

2009-10



AN EVALUATION OF THE WAKE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) alternative educational options. The WCPSS options are similar to those in other North Carolina districts. WCPSS student outcomes based on state assessments and federal standards are also equivalent or higher than other districts, although the capacity for WCPSS students served at each alternative setting is generally lower. Students at WCPSS alternative schools receive benefits such as smaller classes and greater access to counseling services. Student data also indicate that these environments help build student resiliency. Base school personnel understand some aspects of the alternative schools, but greater transparency is needed, especially at the high school level. Additional alternative education sites are needed to better meet the needs of at-risk elementary students. Comprehensive services and settings for long-term suspended students and students with severe behavioral issues who are ineligible for special education services should also be created.

Evaluation & Research Department
E&R Report No. 10.15
November 2010
www.wcpss.net/evaluation-research
(919) 850-1863

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SUMMARY

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) alternative educational options. The current options that are analyzed in this study include two middle schools and one high school for students with moderate behavior and academic needs, an elementary program and a grade 6-12 school for students with disabilities (SWD) who have severe mental, emotional, or behavior issues, and a program to boost over-age students back to their appropriate grade level and set them on a path toward on-time graduation. Although various data sources and multi-level analyses are utilized in this evaluation, three main sections comprise this study.

- First a contextual framework is presented that offers national data on alternative educational models and describes the models used within comparable school districts.
- Second, implementation information is provided to explain the various WCPSS alternative educational options and to empirically examine their level of transparency within the district.
- Finally, the impact and student outcomes of the educational options are analyzed based on student perspectives, student-level academic and behavior data, and longitudinal analyses of students' academic progress. A description of the alternative schools costs and benefits is also provided.

Trends across Alternative Schools

The alternative educational options in WCPSS are similar to those available in comparable North Carolina school districts, except that WCPSS does not provide a physical site for long-term suspended students and most other districts do. The capacity for WCPSS students served at each setting is generally lower as well. Student outcomes tend to be equivalent or higher based on state assessments and federal standards. Students benefit from attending a WCPSS alternative school in other ways as well. According to WCPSS staff and student survey data, the primary benefit of the district's alternative schools and programs is the availability of smaller classes with low teacher/student ratios which promote relationship building and individual attention. Students have greater opportunities to access school-based counseling services at alternative schools because the counselors and social workers serve fewer students and can allot more individual time.

Research suggests that at-risk students can be successful with the support of family, school, and community environments that use protective factors such as caring relationships, high expectations, and opportunities for meaningful participation to build resiliency. Resiliency refers to the student's capacity to successfully adapt to challenging life experiences (Benard, 1991). Data from middle and high school alternative school students indicate that protective factors are being used to build resiliency in most students. Students also believe that many of their problems, particularly earning poor grades, have decreased since attending their alternative school.

Although base school personnel know about some of the alternative education options and make appropriate student referrals, specific information about certain alternative schools and programs especially at the high school level should be made more transparent, that is, more visible, accessible, and understandable. Overall, the needs of students districtwide seem to be

disproportionate to the number of students the alternative settings are currently able to serve. The largest gap appears to be in serving more at-risk elementary students. Additionally, the district is in need of a site for students with severe behavioral issues who are not eligible for special education services and a separate setting for students serving long-term suspensions. WCPSS should also partner with community agencies to provide more alternative education sites.

Providing small classes with greater support is a more costly yet recognized strategy utilized by alternative schools to improve the academics and behavior of specific student populations; however, this makes it more difficult to calculate equitable allotments between base and alternative schools. Base and alternative schools receive different allotments because they are different institutions. Base schools receive both instructional Months of Employment (MOE) and non-instructional funds set by WCPSS formulas using a 10 day Average Daily Membership (ADM). Alternative schools have different staffing patterns than base schools based on standards for alternative school staffing set by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) as well as the characteristics of the student populations served in those settings.

Longview is classified by NCDPI as a special school indicating that all of the students served are eligible to receive special education services. The small pupil to staff ratio at Longview is largely determined by state formulas and the majority of teachers are funded through special education funding, which is formula driven. The Bridges program for behaviorally challenged elementary students in need of special education services is funded similarly although it is a part of the Mount Vernon allotments. Overall, the pupil to teacher ratio is also considerably smaller at the four alternative schools compared to base schools.

Trends within Alternative Schools

Mount Vernon Middle School

- Base-school personnel appear to have a general knowledge of the purpose of Mount Vernon. The targeted student population, service provided, and the process of transitioning back to a base school also seem to be clearly understood. There is a misconception by many base school personnel (75%) that students who attend Mount Vernon might matriculate to either Longview or Mary Phillips high school when students generally transition to their base schools.
- Qualitative data indicate that base schools want to know about students' academic and behavioral needs and successful interventions when they transition back from Mount Vernon.
- Mount Vernon students perform just as well or better on state assessments compared to other similar alternative schools in North Carolina.
- Based on longitudinal analysis of a 6th-grade student Mount Vernon cohort, 2009-10 data for five of the 11 students showed that four students are 10th-grade students that their base high schools. The other student was retained and subsequently dropped out.

River Oaks Middle School

- There is little consensus from the base-school administrators and staff on the purpose of River Oaks. Since River Oaks was recently redesigned to be the companion school to Mount Vernon, more transparency about this change may be necessary. However, the reasons base school personnel refer students to River Oaks do align well with its mission and targeted student population. Similar to Mount Vernon, survey results show that some River Oaks respondents (56%) have the misperception that alternative middle school students might ultimately attend an alternative high school.
- The services base school staff expect—peer mediation, small class size, and self-paced instruction—are actually offered at River Oaks. When students transition back, base school respondents want River Oaks staff to offer suggestions for interventions that can reasonably be provided in a regular school setting.

Mount Vernon and River Oaks

- Mount Vernon and River Oaks were compared to alternative schools in other North Carolina districts. In some cases, the schools were similar in terms of grade span and achievement data from state assessments. In other cases, Mount Vernon and River Oaks had better outcomes than the other alternative schools serving both middle and high school students.
- Based on combined student survey results, Mount Vernon and River Oaks appear to foster resiliency in their students through high expectations, caring relationships, and meaningful participation. Students also reported that their problems with getting in trouble for behavior and earning poor grades have improved since they have attended the alternative school.

Mary Phillips High School

- In general, administrative and staff base school respondents are unclear about the primary purpose of Mary Phillips high school and describe a lack of communication between the alternative school and themselves. The type of student that should be referred to Mary Phillips is also not well understood; however, the top referral reasons are in line with the Mary Phillips target population.
- Students at Mary Phillips are expected to graduate from the school—a fact seemingly unknown by base school personnel who would benefit from greater transparency on this point. In the rare event that a student does return to their base school, the staff would like to be notified before-hand and expect that Mary Phillips will offer transitional services.
- Over 80% of students surveyed reported that Mary Phillips offers them meaningful opportunities for participation and caring relationships, and therefore has increase their resiliency. Students also noted experiencing fewer problem behaviors and better grades since attending Mary Phillips. Qualitative input from students focused on how attending Mary Phillips has helped them get on track toward a successful future.

- In 2008-09, Mary Phillips performance composite was most similar to Hawthorn High in Charlotte; however, Mary Phillips performed better on other measures. Mary Phillips and Hawthorn High also had comparable drop out rates. Other districts' alternative schools serving high school students had slightly less favorable outcomes than Mary Phillips.
- Longitudinal data for 72 students who entered Mary Phillips as 9th-grade students in 2005-06 shows that by December 2009, over half (44 students) of the cohort had dropped out and eight student had transferred out of the district. The remaining 20 students graduated from Mary Phillips. Nearly all did so in just two or three years.

