efforts between the parents/guardians, community support services, and the alternative program staff.

Examples of Alternative Programs in Virginia

The Virginia Department of Education lists [alternative education programs](#) in the state and includes a brief description for each program. Below are five programs that, like the Center for Learning and Growth (CFLG), include behavioral support at the secondary level. While not much information was found on the process of transitioning students back into their home school, program recidivism rates, and specific admissions criteria, there are insights on program structure and content, eligibility, and attendance timeframe. While the list below is certainly not exhaustive, it should provide a helpful starting point to explore other similar alternative education programs. Note that these are all regional alternative education programs serving more than one school division.

- **Breaking Barriers**: This program serves high-risk youths in Henry and Patrick Counties, and Martinsville City. It focuses on behavior modification and decision-making abilities for students. The program emphasizes the total student and addresses topics such as managing family problems, improving motivation, navigating peer pressure, and boosting academic performance. Services offered include counseling, job preparation, and community involvement opportunities.
- **Enterprise Academy**: This program serves Newport News, Hampton Cities, and Poquoson Cities, as well as York and Williamsburg/James City Counties. Enterprise Academy targets students who have received long-term suspension, have been expelled from their home school, are transitioning from youth correctional facilities, or are currently facing community charges. The program seeks to prepare students to return to their home schools, promotes college and career readiness, and offers both academic and behavior management programs (e.g., teaching students how to make smart choices). Students in Newport News' Enterprise Academy also participate in Youth Development Initiatives that include Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). The Academy uses an A/B block schedule, follows a grading scale adopted by the district, and mandates that students and their parents agree to expectations outlined in the contract. The website also lists other program highlights, including a weekly progress report and the use of a distance learning program.
- **Genesis Alternative School**: This program serves Staunton, Harrisonburg, and Waynesboro Cities, and Augusta County. Target students include those who are struggling academically, have poor attendance, and have behavior challenges. The program teaches students how to manage conflict and develop positive attitudes and work habits through a framework of non-confrontational, consequence-based decision-making. The school also provides counseling services. At Genesis Alternative School in Staunton, the student's home school determines timing of placement in the program and of return to the home school. The website also explains the bell schedule and an activity fee per student.
- **Metro-Richmond Alternative Education School**: This school has three programs to serve Richmond City and Hanover and Henrico Counties. Target students include those with academic and behavior challenges. The program provides academic instruction alongside a behavior management curriculum, equipping students with strong decision-making and social/interpersonal skills. At

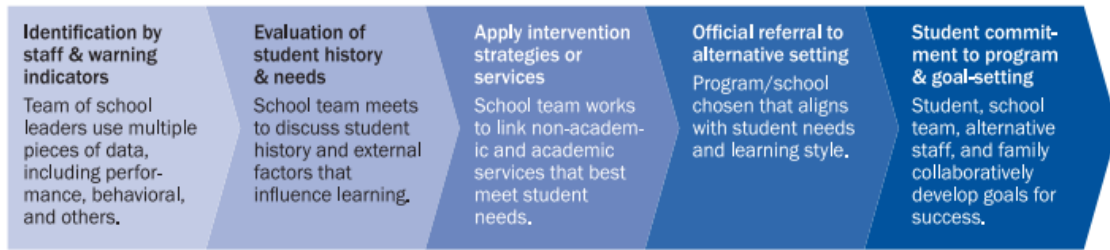
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- Richmond Alternative School's **Spartan Academy**, students receive a recommendation for placement in the program by the principal or a panel. Students stay for a minimum of 90 days, and transitions are facilitated at the end of the semester. A bell schedule is included on the website.
- **Wythe/Bland Alternative Education Academy**: This program serves Wythe and Bland Counties, particularly students who have academic challenges, poor attendance, and disciplinary issues. The Academy emphasizes both academic and behavior modifications, and prepares students to successfully transition into a more traditional academic setting, or earn credentials to prepare for college or careers. At Wythe County's **New Horizons Academy**, students receive online instruction in small and individualized learning environments. New Horizons staff work closely with students' home school principals and counselors to ensure that students are on track to graduate. It is common for students to transition back to their home schools after one semester.

One other state school division to review is [Fairfax County Public Schools](#). Because of the size of the school division, they are able to offer a variety of programs and services for students whose educational needs require more intensive or different types of special education support than can be provided in the traditional school setting. Albemarle County Public Schools is able to offer similar programs, but may review some of the other program models including the AIM program, which exclusively serves students in grades 7-12 who have serious violations of the code of conduct and who have been deemed a safety and security risk to other students. The Reading Inventory and Progress Assessment of Mathematics are administered to students within two weeks of enrollment. Another program is a three-day intervention for students who have tobacco, drug, and alcohol violations which can be a very different population of students. There are also Out-of-School supports, which includes Homebound like ACPS, but also includes on-site temporary academic supports at designated locations from 8am to 1pm (Fairfax County Public Schools, 2019).

Interagency alternative school programs are the most like the Center for Learning and Growth model, but there are nine types of programs with some co-funded with other public agencies. This model breaks the high risk population out into several categories—The GED Readiness and New Technology Skills program is for students aged 16-18 and is like the ACPS ISAEP program. The Transition Support Resource Center is a short-term intervention program for electively placed students whose focus is to improve each student's academic performance and help with a successful re-entry into his or her next educational placement. The Nontraditional Career Readiness Academies partner with CTE and are co-located at academy sites. Agency-sponsored programs provide comprehensive services to youth who require intensive assistance and often long-term interventions (Fairfax County Public Schools, 2019).

A general process by which students may be referred to an alternative education program is outlined below, taken from a June 2014 Rennie Center policy brief.

Figure 3. Process by which students are referred to alternative education settings

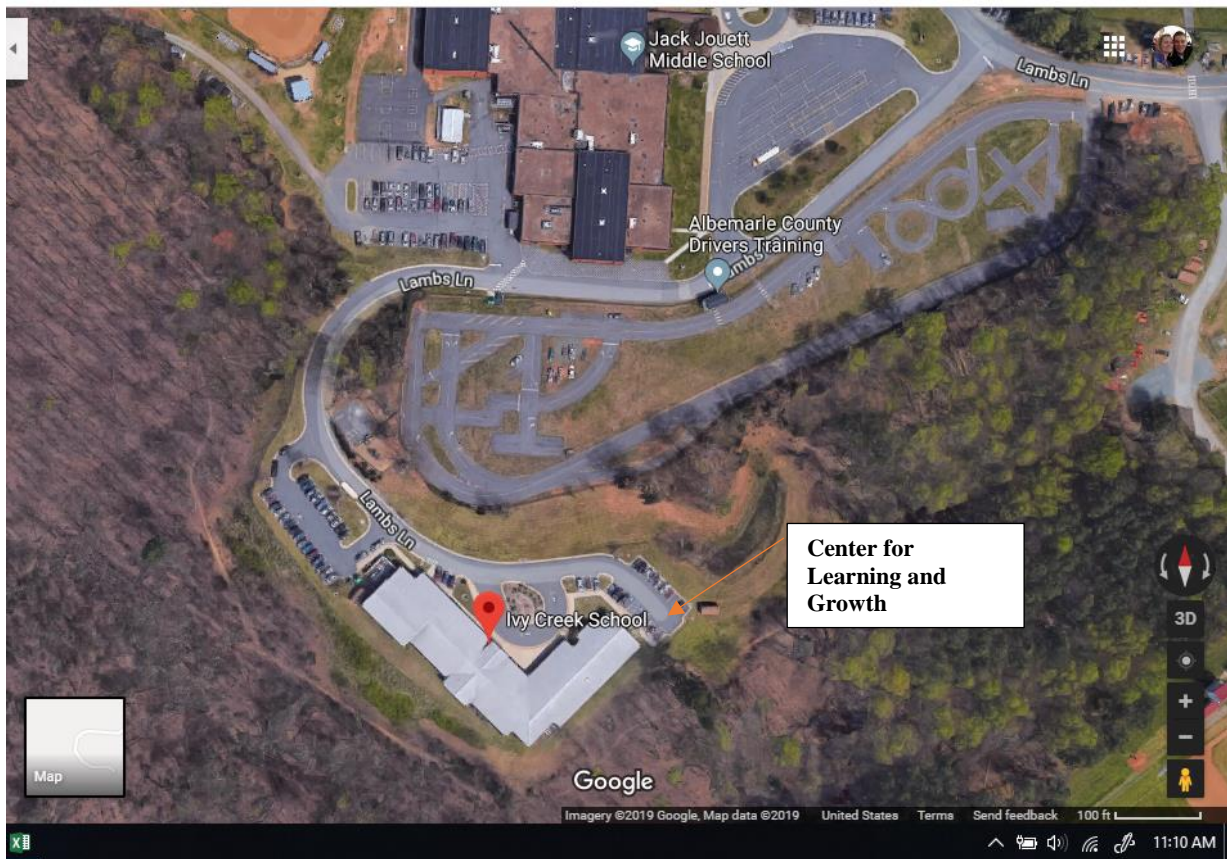


Another example is from the [Greenwood Public Schools' Alternative Schools Handbook](#) and is much more detailed (p. 27).

The 2014 study **How Do States Define Alternative Education?**, by the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE), found that 42 states define the target population for alternative education programs. Most of these programs (i.e., in 35 states) serve students who experience behavioral problems (p. 4). The report describes the types of services that alternative education programs can offer, such as academic instruction and counseling services, social and life skill development, career education, and behavioral services (e.g. conflict resolution) (pp. 8, 10-11).

Background and History of the (Enterprise) Center for Learning and Growth

The Center for Learning and Growth is the Albemarle County Public Schools alternative learning program that provides specialized short-term intervention to students requiring alternative placement in grades 6-12. According to staff oral history, the Center for Learning and Growth, formerly Enterprise Center, has existed since at least the 1980s and once existed in the Jefferson School with students from Albemarle and Charlottesville City. It used to have a full-time principal, office associate, career counselor, guidance counselor, specialists, and core teachers with a much larger enrollment. As the mission of schools has changed and as students have changed over the course of these several decades, the program has shrunk in size as well. In recent years, the program has been located in Burley Middle School, in the building that is Murray High School/Community Public Charter School, in trailers in that same vicinity, and now the program is co-located behind Jouett Middle School with Ivy Creek School (since 2017).



The current space consists of four classrooms, one office space for the lead teacher, a kitchen area, a front entrance for students with an office area for the Therapeutic Day Treatment counselor, a glass room for student solo time, and two bathrooms. Program members assert that “20 students could be accommodated in the spaces; however 12-15 is best for the space.”

Students are assigned to the “Enterprise” Center for Learning and Growth for a variety of reasons, primarily behavioral, including possession or use of substances and physical altercations or threats to others. Students continue their learning through a blend of face-to-face instruction and computer based instruction. Behavioral services, counseling services, career education, and social and life skill development are offered to students to some degree. A recent success story is the team of four students who won a national award for a 360 virtual reality film about the August 12th rallies in Charlottesville. This type of innovative and flexible learning design allowed these students to achieve academic, behavioral, and social emotional successes.

Interviews: Program Purpose and Other Information

Program Purpose

The purpose of the program is important to define because there are different strategies for short-term and long-term placements and different strategies for different “types” of students.

Twenty interviews, conducted in the month of May, 2019, reveal various ACPS staff opinions about the purpose of the Center for Learning and Growth. Eleven (11) central office and building administrators were interviewed while nine (9) current or former Center for Learning and growth employees and support employees were interviewed.

Overall, the group sees the purpose of the program as two-fold. The most common response is that the program is a place that should help students find academic and/or behavioral success outside of the traditional school setting. This type of response came from 13 of the 20 respondents. When asked about the purpose of the program, most interviewees wanted to speak to what the program should be or could be and provided a version of the stated goals of the program with part or variations of the stated components.

The stated goals of the Center for Learning and Growth are as follows:

- Assist students in redirecting behavior to promote success in the traditional school setting;
- Assist students with individual academic achievement; and
- Assist students in improving social emotional development and decision-making.

The second most common response was to provide “a place” for students who cannot function in a traditional setting in order to maintain order in the base school. This was said by nine (9) respondents.