Longview School

- Base middle school personnel appear to know more about Longview than personnel at base high schools. Whereas base middle school administrators and staff viewed the school as nearly always focusing on discipline and behavior, base high school personnel were much less certain of the primary focus of the school. In general, both levels of personnel know that SWD students in grades 6-12 with severe emotional and/or behavioral problems can be referred. They are also aware to the types of transition services Longview staff offer.
- Qualitative feedback indicate that the district might need an alternative environment that serves students struggling with major behavioral issues yet do not need special education services, and thus are ineligible for Longview.
- Longview student survey findings reveal that building student resiliency has occurred less frequently at Longview compared to the other alternative settings. Additionally, students reported inconsistent levels of improvement within their problem areas.
- Longview has a considerably narrower grade span for students served compared to other special education centers in North Carolina district. The school's 2008-09 performance composite fell between the lowest and the highest performing centers located in Guildford and Charlotte-Mecklenburg.
- A five-year longitudinal study of a Longview cohort of 30 entering 9th-grade students indicates that few students have been successful. Based on complete data for 20 students, three students graduated, 14 students dropped out, and three students were still attending Longview as of December 2009.

The Bridges Program

- Behaviorally challenged elementary students in need of special education services can be served through the Bridges program, which is housed on the Mount Vernon campus. Base school personnel who refer students to Bridges are clear on the target population and referral process of the program. The program purpose is not completely clear to these personnel, as many believe counseling is a main priority whereas academics is a primary focus.
- Perceptions about student transitions do not align with reality. Base school personnel tend to believe that students typically transition into self-contained classes at base schools. Most of

the students actually remain at Bridges and then transition to Longview, although greater numbers of students are starting to transition back to base schools.

The Booster Program

- The Booster program, housed at Mount Vernon and River Oaks middle schools, gives motivated, over-age 7th-and 8th-grade students a chance to catch up to their appropriate grade level cohort and achieve on-time graduation. According to data from an analysis of the academic progress of 22 students in Booster Cohorts 1 and 2, many are on a path toward on-time graduation.
- One student from Cohort 1 graduated early in June of 2010. Given their current progress, several other students should graduate on-time during the 2010-11 school year. Other students have not been as successful. Two dropped out and another two have fallen behind academically and are not likely to graduate on-time. Two other students transferred out of the district.
- Cohort 2 students are not expected to graduate until 2011-12; however, most are doing well academically. Two are on-track to graduate in June of 2012 and six additional students could graduate on-time if they plan accordingly and maintain or improve their academic performance. Based on current data, the remaining two students are not likely to graduate on-time. This cohort also lost two students—one moved to another district and the other dropped out.

Recommendations

Several recommendations are being offered based on the empirical evidence presented in this report. The recommendations are intended to offer suggestions for how current alternative educational options might better meet the needs of WCPSS students, administrators, and staff. Ideas for additional alternative services are also given based on school-based input.

Recommendation 1: Increase the capacity for serving students districtwide by creating more alternative options for students.

Given survey respondents estimates of the numbers of current students who would benefit from an alternative educational experience, the need for service exceeds current capacity. WCPSS should consider expanding alternative options for at-risk elementary students. Alternative settings should also be created for students with severe problem behaviors who do not qualify for special education services and for students who are serving long-term suspensions. Currently, the SCORE program is available for long-term suspended middle and high school students to continue their education in an online learning environment. The district should also explore how it handles long-term suspended students and whether a separate alternative setting could be created to serve these students. Additionally, WCPSS should investigate alternative education models that partner with community agencies to serve the comprehensive needs of students and their families within a shared site.

Recommendation 2: Make information about the alternative education options more readily available and accessible and clearly specify the purpose and target population served.

Current Web sites may include some of this information; however, improvements can be made. School Web sites should offer consistent and comprehensive information about the purpose of the program, the target population served, the referral process, the services offered and the typical length of service, and any transition services provided. Each alternative school might have a “Frequently Asked Questions” page. Additionally, Mount Vernon and River Oaks might consider having a link for which base school personnel can obtain information about the Booster program. Ideally, Mount Vernon should add a link to the Bridges program on their Web site. Perhaps information about the available alternative options could also be shared at principal meetings.

Recommendation 3: Increase communication to base schools regarding the services available and student progress and establish a more standardized transition process.

Districtwide, alternative schools and programs are most commonly characterized by alternative and base school personnel as giving students the opportunity to be educated in small classes with a low teacher to student ratio. Survey results show that offering smaller classes is the primary service respondents expect alternative settings to provide. They are less aware that alternative schools and programs also offer counseling services, peer mediation, and social skills training that differ in frequency or intensity compared to base schools.

Data also suggest that WCPSS staff are not consistently aware of the expected length of service and transition expectations at alternative settings and would like improved communication about student progress and impending transitions. Most respondents think that alternative schools do provide some type of service to students who are returning to a base school setting and nearly all would like transition services. It appears that Bridges and Longview are believed to provide the greatest array of service.

Recommendation 4: Frequently review and adjust alternative school allotments.

The alternative schools’ non-instructional funds such as supplies and materials, travel, and contracts are based on student counts. These student counts tend to be higher or lower than the capacity of nearly all of the alternative schools, with Longview being the exception. It is recommended that these counts be reviewed and adjusted annually.

Recommendation 5: Increase the intentional building of protective factors at alternative schools to increase resiliency among students facing life challenges.

It is not clear whether alternative school principals are purposefully building protective factors and resiliency in their students. However, student survey data show that most students at Mount Vernon, River Oaks, and Mary Phillips, and about half of the students at Longview believe they have learned resiliency skills in the alternative setting. This finding suggests a need for staff to prioritize the intentional building of protective factors in the school environment so that students might succeed despite their difficult circumstances.

AN EVALUATION OF THE WAKE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS

This study is organized by three themes, contextual framework, implementation information, and impact and student outcomes, rather than by specific alternative educational options. Some readers may be interested in specific alternative school/program information. This information can be found in the summary and in the tables presented located throughout the report.

CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

This section establishes the study's contextual framework through several reviews. First, a national perspective of alternative education options and benefits is presented based on a review of the alternative education literature. Second, the alternative education options in Fairfax County Virginia, which is compatible to WCPSS in geographic location and student population, are reviewed and discussed. Finally, the alternative educational models within several North Carolina school districts are analyzed, presented, and compared to WCPSS.

REVIEW OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION LITERATURE: A NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

The conceptualization of "alternative education" was established within the American public school system over 40 years ago. This educational option has evolved over the years, and while alternative schools and programs often share a common foundation, the nation's school systems have not moved to a shared definition or monolithic model. Whereas some alternative education models emphasize discipline, others focus on innovative programs to meet students' unique needs. Three categories of alternative education programs with different approaches and goals have been identified within the literature (Foley & Pang, 2006; Lange & Sletten, 2002):

- schools of choice, such as magnet school programs.
- behavior modification programs for students who have been identified as disruptive in base school settings, which are typically "last chance" options for students at-risk of long-term suspension or school expulsion.
- schools or programs emphasizing academic and/or social rehabilitation or remediation, with the goal of transitioning students back to base school settings.

The majority of the extant alternative education literature focuses on the last two categories. According to recent articles, alternative schools and programs typically exist to offer individualized opportunities to meet the educational needs of students who have been identified as at-risk for school failure (Foley & Pang, 2006; Lehr, Tan, & Ysseldyke, 2009). This objective is supported by the U.S. Department of Education, which defines an alternative education school as "a public elementary/secondary school that addresses needs of students that typically cannot be met in a regular school, provides nontraditional education, serves as an adjunct to a regular school, or falls outside the categories of regular, special education, or vocational education" (Lehr & Lange, 2003). There is general consensus within the literature regarding the characteristics of alternative education options and the students they serve. Research on academic and behavioral outcomes of students served by these schools and programs is less prolific.