Most responses are vague about the types of students who may enter the program and the length of time for program attendance. There are a few specific responses, for example, one staff member states, “the center is a program which provides an instructional plan married with behavioral interventions and SEL supports for students on long-term suspension. Outcomes for students are dependent on duration of stay, engagement of student, and support from parents/guardians. The center allows for remarkable and meaningful flexibility for meeting the students at their academic level, while supporting credit gain, workplace skills, and restorative plans (where appropriate).”

When comparing interviewee responses to the stated goals of the program, discussion about the transition back into the base school and strategies for supporting success in the base school are not evident. This is one area that emerges as an opportunity for improvement.

As far as the evaluation question, “Do stakeholders agree on the purpose of the program,” there is general agreement on the purpose. The program definition is not specific enough when compared to the requirements noted in policy IGBH, [Alternative Schools](#). In the future, the staff should put the program definition in writing (as described in policy IGH), include the program goals, and define measures for evaluation.

(11) Eleven comments support the stated goal of redirecting behavior to support the transition back to the base school.

(4) Four comments support the stated goal of providing social emotional development and decision-making.

(3) Three comments support the stated goal of supporting academic achievement.

Employee Type	Comment
administrator	Right now it's a holding place to get kids out of the mainstream environment so that other children can learn that were negatively affected by them being in the classroom.
administrator	For students who are not able to appropriately function within their base school with interventions. Short term or long term placement. Had a kid there at mohs all 4 years and some for 9 weeks. Case by base basis.
administrator	The purpose of the program is to help kids who have had some emotional, social disruption at school and to give them a place to be and to give them a replacement behavior and how that decision that they made affected them and how to restore themselves back into the school and community. Part of the reason that they are there is that they don't have success in academics. I want them to understand how they can be autonomous learners, how they can make plans. Teaching them how to learn, set goals. For me, it's more of an executive function. If I can't do that, I won't be successful. There's a circle you have to disrupt at some point. For me, its helping them be reflective and explore. Feeling of control.
administrator	I think if a kid has done something of such an egregious nature that they need to be pulled out of the school for schools community sake or for the kids sake. It provides that place for students to go and it wouldn't be appropriate for them to go to another school.
administrator	Two purposes: one for really super disruptive and traumatized kids- to have them out of the schools, secondary, so school can have order. Second, should be rehabilitative and therapeutic so that when they are doing better they can come back into the school.
administrator	The program has multiple purposes. It is definitely a space that we can use to serve students who can't operate in the traditional setting bc of either repeated serious behavioral issues or one-time behavioral events that are beyond allowing a kid going back to school. Other purpose is to provide space for kids who had difficulty operating in traditional settings for any number of reasons—inability to connect in the larger school. That tends to manifest in bad behavior as well but a little different than real violence. Provides a space for students for whom the traditional setting just isn't appropriate to their needs.
administrator	The program is pseudo-therapeutic. Not ivy creek. Kids that have verified emotional disturbances need something beyond what we offer. Need setting more therapeutic than supportive. Don't have a counselor. Program gotten smaller bc we have changed expectation for schools and who is appropriate candidate for our program. Might have been some kids then that had no business there.
administrator	The only purpose is to get them out of the base school. What should the purpose be? Everything counts for our school, but we seemingly give up all authority and educational advice when they are there.
administrator	There was the inception program. It's the traditional a place to send kids that are too disruptive or dangerous for the general ed environment. These students for whatever behavior they are doing is not directly related to their disability.
administrator	For students who have not been successful in the traditional school environment, it has more supports. It used to be MOHS part II. For students who seem to struggle in a large comprehensive setting. The idea is for them to transition back and we haven't had any that had successfully transitioned back. Not a lot of success.
administrator	Kids that are not as hard core as ivy creek but are still having problems with behaviors in a huge high school. Staff works closely with them to get on the right path. Some of them in gangs and helps kids to understand why education so important.
current employee	Program philosophy—Be creative. Find another way. Try to keep as small as we can. We get who we get. MS and HS melded together, so clump teachers by subject. Used to be all over.
current employee	To offer these students a chance to see a different path—to show them that they can change their circumstances through their own efforts and willingness to try something new.
current employee	To give them support and consistency and a safe place to grow.
current employee	The purpose of the program is to aide kids in being the best self they can be; to be courageous and kind.
current employee	--the center is a program which provides an instructional plan married with behavioral interventions and SEL supports for students on long-term suspension. Outcomes for students are dependent on duration of stay, engagement of student, and support from parents/guardians. The center allows for remarkable and meaningful flexibility for meeting the students at their academic level, while supporting credit gain, workplace skills, and restorative plans (where appropriate).
current employee	To address the individual needs of a student who is not being successful in home school. Level the playing field with a structured environment—healthy learning space. Teach students different ways of dealing with stress in order to handle the stress of schools, of home, of jobs.
Former employee	My goals for kids in crisis was to figure out how they got there and plan a move forward. Evaluate is this what you want going on in there life and what you want to do—some kids like it there, some really want to get back to base school, some scared to go back. Need a transition plan to go back. Ivy Creek is really good at that but it's harder for Enterprise. Schools don't necessarily want the kids back. Trying to really emphasize to schools they are your kids and come back. Kids need an anchor when they go back.
support worker	I think for the kids who can't be successful in mainstream schools, it gives them a chance to still be successful at school without going to discovery or elk hill or ivy creek—that step before we have to go to the extreme. Once they stabilize, they have the chance to go back to regular school hopefully with more skills, more well-rounded. Some stick around a lot longer b/c they are successful.

support worker	Some kids can't function in a regular school. Too much external stuff to function like they should and Enterprise has been really good about that. Some kids are using it as a buffer before going back to mainstream. Fighter since being at enterprise hasn't been suspended but fighting at AHS the whole time. To provide equity of access for students who need—who do not fit into the cookie cutter of traditional high school and need an alternative path to success, to graduation ultimately. Transitional support. Come in, get what they, need and end goal is to go back to home school. Maybe you are like E and you graduate from there. He was there, left, advocated for himself to come back, and he will finish out the year there. Other student is a huge that he came back. He's attending school every day. They were able to reach out to him and get him back in. Single mom, older brother just dropped out and older sister dropped out bc she had a baby. Somewhere inside and with team at Enterprise he came back—9th.
Key	Green : to provide access/to help students find success in academics/behavior
	Red: to provide a place outside of school / negative word choice

Follow up questions for those interviewed included: What are the strengths of the program? What do you envision for the program in the future? What do students and parents say about the program, and what do transitions look like into and out of the Center for Learning and Growth?

Program Strengths:

The most common strengths are the staff and student relationships, small class size, flexibility [various kinds], and the ability to provide individualized instruction. Here are several answers for “What are the strengths of the program?”

Lighthouse studio collaboration in Charlottesville.

A warm welcoming atmosphere. I tend to judge a school with how I'm greeted and how I walked in. I always felt welcome. A strong team that knows each other's strengths and gaps and works together to fill in those gaps. All seem to have each other's backs and present a united front; I see a lot of consistency in their approaches—approaches to both instruction and social interactions—no “nice” teacher or “hard” teacher. They all seem to have that warm demander with high expectations. The staff knows what they know and knows what they don't know. They teach all secondary classes...they will pick up the phone and call and get the help they need.

Nick [Dr. Nicholas King] has a great rapport with kids. Kind and forceful way.

Sense of community that we create and it works for the kids. I see successes that in a regular classroom would go unnoticed or wouldn't happen.

We try to give students a lot of opportunities to explore different activities that because of their backgrounds they don't always get. It seems to pay off and give a little self-confidence and strength.

Flexibility—we meet the kids where they are emotionally but also academically. Immediately adjusting a lesson or switching a lesson. I wouldn't have the opportunity to do that before and now I am encouraged to.

Humor, sense of humor.

Size.

Personal connection with students.

Routine that is respectful of students.

We intentionally create opportunities to let kids make decisions.

The staff—the staff are really supportive. Much smaller school size so they [students] have less negative interactions and more one on one care. Mr. Root in general is really hands-on and holds them more accountable and for my kids that is important.

Relationships with kids, outside resources, flexibility. Flexibility is both a strength and a weakness because it doesn't prepare them for what's to come.

Being able to work with kids in a smaller setting, having some flexibility with what they do for SEL and academics. Art therapy, Triple C camp, service learning component.

The strengths are that we set aside some resources to allow them to figure out what kids need. They do try to individualize and personalize. Kids feel pretty good when they are there.

The space works better than at Murray. The team seems to work well together. The full-time Region 10 person is important. The intakes that I've done have been positive.

There's good teachers there, site, facility. Provides a good access point for external resources like TDT and Region 10. The most important piece is it can be very de-stressing for the kids that go there. It helps those kids feel valued and gives them a chance to take a time out. They do get some opportunities to do CATEC, internships, and there are some academics, that if they were properly programmed, the kids could keep up.

There's a lot of support there and a lot of patience. Chris is doing an awesome job with those kids.

Small, one-to-one. More restrictive.

The greatest strength is the staff. They have a way of connecting with kids that other folks just aren't able to connect with. The size of the program helps with that because it removes drama. Parents have a high level of trust in [the staff].

It is an option on the continuum of services. I do like the option. It's appropriately staffed and the housing is appropriate. Teachers and kids seemed okay.

Suggestions for improvement:

When asking interviewees about the vision for the future, many offered similar suggestions. Almost all interviewed talked about a need for improved communications and improved transitions into the program and back into the base school. Depending on the person being interviewed, the lack of communication was seen as either the program challenge or the middle/high school challenge. These types of comments highlight the

need for increased collaboration and the need to develop, perhaps, a more prescriptive process for collaboration.

All unique responses and/or comments that suggest an area for improvement or change are recorded below.

Start splitting their time between CFLG and the base school and get a transition plan together.

It's very student-centered with their emotional needs. You can't learn math until you get your head on straight, but that focus needs to be geared towards success in the mainstream environment if that is the goal of the program.

Make the restorative justice component stronger.

Make transitions at logical times. Build relationships, but understand the boundaries.

The staff needs more information on students before they come to the Center for Learning and Growth. Ex: medical issue.

Setting up protocols for communication would be a good explore. Better relationships and communication with home schools, more two-way communication.

Return to having a building administrator. The lead teacher role has conflicting hats.

I would like to see a continuation of therapies coming in, with the school counselor doing goal setting with students deciding. I'd like to see more students advocating for themselves, articulating their need, and taking that responsibility.

Parenting support.

Help schools feel like they are still our kids. Counselors coming over or kids going back to school so they are part of the conversation. Re-entry meeting.

Keep doing the special programs—Lighthouse, Triple C, Equine Therapy—not sitting down with a book or computer.

Access to base school clubs/activities.

Improve on food. Food delivered maybe or order lunches? Middle school lunch and breakfast is not enough. [They provide a lot of supplemental food, snacks, water at the CFLG.]

Expand to allow 11th or 12th graders with three credits who aren't necessarily behavior problems to come down [to CFLG] and do internships or vocational training, as much math or English as they can do, and go out in the community and do work. Be exposed to something that isn't fast food or grocery stores. They can know how to go to a job interview and know what they need to wear.

Huge proponent of CATEC and hands on skills and figuring out different paths for kids. This may be a good opportunity to introduce middle school kids to technical skills and something that gives them a path and direction when going into high school.

Each student should have a plan like an IEP no matter what. No fuzziness for how everything is going to work. Base schools and CFLG in constant communication and maybe a gradual transition.

Expertise is needed—for SOLs, counselors, administration for personnel issues. Therapeutic behavioralist, school psychologist.

Use some sort of assessment to enter and exit the program.

Assign a mentor.

The program should be much more temporary than it is.

Grow the program—need a different space.

Use a rehabilitative model that would keep kids from going there in the first place and be a restorative program built on individual student needs with a goal of transitioning back into school or some other set of services that would support the student. Be a service model not a place.

Decide on what happens [to students] when this program is full.

Define more of a process for getting into program.

Student Experience and Placement in Program

Students are assigned to the Center for Learning and Growth for a variety of reasons and usually are assigned a long-term suspension from school. During this school year, [policy JGD/JGE](#), *Student Suspension/Expulsion*, was updated and changed the length of long-term suspensions from “more than ten but less than 365 calendar days,” to “11 to 45 days.” ACPS still has the ability to recommend placement in an alternative education setting after the long-term suspension, and, for certain offenses, placement may still be allowed up to 364 calendar days. This change has influenced the placement of students because it takes time to build relationships in the Center for Learning and Growth and impact change.