Under a federally funded grant received in 2001, the University of Minnesota launched a national alternative school research study in June 2002 to obtain extensive information on alternative schools in the 50 states. The three-year project consisted of four studies. Several individual reports were published using data from one or more of these studies. Three reports are referenced in this section to offer a national perspective on alternative education characteristics, school populations, and student outcomes (Lehr, Moreau, Lange, & Lanners, 2004; Lehr and Lange, 2003; Lehr, Tan, & Ysseldyke, 2009). A collection of additional research articles and publications compiled by Educational Research Service (ERS) were also reviewed and are also cited in this section.

Alternative Education Characteristics

Nationwide, alternative schools were described as having mainly a disciplinary orientation to managing or improving student behavior. Common characteristics of the nations' alternative schools include small class size, small total school populations, and small student/teacher ratios; flexibility in class hours and class schedules, and a creative curriculum described as nontraditional, hands-on, and experimental (Lehr, Moreau, Lange, & Lanners, 2004; Lehr & Lange, 2003; Lehr, Tan, & Ysseldyke, 2009). Additional studies have also characterized alternative schools by their small and supportive environments, emphasis on one-on-one interactions between teachers and students, and flexibility in structure and opportunities (Foley & Pang, 2006; Powell, 2003).

Alternative schools are often characterized by comparatively small student populations and low student/staff ratios. According to the literature, alternative schools usually serve fewer than 200 students or they may exist as smaller units within a larger school (Hadderman, 2002; Lehr, Tan, & Ysseldyke, 2009). Within the national study (see Lehr, Moreau, Lange, & Lanners, 2004) 20 states reported a range from 0.2% to 18% in alternative school enrollment compared to total school enrollment and 17 states reported a student to teacher ratio of 10 to 1. A low student/staff ratio is helpful in fostering positive relationships and often creates a close-knit environment, a sense of community among school members, and opportunities for individualized instruction, all important attributes of an alternative environment (Hadderman, 2002). High school student participants of a focus group study on alternative schools offered insight into the relationship between school size and connectivity (De La Ossa 2005). The students commented on how the smaller class sizes and school size in general facilitated peer and teacher communication and connection, especially in terms of receiving individual attention, developing relationships, and fostering a community atmosphere. In a qualitative case study of a single alternative high school serving a high minority and free or reduced-price lunch student population (Kim & Taylor, 2008), researchers observed a caring, nurturing environment where students formed positive relationships with teachers and benefitted from small class sizes. However, the school was also found to offer a limited curriculum that served the purpose of helping students obtain basic skills or recover credits for graduation rather than to promote critical and higher order thinking.

Other essential elements of alternative education and programs serving at-risk student populations that have been identified within the literature include clearly identified goals, a student-centered atmosphere, alignment of curriculum and assessment, availability of special education services, training and support for teachers, and links to multiple external agencies

(Foley & Pang, 2006; Powell, 2003). States typically portray the instructional programs of their alternative schools as focusing on core curriculum aligned with the district or state and/or a vocational, career planning, or service learning component (Lehr, Tan, & Ysseldyke, 2009). In fact, data from reporting states indicate that US alternative educational settings are frequently designed to prevent students from dropping out of school (Lehr, Moreau, Lange, & Lanners, 2004). In their review of the literature, Lange and Sletten (2002) found several studies which consider small size, flexibility, and unconventional academic approaches as key components within effective dropout prevention strategies. Additional characteristics of some alternative schools that facilitate successful school completion for students at-risk of dropping out of school are those that offer extra support or counseling for students, assistance in setting and accomplishing meaningful educational and occupational goals, and chances to develop living and vocational skills (Lehr & Lange, 2003).

Alternative School Student Population

Lehr, Tan, and Ysseldyke (2009) included a review of state legislation and policy in their national report of alternative schools that revealed four general criteria for admission into an alternative school: being at-risk (often defined in terms of drop-out status, truancy, substance or physical abuse, and homelessness); being suspended or expelled from a base school; being disruptive in a base school, and not achieving success in a base school. Being pregnant or a teen parent has also been cited as a reason for referral to an alternative school (Foley & Pang, 2006). Nationwide, 11 states were identified as having policies that suggested that alternative schools would benefit students who have been academically unsuccessful in conventional school environments defined as having been retained; having low test scores, failing grades, low grade-point-averages, or credit deficits; or not meeting state or district proficiency levels in reading, mathematics, and writing. In general, it was believed that alternative schools would offer more individualized attention and instruction that would support student success (Lehr, Tan, & Ysseldyke, 2009).

Thirty states from the national alternative school survey (Lehr, Moreau, Lange, & Lanners, 2004; Lehr, Tan, & Ysseldyke, 2009) reported primarily serving students in grade 9-12; however, states are increasingly serving students in grades 1-5. The report's findings also suggest that special education students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) comprise about 12% of all students in alternative schools/programs for at-risk populations. Additionally, no significant difference was found between this percentage and the total percentage of students with IEPs enrolled in all public schools during the 2000-2001 school years. The national survey results also showed district variation in the percentage of special education students ranging from 3% to 20%.

Alternative schools may be labeled as “dumping grounds” or “warehouses” for at-risk students with behavioral problems and/or poor academic performance who also tend to be disproportionately minority, requiring special education, and/or from lower socioeconomic families (Kim & Taylor, 2008). In fact, the alternative high school examined by Kim and Taylor (2008) was described by staff as a facility to which base-school teachers used to send “trouble-makers.” The students attending alternative schools are often aware of the negative stigma applied to them. In a qualitative study that collected high school students perspectives on their school experience, participants frequently stated that they felt viewed as second class citizens

because they attend an alternative school (De La Ossa, 2005). A question that remains unanswered by research is whether alternative schools function to help disenfranchised students succeed or to benefit the population at mainstream schools who wanted a respite from these “problem students” (Kim & Taylor, 2008).

This perspective also raises questions about the equity of education within alternative settings and between alternative and base schools. A finding from the first phase of the national study on alternative education, in which state directors of special education were interviewed, was that students with emotional or behavioral disabilities (EBD) are the most common group of students with disabilities served in alternative schools (Lehr & Lange, 2003). Often times the primary goal for these students within the alternative school setting is to improve behavior rather than academics. There is limited research describing effective academic interventions for this group of students, who tend to have multiple academic needs (Hughes & Adera, 2006).

Although youth who attend alternative schools may share common risk factors, these students tend to have diverse educational needs. In their synthesis of the research literature, Lange and Sletten (2002) present evidence suggesting that the benefits gained from attending an alternative school will vary across students with different characteristics. For instance, students labeled as “persisters” (those missing fewer than 30 days of schools a year) or “buoyant” (optimistic and resilient) tend to experience more positive outcomes compared to students who are labeled as “dropouts” (those missing more than 30 days of schools or who dropped out of the program or school indefinitely) and “beset” (more anxious and depressed at the onset of entry into the program). Such information may be useful to alternative schools in identifying students who may need early intervention or who may not meet admission criteria.

Student Outcomes

A review of the alternative education literature published primarily in the 1990s was provided in an E&R report on alternative schools (Carruthers et al., 1996). Examples of positive outcomes among students at alternative schools were categorized into three areas including academic achievement, student attitudes (toward themselves, their teacher, and their schools), and graduation. The effects of such outcomes tended to be examined primarily in the short term, yielding a paucity of research showing the long-term benefits of alternative education options. The reports launched from the national study conducted in 2002 referenced similar outcomes of alternative school students such as an increase in self-esteem, positive peer relationships, commitment to school, and school performance (Lehr et al., 2004; Lehr, Tan, & Ysseldyke, 2009).

Authors Lange and Sletten (2002) published a synthesis of available findings and categorized outcomes for students at alternative schools. Student academic achievement was identified as the primary focus of extant research; however, the authors noted that studies have produced mixed results including improved academic achievement, little or no change in outcomes, and a decline in standardized test results. During their review, the authors found that studies soliciting student feedback reported positive peer and teacher relationships as essential to promoting a sense of belonging and satisfaction with the alternative school. There was also evidence of the positive impact of alternative education environments on students’ self-esteem. In general, the study found that students with certain characteristics (higher self-esteem, lower reports of

depression and anxious feelings, and fewer somatic complaints) were able to maintain their improved confidence and academic performance as they transitioned to non-alternative school settings.