The primary reasons that students were assigned in the last two years are drug and alcohol-related and verbal or physical violence. Below is a chart listing all of the reasons for assignment in the last two years.

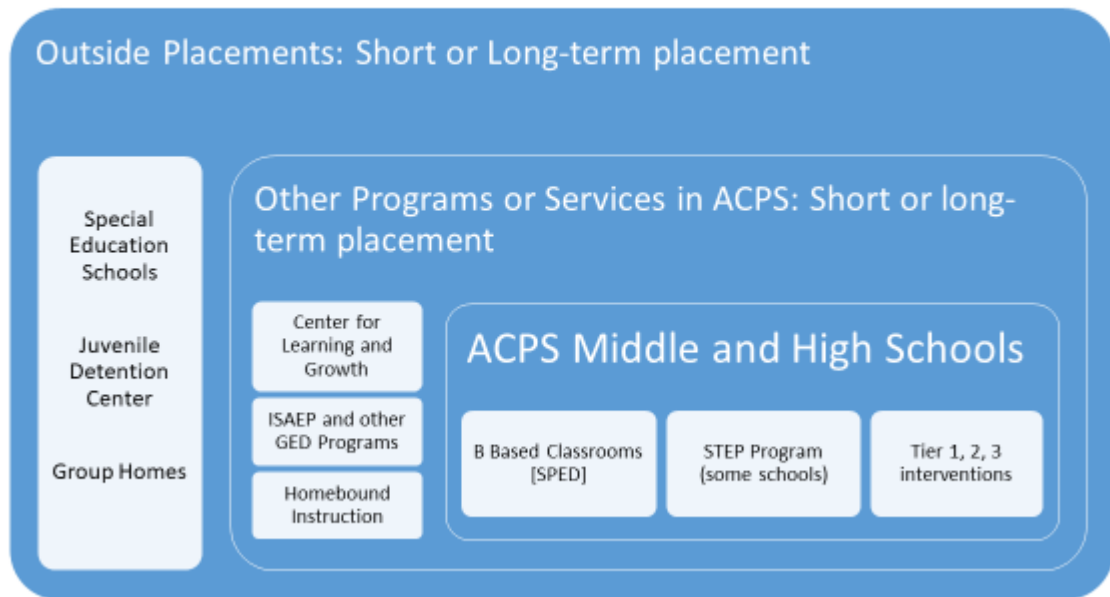
<u>Reason for Assignment</u>
Assault
Behavior and Threats
Drinking Alcohol on Bus
Fight
Gang-related Threat
Possession and Distribution
Possession of Alcohol, Adderral, Juuls
Possession of E-Cigarette
Possession of Inappropriate Items
Possession of Marijuana
Possession of Unprescribed Prescription Drugs
Selling Marijuana
Selling Marijuana, Under the Influence Marijuana
Striking another Student
Third Fight
Threat
Threat to shoot up school
Under the Influence of Alcohol
Vape and Marijuana
Verbal Altercations

There are some infractions that are so serious, students cannot go back to the middle or high school. Students are typically not assigned to the program the first time that they are caught abusing substances. Some students who are labeled as ED (emotional disturbances) and who are receiving a high level of services in the middle or high school may not be placed if the Center for Learning and Growth cannot provide the same support.

Students enter the program from a variety of avenues. In ACPS, students who are returning to school from group homes, juvenile detention centers, [Elk Hill](#) or [Keys Academy](#) may re-enter through the Center for Learning and Growth before going back to the base school. Students may be assigned to the Center for Learning and Growth from ACPS middle or high schools for disciplinary reasons after going through the hearing process. Special Education students may be assigned to the program if it is determined during the Manifestation Determination Review (MDR) that the behavior is not related to the student’s disability (behavior found “not causal”). The Student Services Officer, Dr. Nicholas King, conducts the re-entry and discipline hearings and places students as defined in the policy linked above. Dr. King is also the administrator assigned to supervise the program. Dr. King notes that in recent years the program has gotten smaller because “we have changed expectations for schools and who is the appropriate candidate for our program.” The new definition of long-term suspension impacts recommendations for placement as well. In the current setting, he feels the program could have “reasonably” 20 students, depending on the students.

Albemarle County Public Schools provides access to a continuum of services for students with challenging behaviors through the following avenues:

Transitions for Students Typically in the Center for Learning and Growth



When a student is placed at the Center for Learning and Growth there is an intake meeting with the student, family members/guardians, members from the base school (when available/when invited), and Center for Learning and Growth staff. If the student was receiving additional services, like Therapeutic Day Treatment (TDT) support, or English Language Learner support, those services continue during placement. If the student receives services that the program cannot provide, that may be a reason not to place the student in the program. Center staff communicate often with juvenile court case managers, school counselors, and guidance.

At least one ACPS administrator has other ideas to add to the programs already offered on the continuum for students in need of behavior, academic, and social-emotional supports. Kathryn Baylor, from Jouett Middle School, proposes the “Alternative Center for Education,” or “A.C.E.,” to help students “become successful members of the community by offering opportunities to educate minds, develop empathy, and ensure lifelong learning. Key components to her idea is the voluntary contract, inter-agency and community support, and emphasis on transitioning back to the middle school setting (Baylor, personal interview, 2019). Her program idea is included at the end of this report.

During the intake meeting, participants discuss academic and behavior goals and it is recorded in a notebook. The Student Performance Agreement, given to parents/guardians and students states the following:

Students are assigned to the Enterprise/CFLG program by the Albemarle County Schools for a variety of reasons. It is of the utmost importance that students entering this program realize that the major emphasis of their attendance here is to allow them the OPPORTUNITY to change BEHAVIORS and ATTITUDES that have been hindering them in the regular school setting.

Each student is expected to work on a behavioral and instructional plan that is developed and designed to address his/her specific needs. Students entering the program must develop the

understanding that mutual respect with others and the acceptance of personal responsibility are expected.

Changing behavioral patterns and learning new coping skills requires effort and cooperation. We ask that each student come to the Enterprise/CFLG program with an open mind toward learning new skills that will provide better opportunities in all future settings.