Overall, it appears that studies using non-experimental designs consistently yield more positive effects than those incorporating experimental designs, and that positive outcomes for individual students are typically derived from anecdotal reports. For example, it is common for alternative school staff to use students who have had a negative school experience, enroll in an alternative school, and graduate with the confidence and skills needed to obtain higher education or employment goals as exemplars. Although individual alternative schools and programs tend to offer happy endings for many of the students served, the generalization of this phenomenon across the nation has not been verified.

REVIEW OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS IN FAIRFAX COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) in Fairfax, Virginia, is slightly larger than WCPSS in student population size and has similar characteristics¹. FCPS offers 48 alternative or non-traditional educational options, some of which are similar to the alternative options in WCPSS, and others which differ in terms of higher capacity and program and service offering beyond those found within WCPSS. The non-traditional school options in FCPS are categorized by two groupings, those controlled by the school system and those controlled by public agencies.

Similar to WCPSS, FCPS offers alternative education options for students in grades K-12. Among the schools controlled by the school system are three alternative high schools and six alternative learning centers - two serving elementary students and four available to students in grades 7-10. Each of the high schools serves about 300 students who are characterized as “discipline cases.” Students with truancy issues are also targeted and elective placements occur. The six alternative learning centers are primarily for students with disciplinary issues or those who are long-term suspended. State test results are individually reported for the three high schools; however, the alternative learning centers assessment results are combined and reported as a single school.

Whereas the options within WCPSS serve at risk students due to over-age, behavior, mental, or emotional issues, or special education needs and a distance learning program for long-term suspended students, the FCPS school system offers additional alternative educational programs. Within each program, students must take state tests to graduate. The various programs target specific populations and offer unique services to students. They include:

- A homebound program for medically fragile students and those in the process of disciplinary review if they have an IEP.
- An adult high school including regular diploma programs, external diploma programs, and Graduation Equivalency Diploma (GED) transition programs.

¹ Overall spending per student in Fairfax County is much higher than in WCPSS (\$13,553 versus \$8,282, respectively).

- The AIM Program for students in grades 7-12 who have been expelled. AIM stands for achievement, integrity, and maturity. Teachers focus on these three areas in order to assure that students make academic progress, show improvement in personal honor, and develop skills in self-sufficiency and independence. The program serves about 12 students each year. Teachers provide students with computer-assisted instruction for half of the school day and students then complete additional work at home. Student test scores are reported with their base school.
- A program for adjudicated youth who receive 2.5 hours of computer-enhanced instruction and additional assignments to complete outside of class.
- A transition support resource center that supports a few students each year who are returning from a residential placement. Small-group support and self-paced instruction are provided.

Additionally, there are seven Special Education Centers/Schools within FCPS that serve either elementary, middle, or high school students with distinct disabilities ranging from mild to severe. Two operate as separate public schools and the other five are housed on existing school campuses, which is similar to the structure of WPCSS options for these groups of students. Attending students participate in either the state's standard assessment or alternate assessment program.

FCPS provides staff, materials, and program direction to 39 school programs located at 25 sites operated and funded by other public agencies. These programs are identified as interagency alternative schools. The interagency alternative schools are small school programs that promote the academic and social development of disruptive or disaffected youth. Unlike the offerings within WCPSS, the programs include schools at jails, mental health facilities, and day treatment or residential treatment facilities, for example. Each school is specifically designed to meet the needs of the student population of the host agency. Eight of the programs are partially or fully state-funded and some receive grant funds.

REVIEW OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION MODELS IN SELECTED NORTH CAROLINA DISTRICTS

A review of the alternative schools in large North Carolina school districts including Charlotte Mecklenburg, Durham, Forsyth, and Guilford was conducted to draw comparisons between the alternative education models implemented in WCPSS and other similar districts and to identify gaps in service. E&R staff reviewed alternative school Web sites and conducted informal phone interviews with principals and program directors to gather pertinent information. A description of each alternative school is provided in Appendix A, which outlines each school's mission, target student population, capacity, teacher student ratio, referral process, program services and goals, length of service, and transition process. Some types of alternative schools focus primarily on social emotional growth and life skills and place secondary emphasis on academic pedagogy. In contrast, academic remediation, enrichment, and achievement are a priority at other alternative sites. It is also common for schools to support both behavioral and academic objectives. The focus of each alternative education option is dependent on the student population served.

Based on a content analysis of the target student population and program services, several types of alternative educational options are available within WCPSS and other North Carolina school districts. This array of alternative schools and programs focuses on a range of student needs. Among the options are programs that target the following populations:

- Students who have behavioral issues
- Students who have been long-term suspended
- Students who are over-age in grade
- Students at risk for dropping out of school
- Students who have severe mental or emotional issues
- Students identified as in need of special education services

As shown in Table 1, the availability of alternative education options is district-dependent, although nearly all of the selected North Carolina school districts including WCPSS support the identified array of programs. Each of the aforementioned alternative education options is offered within the Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Forsyth, Guilford, and WCPSS school districts. Durham has more limited options with one alternative setting for long-term suspended students and smaller centers for specific-need students.

- Charlotte-Mecklenburg supports an alternative school for students in grades K-12 who are in need of special education services and a school for over-age 9th-grade students. It also has an academy for students in grades 4-12 serving long-term suspension. Finally, middle and high school students who are academically at-risk may choose to attend Hawthorn High which offers day and evening programs and supports the academic progress of teenage parents through on-site services.
- Durham has one alternative school serving middle and high school students who have been long-term suspended. This school also offers a therapeutic setting for students with mental health issues and a detention center for adjudicated youth.
- Forsyth offers a center for students in grades 5-9 with programs for students who have been long-term suspended, students who are over-age, students who are at-risk of dropping out, and students in need of special education services. Also available is an alternative school for middle and high school students who have been long-term suspended. Another high school for students in grades 11 and 12 who are at-risk of dropping out has partnered with Forsyth Technical Community College to promote student academic and vocational achievement.
- Guilford has a comprehensive alternative education center for students with severe mental and physical disabilities. The center has three age-appropriate programs for students beginning at 6 months until age 22. Another public, separate school serves students between the ages 5 and 22 who are moderately to severely mentally challenged. Middle and high school students who have been long-term suspended may attend one of two School Community Alternative Learning Environments, also referred to as SCALE schools. There is also one academy for over-age 8th-grade students and another school serving 12th-grade

students with poor attendance, chronic misbehavior, or face other circumstances that necessitate an alternative setting.

Both similarities and differences are present when making a comparison between the alternative education options within WCPSS and the selected North Carolina school districts and FCPS.

- WCPSS offers similar alternative educational options for its large and diverse student population. Similar to Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Forsyth, Guilford, it provides separate educational environments for students with mild behavior issues and those with major behavioral issues who are also in need of special education services, as well as programs for over-age and at-risk students.
- The manner in which WCPSS supports students serving long-term suspensions does differ from other districts in North Carolina. WCPSS puts students on long-term suspensions from the system rather than from their base school. The district does not currently support a physical center for long-term suspended students. It does have a new program called SCORE (Second Chance Online Resource for Education) for teaching long-term suspended middle and high school students in an on-line learning environment. The program provides English, language arts, and mathematics instruction during courses that meet *online* Monday-Thursday. Mathematics courses are offered 2:45-4:45pm and English/language arts courses are offered 5:00-7:00pm. Participation in SCORE requires access to a computer.
- The capacity of the alternative schools and programs within WCPSS is lower than comparable sites in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Guilford, and FCPS. As such, fewer students are able to be served in alternative settings.
- Finally, unlike FCPS, WCPSS has not systematically created partnerships with community agencies to support the needs of the alternative school students at a shared alternative education site.