Some examples of student goals include: “Complete subjects and move to the next grade by asking questions and completing assignments.”

“To graduate. Graduation goal: to demonstrate work skills commensurate with maintaining competitive employment as measured by the ability to obtain and maintain employment (volunteer work may be considered).”

The goals provided by the program lead teacher seem appropriate, but the strategies for meeting the goal are “optional” and, in many cases, may not be specific enough to meet the aspirational goal(s).

One more specific example is the following: “Goal is to improve attendance and English reading, writing and speaking through get[ting] good rest at night, wak[ing] up in time to come to class, speaking and practicing English more often, reading challenging books, and writing practice.”

One less specific example is this: “Goal is to graduate by coming to school (and staying) and completing work.”

Students arrive at the Center for Learning and Growth and check-in starting about 9:00. Check-in consists of students entering the front door via controlled access where staff members conduct a bag check and clothing check for students who are “Level 1 or 2.” Students then walk up to Jouett Middle School for breakfast and return to start the day with current events. At 9:30, 1st period begins and students rotate through classrooms to participate in different subjects. The four teachers and classrooms are grouped by curriculum content—English, Math, Science, and Social Studies. Students learn through a blend of individualized instruction, project-based learning, online courses, and self-paced work provided by the base school or from instructors in the program. Students walk up to Jouett again for lunch in the middle of the day. Other structural scheduling components occur throughout the week, including time for physical education and community meetings. Various other activities occur throughout the year, including the Triple C ropes course, projects with Lighthouse Studios, Equine Therapy (this year), Art Therapy, and Music Therapy. Students also have access to work-based learning or internships through the Community Attention Youth Internship Program and CATEC. Students finish the day at 3:15 after 6 periods.

Students are monitored in classrooms based on the “leveling” system. Below is an overview of the Leveling System that is in place at the Center for Learning and Growth.

LEVEL 3: Independent

- May use cell phone for music during class (phone use remains restricted to nonacademic times)*
- May charge cell phone during school
- Independent morning check-in (staff retains the right to search any student at any time regardless of levels)
- Students help develop a personal schedule

-
- May take independent walk outside*

LEVEL 2: Guided

- Students may be issued a laptop for school use
- Online music permitted during class*
- Cell phones may be used during breaks only
- By request, students may flex subject matter (class choice) when applicable
- May take independent break, within view, outside*

LEVEL 1: Directed (Program start)

- Points may be earned for use toward student store
- Cell phones may not be visible during any part of the school day
- Students are expected to follow assigned schedule

*privileges require approval of classroom teacher

Students may move up levels by request. They must write a letter describing evidence of progress in the areas of respect, responsibility, and safety in addition to meeting the requirements identified on the “Request for Level Increase” memorandum (Attachment following).

Student progress is tracked daily, by each teacher, using the “Student Contract Sheet” (Attachment following). Staff refer to this as the “daily sheet.” The three categories are in Academic Progress, Following Directions, and Managing Feelings.

Albemarle County Public Schools Center for Learning and Growth

225 Lambs Lane, Charlottesville, Virginia 22901 | 434.974.8070

Committed to providing a safe, engaging environment in which students can discover their own potential for success.

Request for Level Increase

Student:

Date of request:

Your request for level increase has been reviewed by the High School Instructional Team based on the following information (request attached):

- Points earned since program start/last increase:
- Time since program start/last increase:
- Average points per daily session:
- Academic progress:
 - Math
 - English
 - History
 -

Level increases are offered as a means to acknowledge students who have consistently achieved their goals, put forth honest effort, and who demonstrate positive, productive student behavior. As such, these students serve as role models for those still working to achieve advancement. Furthermore, promotion to advanced levels reflects the High School Instructional Team's trust of and respect for those students who have earned that status.

Eligible Yes/No

S. Mortell: _____

L. Anderson: _____

B. Whitehouse: _____

L. Mack: _____

C. Root: _____

Based on the developed criteria, the team has determined that you are:

Eligible for level increase

Notes:

Not eligible for level increase at this time

Recommendations:

STUDENT CONTRACT

The Enterprise Center For learning & growth • 225 Lamb's Lane Charlottesville, VA 22901 • 434-974-8070

1

Date: _____

Goals	Check-in	Current Events	1	2	3	lunch	PE	Comm Mtg	4	5	6	Totals
Make daily progress in all academic & elective subject areas (participation)												/9
Follow directions; show honesty & respect; & follow school rules (PHONE)												/11
Manage feelings of anger, anxiety, stress, & frustration in a non-disruptive & self-respecting manner												/11
Comments												Total
1st												
2nd												
3rd												
4th												
5th												
6th												/31
												%

Student Expectations are posted in the main area and Chris Root, the lead teacher, emphasizes that staff hope to instill in students how to behave as members of a school community.

Enterprise Center for Learning and Growth

225 Lamb's Charlottesville, Virginia 22901 | 434.974.8070

STUDENTS AS COMMUNITY MEMBERS

RESPONSIBILITY OF STUDENTS

1. Attend school regularly.
2. Make progress, daily, in all academic and elective subjects.
3. Demonstrate behavior that recognizes and respects the rights of others.
4. Know and follow the school's rules and expected standards of behavior.
5. Know the consequences for violations of the school's rules.
6. Accept the consequences of behaviors.
7. Accept and demonstrate the obligation of good citizenship to help prevent conflict, to help resolve conflicts when they occur, and to set a good example.
8. Manage feelings of anger, anxiety, stress, and frustration in a non-disruptive and self-respecting manner.

Despite the stated restrictions, during observations students had quite a bit of choice in how they use their time. This is likely because of the flexibility of the five staff members serving the students. Chris Root, the lead teacher, says they are “less rigid about doing things for time.” When asked about the key structures that are in use in the program, Root says that, “relationship-building is number 1,” and it is clear to see and feel the connections between students and teachers during observation.

Other strategies include “the Glasser approach [choice theory],” building accountability and structure through the leveling system and the daily sheets, putting responsibility back on students through goal-setting, meeting students where they are academically, “heavy doses” of communication, team-building exercises like the ropes courses, conflict resolution, field trips, counseling, community meetings, group activities, solo study, and project-based learning. Root says it is important for teachers to have trauma awareness, and would like to see more support for restorative justice practices as well as counseling, although there is a Therapeutic Day Treatment support worker from Region 10 who works with assigned students.