Table 1
Summary of the Types of Programs Offered at Various
North Carolina Alternative Schools by District

	School Name	Grades Served	Behavior Issues	Long-term Suspended	Over-age in Grade	At-risk of Dropping Out	Mental or Emotional Issues	Special Education Needs
Charlotte Mecklenburg	Morgan School	K-12					X	X
	Turning Point Academy	4-12	X	X	X	X		
	Hawthorne High School	6-12				X		
	Midwood High	9			X	X		
Durham	Lakeview School	6-12	X	X		X	X	
	Kennedy Learning	5-9	X	X	X	X		
Forsyth	Griffith Academy	6-12		X				
	Forsyth Middle College	11-12				X	X	
	Gateway Education Center	6 months-22 years					X	X
Guilford	CD McIver Education Center	5-22					X	X
	SCALE - Greensboro	6-12	X	X				
	Dean B. Pruett SCALE School	6-12	X	X				
	High School Ahead Academy	8			X	X		
	Twilight School	12	X			X		
	Wake	Mount Vernon Middle	K-8	X		X	X	X
River Oaks Middle		6-8	X		X	X		
Longview		6-12	X				X	X
Mary Phillips High		9-12	X			X		
SCORE program		6-12		X				

Note: The Bridges program housed at Mount Vernon serves students in need of special education who may have mental or emotional issues. The Booster program housed at Mount Vernon and River Oaks serves over-age students.

CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK SUMMARY

Alternative schools nationwide are characterized as having small class sizes and low teacher to student ratio which promote supportive environments, emphasize one-on-one interactions between teachers and students, and offer more flexibility in school structure. According to the literature, alternative schools usually serve fewer than 200 students or they may exist as smaller units within a larger school. Additionally, the schools typically serve the purpose of improving student behavior. National reports indicate that special education students comprise about 12% of all students in alternative schools/programs for at-risk populations. Improved academic achievement, more positive student attitudes toward themselves and their teachers, and greater rates of graduation are some of the positive outcomes of alternative schools according to the literature.

Comparison between the alternative education options within WCPSS, North Carolina school districts, and FCPS reveal similarities and differences. WCPSS and similar school districts within North Carolina offer compatible alternative education options serving at risk students due to over-age, behavior, mental or emotional issues, or special education needs. FCPS has a wider variety of alternative education options, including partnerships with public agencies, which have the capacity to serve more students. The capacity of students served at each WCPSS alternative setting is also lower than Charlotte-Mecklenburg and Guilford. WCPSS does have a gap in service compared to the offering in other school districts. WCPSS does not have a public separate school specifically designed for students serving long-term suspensions, although it does have a distance learning program for these students. Additionally, WCPSS does not have environments for students with more severe behavioral, mental, or emotional issues who are not in need of special education.

IMPLEMENTATION INFORMATION

This section of the report provides alternative education implementation information for the WCPSS district offerings. First, detailed descriptions of the alternative schools and programs are presented in terms of their missions, student populations served, referral and exit processes, and goals. Second, the degree to which this information is known among base school personnel who might access the services is examined through an on-line survey to determine if the alternative education options need to be more transparent.

WCPSS ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS AND PROGRAMS

The vast majority of WCPSS students are educated in base school settings. Several alternative schools exist in WCPSS and are serving students who have been unsuccessful in such settings, yet have the potential to succeed with the support of a small, structured and nurturing environment. The district's alternative schools include Mount Vernon and River Oaks Middle Schools, Mary E. Phillips High School, and Longview School serving 6th-12th-grade students. Two alternative programs, Bridges and Boosters, also serve distinct student populations within the district.

To obtain an overview of alternative schools districtwide, Evaluation and Research (E&R) staff visited each school and conducted interviews with the principal during the fall of 2009. The Bridges program facilitator and the Booster program transition counselor were interviewed as well. The purpose of the interviews was to gather background information about the students served, the application process, school resources and strategies, and short-term, intermediate, and long-term goals. In addition to conducting interviews, E&R staff also reviewed school documents and Web sites to provide descriptive information. Several key questions are addressed in this section of the study:

- What is the purpose of the district's alternative education options?
- Who are the targeted student populations?
- What is the school/program profile?
- What is the teacher profile?
- What are the referral/admission processes?
- What alternative program/school services are available to students?
- What are the expectations and goals for students?
- What is the length of service/enrollment and the exit process?
- What transition services are offered?
- How might information be more transparent?

What is the purpose of the district's alternative education options?

The district has several alternative education options that offer safe, supportive, and structured environments that are especially designed to promote the academic, behavioral and social success of students who are at risk, socially dysfunctional, and/or severely behaviorally impaired. Each of the alternative schools and programs functions to support this purpose by providing comprehensive services to targeted groups of students with various needs.

Mount Vernon Middle School was initially established in 1976. Since 2008-09, it has collaborated with River Oaks Middle School² to serve moderately at-risk students in grades six through eight who are not experiencing adequate success at their base schools. Each school serves different regions of the county and has corresponding sending base schools (see Appendix B). Mary Phillips High School, established in 1973, is the district's alternative school setting for moderately at-risk high school students.

Alternative education options are also available for students with severe emotional and behavioral challenges that place them at-risk for educational failure. Middle and high school students within the district are served by the Longview School, an alternative school that has evolved since its foundation in the early 1980s. The Bridges program is an elementary school-based assessment/intervention program for K-5 students with significant unmet emotional/behavioral needs. Bridges has been serving the elementary students in WCPSS since 1995. Bridges functions as a public separate school and is housed on the Mount Vernon school campus. Students are enrolled at Mount Vernon although they are served solely by the program. Elementary level students with a public separate Individualized Education Program (IEP) who move into the school district are enrolled in Bridges. Middle and high school students who were served outside the district under public separate IEPs attend Longview.

The Booster program was initiated at Mount Vernon during the 2007-08 school year. Unlike the other alternative educational options, this program serves a small number of 7th- and 8th-grade students who are performing well in school yet are at-risk of dropping out because they are over-age. Selected students participate in a rigorous academic semester that will boost them to their age appropriate grade-level and fast-track them into high school and on a path toward on-time graduation. In the fall semester of 2009-10, a second Booster program site was implemented at River Oaks, allowing twice as many students districtwide to be served annually. Currently accepted students are enrolled at either the Mount Vernon or River Oaks site based on their geographic residence and collective transportation patterns. They are served solely by the Booster program.

² Prior to restructuring in 2008-09, River Oaks functioned as a time-out or cooling-off place for students. Service would last between 9-14 weeks with the primary purpose of behavior adjustment followed by swift re-admittance of students to their base schools.

Table 2
Alternative School/Program Mission Statements

	Mount Vernon Middle	River Oaks Middle	Mary Phillips High	Longview School	Bridges Program	Boosters Program
Mission	To provide all students with an opportunity to succeed academically and behaviorally in a supportive, structured environment that emphasizes positive reinforcement for achievement.	To equip students with the academic and relational tools necessary to be successful in school.	To educate each student to be a responsible and productive life-long learner capable of managing future challenges.	We teach until they learn.	To provide an alternative therapeutic environment that allows elementary students with significant unmet emotional/behavioral needs to progress academically and behaviorally.	To provide a cohort of over-age students with a rigorous academic semester which will boost them to their age appropriate grade-level and fast-track them into high school and on a path toward on-time graduation.
Grades Served	6-8	6-8	9-12	6-12	K-5	Over-age 7 th and 8 th grade students

Who are the targeted student populations?

The alternative educational options available within WCPSS target students with a variety of behavioral and academic issues. Different settings are available to serve students depending on the severity of these issues. While nearly all of the alternative sites serve at-risk students, the Booster program is a unique option for over-age students characterized as academic proficient and well-behaved.

Mount Vernon, River Oaks, and Mary Phillips are designed to support academically at-risk students with mild to moderate behavioral challenges in need of targeted group interventions. Ideally, special education students comprise between 10-15% of the school population, which is proportionate to the composition of base WCPSS schools. Typically students are performing below grade level on standard assessments, have problems with attendance, discipline or suspensions, and/or have been retained in grade. Students may be characterized as having little motivation, poor social skills, and/or difficulty interacting with peers and adults. It is not uncommon for students to experience disruptions and conflict within their families and to have few supportive adult relationships. Many of the students served need more structure and adult attention than they were receiving at their base schools. This is especially the case for Mary Phillips students who have not adjusted to the high school environment and need extra instructional support.

Longview and Bridges are designed to support students with severe emotional and/or behavioral problems or those who have a history of severe or aggressive behaviors who need intensive, individual interventions. All of the students served at Longview have been identified as students with disabilities (SWD). Nearly all of the students served at Bridges receive special education

services. Many of these students were previously identified and receiving services at their base school. Bridges students often experience low academic performance and most score significantly below grade-level on universal screenings in reading. Common characteristics of Bridges’ students may include disruptive, defiant, or withdrawn behavior and physical aggression toward oneself, other people or property. Similar to students at the other alternative schools, the Longview student population tends to suffer from low motivation and excessive school absences due to poor attendance and/or suspensions. It is also not uncommon for Longview students to have been involved in criminal activities or serving probation. According to the principal, most of the students admitted to Longview are two or more years behind in grade level. Students attending Longview or Bridges often come from group homes, foster families, therapeutic facilities, female-headed families, and households where they confront abuse, violence, or criminal activities. Some children are homeless and others are experiencing a state of crisis.

Each year, the Booster program serves cohorts of over-age 7th- and 8th-grade students from base middle schools who are academically capable and motivated to succeed in school. Students selected to participate are proficient in reading and mathematics, as measured by EOG exams, have high GPAs, and few, if any, behavioral problems. Many of the students served through Boosters have been retained in grade one or two times, which places them at risk for dropping out of school in spite of their academic potential.

Table 3
Alternative School/Program Student Profiles

	Mount Vernon Middle	River Oaks Middle	Mary Phillips High	Longview School	Bridges Program	Booster Program
Target Student Population	Academically at-risk students with mild to moderate behavioral challenges in need of targeted group interventions. 10-15% of the school population is typically students in need of special education.			Students with severe emotional and/or behavioral problems or those who have a history of severe or aggressive behaviors who need intensive, individual interventions. *Longview: All students are in need of special education services. *Bridges: Nearly all students are in need of special education services.		Over-age 7 th - and 8 th -grade students who are academically capable and motivated to succeed in school.
Student Risk Factors	Low academic performance Problem behaviors Low motivation/Poor attendance Poor social skills/few positive relations with peers and adults Retained in grade *Mary Phillips: teenage parents or in need of flexible schedules			Low academic performance Significant disruptive and/or dangerous behaviors Low motivation/Poor attendance Highly unstable or transient families *Longview: retained in grade, suspensions, and adjudicated		At achievement Levels III or IV High GPAs Few to no behavioral problems Retained in grade

What is the school/program profile?

Alternative education options are generally characterized by their small size and low teacher student ratio. The number of WCPSS students enrolled in each of the alternative schools and programs ranges from approximately 60 to 200. Overall, the alternative education settings can serve fewer than 600 students districtwide during a given school year.

Mount Vernon typically serves 90 students in the middle school; whereas the desired student population at River Oaks is approximately 65 students. The student population at Mary Phillips is approximately 200, which includes roughly 30 students who participate in a credit recovery program offered in the early evening. Each school employs one counselor as well as one special education teacher, which limits the number of special education students admitted each year. To be eligible for admittance to Mount Vernon, River Oaks, or Mary Phillips, special education students must be able to function in the regular classroom.

Compared to grades 7 and 8, only a small number of 6th-grade students are referred to and eventually served at either Mount Vernon or River Oaks. Generally, 6th-grade students are less likely to need alternative education services because they have not been in middle school long enough to have exhausted available school-based interventions. The alternative middle schools are structured to reflect this need for service. Mount Vernon typically has one 6th-grade class, serving about 10 students, which is co-taught by a K-6 certified teacher and an In School Suspension (ISS) teacher. Staff certified to teach middle school serve approximately 40 students in grade 7 and 40 students in grade 8. Likewise, River Oaks employs one 6th-grade teacher, four 7th- and four 8th-grade teachers who each teach no more than six to seven students in a given class.

In general, 10th- and 11th-grade students comprise the majority of the Mary Phillips student population. Since the implementation of the new graduation requirements, Mary Phillips has received a greater number of 9th-grade student referrals. Proportionally fewer 12th-grade students, who tend to have prior long-term suspensions and need to recover credits for graduation, are accepted. Students typically range in age from 14 to 20 years old. The admission team does consider the likelihood that a student can meet all graduation requirements prior to turning 21 before admission is granted. The on-site childcare center draws referrals from students who are pregnant. Most of the students who attend Mary Phillips are African American females.

Longview typically serves about 100 students including 40 middle school students and slightly over 60 high school students. Most of the student population receives free or reduced-price lunch (FRL) and almost all of the students are African-American males. Longview offers a structured educational environment with small classes and special education teachers to provide individual interventions and differentiate instruction. Most classes contain five to six students (eight maximum) with a teacher and a teacher assistant. The school has a counselor, 2 social workers, and a 5 person crisis team.

Bridges typically enrolls about 60 students. There are seven teachers and seven teacher assistants on staff, most of whom are special education teachers while others specialize in

remediation or intervention. Between eight and nine students are served within each of the seven classes. Students are assigned to classrooms and teachers based on their instructional level rather than their grade level. The program employs one psychologist, one social worker (at 3/4 time), and two crisis assistants.

Each Booster program site serves a maximum of 15 students per semester cohort or 30 students per year. Fewer students may actually participate in the program. The fall cohort is comprised of 8th-grade students. During the spring semester, over-age 7th-grade students enter the Booster program. One full-time teacher and one full-time guidance counselor is employed at each of the Booster program sites (Mount Vernon and River Oaks) to specifically serve program students.

Table 4
Alternative School/Program Profiles

	Mount Vernon Middle	River Oaks Middle	Mary Phillips High	Longview School	Bridges Program	Booster Program
Capacity	90 students: 10 6 th -grade students 40 7 th -grade students 40 8 th -grade students	65 students: 1 6 th -grade class 4 7 th -grade grade classes 4 8 th -grade grade classes	Around 200 students, including 30 students who participate in a credit recovery program offered in the early evening.	Around 100 students: 40 middle school students 60 high school students	60 students	60 students: 15 students per semester at Mount Vernon 15 students per semester at River Oaks
Teacher/Student Ratio	1 to 10	1 to 6 or 7	1 to 15 (17-18 max.)	2 to 6 or 7 (max. 8)	2 to 8 (max. 10)	1 to 15
Counselor	1	1	1	1	1	1 per site

What is the teacher profile?

Teacher retention varies among the alternative schools. A common trend mentioned by alternative school principals is that staff either love working with the students and stay or they realize they are not suited for the job and leave. All teachers are certified and all core teachers meet the No Child Left Behind Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT) standard (Table 5).

The majority of Mount Vernon staff have retained their employment since the principal joined the school 9 years ago. As shown in Table 5, in 2008-09, the staff turnover rate was 6.9%. River Oaks has experienced almost a 50% turnover rate since the school opened, with a staff turnover rate of 47.1% in 2008-09. Staff turnover has likely been high due to three changes in school leadership and a repurposing in 2008-09. Former principals have resigned for personal reasons or retired.

Teacher retention at Mary Phillips is good, according to the principal, and has never been a problem during his tenure. He finds that teachers who remain at Mary Phillips end up loving the job because of the successes they see *and* the challenges they face. The principal did say that it is important to hire teachers who have an understanding of the student population. Teacher turnover at Longview tends to be highest among the middle school staff. The principal stated that “Teachers either love teaching here or hate it; there is no middle of the road.” Similar to the trend at Mary Phillips, the Longview staff who stay tend to understand the student population and do not take students’ behavior personally. As illustrated in Table 5, all staff at Mary Phillips and Longview were retained in 2008-09.