During both of the times the evaluator was there to observe, a substitute teacher was needed. During the observation on May 13, 2019, the work release students were not in attendance (2) and one student was suspended. One female student was cleaning during the observation time, but was in a good mood. A bus drive and an assistant came in to speak with Mr. Root because there was a fight on the bus the day before (the student who was suspended that day). Academic activities observed included students performed math online, journaling and story-writing in English, silent reading, writing a letter to move up to Level 3, a science worksheet with a science textbook, a project for health class on the adolescent brain (student was researching and creating a poster), worksheet and math lecture/modeling on mirroring and reflecting shapes on graphs. One student spoke about how successful he has felt there. One student spoke about how safe he feels there and how his actions in CFLG are much different than how he acts at home.

During the observation on May 14, 2019, four students were suspended and not in attendance. Two students were suspended as a result of the bus fight mentioned previously. One student got into a fight at Albemarle High School and one student had to leave the program; she was too upset to be there. Students were reading quietly or journaling in the English classroom. They also had grammar worksheets and summarizing to do. In the history room, there was a substitute teacher and two boys who were not actively engaged in academics. One had a book out and the other was eating packing peanuts and interrupting another female student. The female student was trying to read. [It turns out that the female student and the male student who I observed talking to her are “dating.”] One student was in the “quiet room” or solo room talking to a support worker and the math teacher was giving direct instruction to one student in the math room. The science teacher was working with a student on an art project.

Students turned in written answers to the following questions: 1. How have you experienced success at the Center for Learning and Growth? 2. Have you met any goals that you made for yourself? 3. What is one thing that you would change about the Center for Learning and Growth? 4. Anything else you want to share with me?

Students answered some or all of the questions and not all students answered.

Five responses are shared and show that students feel welcome and safe and feel like they are in a friendly environment. The responses show the high-does of SEL and there are two that also show specific academic achievement.

“I have succeeded in math by moving ahead from 8th grade math to ninth grade which is algebra. My goals to succeed more this year were: 1. Complete all work or as much as I possibly can, which I have been doing. 2. Focus on myself and learn to control myself around others. 3. Push forward and continue to grow to become something or someone I would admire. I expected Enterprise to be like every other boring school but it turned out to be cool. The teachers are nice, and the other teenagers have the same humor as me so we get along. I wouldn’t change anything. I like everything the way it is. I love everyone here like family and once I leave I don’t really have anyone.”

“When I first came to CFLG my goals where to come to school and get my work done and to stay out of trouble. No I would not change my goals and I have kind of met my goals by sometimes getting my work done. A couple things that would of made it better are if I came to school more often and stayed out of trouble. One thing I would change is the levels. It’s not really what I expected. I thought it would be a little more strict but its not.”

“My goal in the beginning of the year was to make A’s and B’s. I have been able to maintain my grades. Since I’ve been at the CFLG I’ve learned how to identify my strengths and weaknesses. I’ve also learned how to regulate myself when I get upset. If there was one thing I could change about CFLG it would be us not walking up to Jouett. I liked being here as it is a very welcoming and friendly environment.”

“My goal this year was to do everything I needed to graduate this and pass my SOL tests. The SOLs were my hardest obstacles but I did it. CFLG really helped me prepare for the test. Mr. Root helped me get into Center One where I am going to take some Piedmont Community College classes. I wouldn’t change anything about CFLG because its better than any high school I’ve attended. It takes a while to get used to the system and some of people here but once you do it’s an awesome program!”

“I have achieved some of my goals and plan to achieve the rest of them. My goals when I arrived were to do my work, not complain and not get in trouble. I have changed my goals to self regulate when I get mad and not to back talk (which I am still working on). I have felt success because I am getting along with my peers, I am doing most of my work, and listening a lot better than I was before. I would change nothing because I think there is nothing wrong with the school. It was not as I expected. I thought the school would be strict. One thing that would make this school better for me is we had more breaks in the day.”

Data Collection

End of year summaries are provided on the (Enterprise) Center for Learning and Growth program. In 2017-18, two new teachers transitioned into the program and it completed its first year at 225 Lambs Lane (next to Ivy Creek). Overall the program saw a decrease in disciplinary referrals and short term suspensions: 10 students accounted for a total of 39 documented interventions throughout the school year as compared to 65 in the previous year.

Students have maintained an average daily percentage attendance of around 80% (ADA/ADM) at the Center for Learning and Growth. This data may or may not be a valuable indicator of program success. Many students entering the program are chronically absent or truant before entering. Anecdotally, during observations, 9 out of 14 students received perfect attendance “stars” on their “Star Wall” for the week prior to the second observation. Some students’ goals include coming to school daily or coming to school daily and staying the whole school day.

Average Daily Membership and Average Daily Attendance from PowerSchool 2013-May 2019

Year	Calendar Days	Unique Students	ADM	ADA
2013-2014	173	38	21.3	17.3
2014-2015	176	49	26.3	20.8
2015-2016	177	32	13.9	10.1
2016-2017	179	22	10.0	8.3
2017-2018	173	18	10.1	8.3
2018-2019	147	20	10.3	7.9

Staff vary between calling the program appropriate for short-term intervention or long-term intervention. Over the past several years students average between 72 – 92 days, which is about a semester considering when the student is placed.

Average Duration of Student Stay 2013-May 2019

Year	Avg. Duration (Days)
2013-2014	92.3
2014-2015	82.5
2015-2016	72.5
2016-2017	74.5
2017-2018	87.7
2018-2019	92.0

Student placement dates ranged from 1 day to 179 days. 24% of the total number of student placements were 135 or more days while 30% of the total student placements were 45 days or fewer. The rest (46%) ranged between 46 and 134 days.

Students have come from all middle schools and all high schools. Over the years, transportation and location of program have impacted program placement. Administrators also impact program placement to some degree. The last five school years are shown below with the number of students sent by school in that school year.