Table 5
Alternative School Teacher Profiles, 2008-09

	Mount Vernon Middle, including Bridges	River Oaks Middle	Mary Phillips High	Longview School
Total Teachers	33	18	27	24
% Certified Teachers	100%	100%	100%	100%
# Core Teachers (NCLB high qualified standard is applicable)	29	16	21	19
% Highly Qualified Teachers	100%	100%	100%	100%
% of Staff Turnover	6.9%	47.1%	0.0%	0.0%

Data Source: Healthy School Data 2008-09 and Oracle March 2009 database.

What are the referral/admission processes?

Attendance at any of the district’s alternative schools/programs is application based. Students must be referred by their base school and should meet the alternative school’s targeted student profile for consideration. The application process varies somewhat by school, although each requires documentation of need which is reviewed by a team of school and/or district staff members who make acceptance decisions based upon a number of factors.

Mount Vernon and River Oaks have the same admission process. Intake hearings for admittance are scheduled every two weeks between mid-September and the end of the third quarter in early March. A hearing is also offered in mid-June for referrals received after the March deadline. September intakes are usually referrals from year-round or modified calendar middle schools. By October, middle schools on the traditional calendar schedule begin to make referrals. River Oaks receives about two to five applications every two weeks and Mount Vernon receives about three to five. Students are admitted every two weeks until each school reaches capacity.

In most cases, students referred to Mount Vernon or River Oaks have been through the Student Support Team (SST) process whereby interventions and resources to offer assistance have been exhausted without success. Base school counselors typically make student referrals, submit applications, and attend the intake hearings. At the intake hearing, the counselor or advocate offers a narrative report and documentation regarding the areas in which the student is experiencing difficulty and describes any interventions that have been attempted. The student’s

areas of strength are also discussed and a case is made for why the student is a good candidate for placement. Each school's intake team includes various school staff, such as the social worker, school counselor, principal, and teachers, who serve annually on a rotating basis. The team selects applicants for admission, and if accepted, students and their parents are scheduled to attend a mandatory orientation session.

According to each school's principal, the acceptance rate at River Oaks is about 80-85%, whereas about 95% of applicants are accepted at Mount Vernon. Students who do not fit the targeted student profile, such as those who have severe special education needs or a history of aggressive and violent behavior, are denied admission. River Oaks and Mount Vernon collaborate to serve their target population. River Oaks has accepted students who were geographically slated to be served by Mount Vernon but could not attend because the school had reached capacity.

Applications for admission to Mary Phillips are reviewed twice a year. Most applications are submitted in the spring and early summer which ensures that accepted students can attend school on the first day of the school year. Fewer students are admitted in January to begin the second semester. Applicants are asked to provide a reason(s) for referral and a brief statement that explains why, other than attending a smaller school, Mary Phillips would be an appropriate education alternative to the student's current school setting. Staff have established a rubric that is used to judge whether a student is a good candidate for the program. Upon admittance, students and parents attend an orientation led by the principal in which he explains the rules and expectations for student conduct and performance.

The principal of Mary Phillips mentioned the on-going challenge of educating base schools about the types of students served and who should be referred. Notably, Mary Phillips can serve only a limited number of special education students and students with acute special needs must be referred to Longview. Many special education student applicants are denied each year as the number of these applicants is disproportionately greater than the number the school is able to serve. Additionally, Mary Phillips will not admit multiple students who have been referred from a single school for disruptive group behavior, such as gang-related activities.

The process for admission into Longview begins with a referral from an IEP team at any of the WCPSS middle or high schools. Referrals, which typically contain IEP documentation, psychological reports, suspension data, attendance data, and other information, are reviewed by the Special Education Services Senior Administrator assigned to work with Longview. If placement at Longview is deemed appropriate, then the referral packet will be sent to the student support services team at Longview for review. When making an admittance decision, the team will consider the type, frequency, intensity, and duration of the student's behaviors. They also look at the interventions provided at the base school, as well as whether the student has been referred to SST or to external community or social support agencies. If the intake committee believes the student meets the profile characteristics and determines that the base school has exhausted all resources and interventions without success, then the student is accepted into the program. Alternatively, the committee will make recommendations for additional interventions that should be attempted at the base school before staff can make a second referral. Longview accepts referrals throughout the year, and students can be admitted at any time. The intake committee meets every Thursday and typically reviews three referrals.

Parents, school, or agency personnel can refer students to the Bridges program. A referral packet must be completed that requires information about the student's background and academic and behavior history. The application process may include student and parent interviews, behavior assessments, and a review of documented interventions. Student intakes occur every two weeks. The largest numbers of applications, typically five to six applicants per every two weeks, are received in September and October. Many of these referrals are from year-round schools that have been serving students beginning in June or July. By the end of the first semester it is more common for staff to receive two or three applications each intake period. The intake committee consists of school-based mental health personnel, guidance and social work staff, central student support service administrators, and Mount Vernon and Bridges administrators.

Two behavior support teachers and one behavior support teacher assistant were added to the Bridges staff in 2008-09. These teachers make visits to base schools to provide proactive support to students who are under consideration for a referral. During their visits, staff may offer recommendations for additional interventions or provide assistance in implementing new classroom initiatives. According to the Bridges coordinator, the intake team tends to accept all applicants, even if they do not believe that the base schools have exhausted all available resources.

An intake meeting is scheduled after a student is accepted into Bridges. Some students have neither been identified nor received special education services prior to their admittance into Bridges, therefore, it is standard procedure for students to receive psychological and educational evaluations upon admittance. Then, base school staff and Bridges staff collaborate to develop Individualized Education Program (IEP) for each student identified as in need of special education services.

Each semester, school staff are asked to make referrals of appropriate over-age students to the Booster program. The referral form requires student data including EOG reading and mathematics achievement levels and scale scores, report cards, special program participation, demographic information, and evidence of high motivation and a commitment to academics as indicated by good attendance and very few behavioral issues. A committee of WCPSS central office administrators, Mount Vernon administrators, and Booster guidance counselors select the top candidates districtwide for admission each fall and spring.

Table 6
Alternative School/Program Referral and Admission Processes

	Mount Vernon Middle	River Oaks Middle	Mary Phillips High	Longview School	Bridges Program	Booster Program
Referral Application	SST intervention process implemented from base school prior to submitting referral application.		Base school application.	Admission is through the IEP process at the base school.	Parents, school or agency personnel can provide a referral form.	Base school application.
Intake Period	Intake hearings for admittance are scheduled every two weeks between mid-September and the end of the third quarter in early March.		Applications are reviewed twice a year.	Referrals are accepted throughout the year.	Student intakes occur every two weeks.	Once per semester.
Intake Meeting	Student/Parent Orientation			IEP Intake Meeting		One Hour Student/Parent Orientation

What alternative program/school services are available to students?

As previously mentioned, alternative schools are best known for their small classes, low teacher/student ratio, and the individual attention they offer students. These characteristics are found within the district's alternative schools and programs as well as other support and behavior services designed to promote student success. Provisions such as transportation and school uniforms and grading scales and course of study offerings are also of interest.

Support and Behavior Services

Each of the alternative educational options provides students with support and behavioral services. In-depth school counseling, psychological, and social work services are available, and typically, the schools use some type of point system to manage and monitor behavior. These supports differ from those offered by the Booster program, which serves a unique group of students. Booster students receive enrichment and remediation support, high school transitioning and planning assistance, career guidance, and service learning experiences designed to enhance self-esteem and build confidence.