Number of Students Sent to CFLG in that school year

Year	School	Students	Year	School	Students	Year	School	Students
2013-2014	AHS	11	2014-2015	AHS	20	2015-2016	AHS	9
2013-2014	BMS	5	2014-2015	BMS	6	2015-2016	BMS	5
2013-2014	HMS	1	2014-2015	HMS	1	2015-2016	CPCS	1
2013-2014	JMS	3	2014-2015	JMS	3	2015-2016	HMS	3
2013-2014	MOHS	12	2014-2015	MOHS	14	2015-2016	JMS	1
2013-2014	MUHS	1	2014-2015	MUHS	2	2015-2016	MOHS	12
2013-2014	WAHS	3	2014-2015	WAHS	2	2015-2016	MUHS	1
2013-2014	WMS	1	2014-2015	WMS	3	2015-2016	WMS	1

Year	School	Students	Year	School	Students	Year	School	Students
2016-2017	AHS	7	2017-2018	AHS	7	2018-2019	AHS	9
2016-2017	BMS	2	2017-2018	BMS	1	2018-2019	HMS	1
2016-2017	JMS	1	2017-2018	JMS	1	2018-2019	JMS	5
2016-2017	MOHS	7	2017-2018	MOHS	5	2018-2019	MOHS	3
2016-2017	MUHS	1	2017-2018	MUHS	1	2018-2019	WAHS	2
2016-2017	WAHS	3	2017-2018	WAHS	2	2018-2019	WMS	1
2016-2017	WMS	1	2017-2018	WMS	1	*data as of April 2019		

Recidivism

Of the 140 unique student IDs in PowerSchool from the beginning of school year 2013 to April of 2019, 101 of the students entered the program only one time. 26, or 19%, were in the program twice. 11, or 8%, entered the program 3 times and 2 students entered the program 5 times.

Opportunities for Credit

Grades were pulled from PowerSchool for the last three complete school years—school years 2015-16, 2016-17, and 2017-18. Out of the 206 opportunities to earn credit, 52% received passing grades and earned credit for those classes. These grades represent 79 students and 14 of these 79 received Advanced or Standard level diplomas from ACPS since their time in the CFLG.

Grade	Count	%
A	23	11%
B	32	15.50%
C	32	15.50%
D	10	5%
F	5	2%
I	8	4%
P	10	5%
No grade	86	42%
Total	206	100%

Conclusion and Recommendations

There is an opportunity for program staff, school level administrators, division level administrators and other stakeholders to come together to decide the purpose of the program within the context of the continuation of services within Albemarle County Public Schools. There are opportunities for this group to consider programs for various student populations, and if this program should be modified, continued, or if another program could be added on the ACPS continuum of services.

ACPS policy for alternative schools, policy IGBH, states that a proposal with specific elements is required for alternative schools. Staff should review the current structure of the Center for Learning and Growth and reconstitute a proposal to ensure required elements are still embodied within the current program.

All stakeholders agree that more collaborative processes for placing students into such program and for re-entry/entry into base schools (transitions) are essential for student success. Formal transition plans can be considered that outline the projected date of withdrawal from the alternative education setting, resources for support including people resources, goals to be addressed, schedule concerns or other concerns, and suggestions for success in the traditional program. Students can be supported through campus tours, partial re-entry, meeting with administrators, and explicit instruction with school procedures like locker use or lunch periods. The unique and challenging needs of this student population require more supports to be successful in the transition back to the school setting. Improving communication with base schools through progress reports, a “set” meeting, or designated contact or mentor are all various options that could be considered to support two-way communication.

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*This policy is up for 5-year review with no recommended changes.

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Alternative Center for Education Proposal

This proposal was provided by Kathryn Baylor, principal, Jouett Middle School.

Alternative Center for Education (A.C.E.)

Mission Statement

The Alternative Center for Education (A.C.E.) is designed to help students become successful members of the community by offering opportunities to educate minds, develop empathy, and ensure lifelong learning.

A.C.E. Goals

- Students will master grade level core content.
- Students will experience social/emotional growth through the weekly counselor/student conferencing.
- Students will participate in mindfulness experiences daily.
- Students will transition back into the traditional Jouett community through the leveling system.

Referral Process

- Once a student has attended a discipline hearing, A.C.E. will be a consideration if another infraction occurs.
- Consideration - Placement of Special Education Students

Placement Criteria for A.C.E. Acceptance

The placement will focus on the following three aspects of a student's school life. Students must demonstrate needs in at least two of the following areas:

- Behavior
 - Student has received multiple discipline referrals.
 - Student's behavior resulted in one discipline referral that resulted in a long term suspension.
- Academic
 - Student has demonstrated an academic need based on current and historical achievement data; however, the student will still be capable of graduating from high school on time.
 - Student has demonstrated a lack of interest in school or does not see the value in education.
- Social /Emotional
 - Student has difficulty adapting to transitions throughout the school day.
 - Student has struggled building and maintaining peer and adult relationships.
 - Student has social skill deficits that adversely impacts their educational performance.

Daily Schedule and Transportation

- 9:45 a.m. - 1:15 p.m.
- County Transportation

Staffing Needs

- Hourly Teacher - 3.5 hours

Alternative Center for Education (A.C.E.)	Short Term Education Program (STEP)
Long Term Education Program which replaces placement in Center for Learning and Growth or Homebound Instruction or Transition from Center for Learning Growth	Short Term Education Program which replaces OSS
Voluntary contract after meeting with Discipline Hearing Officer	Voluntary Parent/Student Contract when suspension is implemented
Student will transition to traditional Jouett experience through the Leveling System.	Student will exit STEP when suspension is completed and academic expectations are met.
Students will transition from Center for Learning and Growth to A.C.E.	
Modified Schedule 9:45 a.m. - 1:15 p.m. - Transportation is provided	
Counseling Support	
Mindfulness	
Academic Rigor	
Community Service	
Individual Development Course	

Leveling System

Students will monitor their own progress through a leveling system. Students may move up or down the leveling system. The students will present proposal for level transition and placement determinations will take place weekly.

- Level 0 - Directed
 - Restrictions placed to maintain compliance and includes instruction away from other students.
 - Mastering 100% of the work
- Level 1 - Supported - Introduction week
 - After introduction week - two successful weeks student may apply for level 2.
- Level 2 - Guided
 - After three successful weeks student may apply for level 3 and to return to one traditional class.
- Level 3 - Independent - Add 1 class each week.