Mount Vernon uses a daily point system to reward positive behavior and academic performance. The point sheet helps to link positive behavior and improved academic performance. Students have the opportunity to earn 100 points per day and those who earn at least 94 points can participate in reward activities. Each student also creates a personal goal that is recorded on the point sheet. Teachers and administrators use the point sheet to look at patterns of behavior and determine when a student needs extra resources. Mount Vernon, which supports the Booster program, has created a spin-off program for over-aged 6th-and 7th-grade students called LEAP in which staff make recommendations for students to leap to the next grade. Entry into LEAP is based on a student's academic performance in the 1st or 2nd quarter as well as their maturity level.

River Oaks has two gender-based mentoring programs: one composed of male teachers and male students and another weekly session for female students led by the female social worker; two lunch-time mentoring groups: *Catch-up* for students in need of academic remediation and *Mustard* for students needing extra social/behavioral support; as well as individual mentoring/buddy systems. The last period of each day is structured to provide curriculum remediation and enrichment within a more interactive environment.

Mary Phillips offers two unique resources to support students' academic successes, an evening program and a childcare center. The evening program is designed to educate approximately 30 students who need flexible scheduling and/or an opportunity to earn additional credits. Enrolled students often work during the day to provide financial support to their families. The evening program consists of a 5th and 6th period, beginning after school and ending at 6:10, with five class options (English, mathematics, science, career and technical education (CTE), and Nova Net) taught by staff members who also teach classes during the day program. Students who do well in the evening program may submit applications to attend Mary Phillips full-time.

The childcare center at Mary Phillips has a director who is the on-site administrator of the program and is the teacher and/or coordinator of student caregivers who are enrolled in Early Childhood Education classes. The center serves a dual purpose. Its primary purpose is to develop the skills and learning experiences of Early Childhood Education students working as student caregivers in order to prepare them for employment in childcare services. Secondly, it helps reduce the number of teen parent dropouts by providing on-site day care which allows them to stay in school as well as developing positive parenting skills. The center is designed to accommodate up to 10 children ages 6 weeks to 24 months old. The program prioritizes serving the children of students enrolled at Mary Phillips and typically has a long waiting list. According to the principal, many students have told him that the daycare has allowed them to stay in school or finish school. Students can visit their children during lunch; otherwise, they are expected to attend classes and focus on school.

Longview offers a structured behavior management system which includes a feedback point sheet and a crisis room to promote acceptable student behavior. Students earn points for appropriate behavior, which are recorded on a feedback point sheet. Accumulated points lead to rewards such as casual-dress Fridays and opportunities to buy snacks, listen to music, or participate in an activity.

At Bridges, all significant positive and negative behaviors and incidents involving physical restraints must be recorded on the point sheet. A total of 90 points may be earned for a given day, which begins on the cab ride to school and ends after the cab ride home. A rubric is applied to assess and reward student behavior. Time-in is a separate space within or near the classroom that is used if a student continues to violate the rules and does not earn points. Time-out is a specially designed room for students who have failed to earn points, refuse to take a time-in, or have committed a serious offense.

Each of the alternative schools has or is beginning to implement the Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) initiative to promote positive student behavior throughout the school. Administrators believe that PBIS has helped to proactively handle problem behavior that occurs within their schools. In the past, Longview focused on punishing poor behavior rather

than rewarding positive behavior. According to the principal, “This (PBIS) works a whole lot better for us.” Mary Phillips is currently in their first planning year of PBIS implementation. However, the principal stated that schoolwide expectations, practices, and procedures have been part of the school’s culture for many years.

Student Transportation

Students attending Bridges, Mount Vernon and River Oaks are transported by cabs. Each cab serves approximately six to seven students. Although it is rare, students riding cabs may have an hour to an hour and a half long commute to and from school. Attendance for these students is often poor. Students attending the Mary Phillips day program ride WCPSS buses, except for student parents with infants in the childcare program who are transported by cabs to accommodate child seats. Longview utilizes 23 cabs and two buses to transport students.

Dress Code

Each alternative school has a dress code and requires a standard uniform of a white shirt and khaki pants or skirts. This policy has been implemented to reduce external distractions, gang paraphernalia, peer competition, and bullying as well as to increase the visibility of enrolled students. In fact, the enforcement of student uniforms has alerted Mary Phillips staff to the presence of trespassers on campus. Students who exhibit excellent academic and personal behavior may be rewarded with no uniforms on casual Fridays.

Grading Scale

The traditional A, B, C, D, F grading scale adopted by the Wake County Board of Education is used by almost all of the alternative schools. The exception is found among Longview’s high school students who are assessed via standards-based grading and must earn at least an 80% to pass a course. This grading practice was implemented at Longview to ensure that students would be successful if they transitioned back to a base high school setting.

Course of Study or Graduation Requirements

Each of the alternative schools follow the standard course of study. Mount Vernon and River Oaks also emphasize basic academic skills and character development. Mary Phillips offers some electives such as visual arts, health, career planning and management, and Spanish. Limited elective courses are offered at Longview. The Bridges program utilizes the standard course of study and the school day is structured around the core academic subjects. Reading and mathematics are the primary focus. The Booster program is structured around three 90-minute academic blocks: Algebra I, English I, and a combination of science and social studies, and has a service learning component.

At Mary Phillips, graduation is the ultimate goal, whether it is early, on-time, or late. Similar to base schools, students can expect to receive an education that prepares them for a post-secondary education or entry into the labor force. Students may choose from three of the four courses of study and at present must successfully complete 21 required course credits to graduate, whereas

most base schools require 26 credits. Students must also meet established graduation exit standards.

Longview has a high dropout rate and does not expect that *all* students will graduate on-time or at all. All diploma pathways are offered. To graduate, students must complete 20 credits and established graduation exit standards. Students typically complete the Occupational Course of Study. Students may enter the labor force or attend institutions of higher education after graduation, including Wake Technical Community College; although, not all graduates continue on a successful path.

Educational resources are available to help students at Mary Phillips and Longview gain the credits they need to graduate. NovaNet classes are available at each school. This resource is beneficial for students who need to recover credits or need a course that is not offered at the school. In rare cases, Mary Phillips students may be given a 5th period in the evening program to gain additional credits. Longview students may also attend Mary Phillips or another high school to take specific courses that are not offered at Longview. A limited number of students at either alternative high school enroll in Virtual Public School courses.

Table 7
Alternative School/Program Services

	Mount Vernon Middle	River Oaks Middle	Mary Phillips High	Longview School	Bridges Program	Booster Program
Support Services	School counseling, psychological, and social work services are available to all students and parents. *Mount Vernon: LEAP program *River Oaks: Gender-based mentoring programs. *Mary Phillips: Evening program and on-site daycare for student parents				School counseling, psychological, and social work services Academic, behavioral, & emotional assessments Working with families to help obtain outside services	Study hall for enrichment and remediation High school transitioning and planning assistance Career guidance services
Behavior Services	A contingency management system: Feedback/reward based on point system		Strong social intervention programs	Structured behavior management system: point sheet and crisis room	Structured behavior program: Point sheet and Time-in or Time-out	Daily point sheet: points lost for incomplete work
PBIS School	X	X	X	X	na	na
Transportation	Cabs			Buses/Cabs	Cabs	
School Uniform	X	X	X	X	X	X
Standard WCPSS Grading Scale	X	X	X	Standards-based grading (80% to pass a course)	X	X
Course of Study and Graduation Requirements	Standard course of study Emphasis on basic academic skills and character development.		Standard course of study 21 credits and exit standards.	Standard course of study with limited electives 20 credits and exit standards.	Standard course of study Reading and mathematics are the primary focus	Algebra I English I Science/Social Studies Service learning

Note: X = Yes, the school has that program or service.

What are the expectations and goals for students?

The expectations and goals of students in the alternative educational settings typically relate to improved behavior and academics. The ultimate goals for students at Mount Vernon, River Oaks, and Longview are reintegration and success in base school settings, followed by graduation, although not necessarily on-time. Mary Phillips students are expected to graduate from Mary Phillips. Although the main objective for Bridges students is to be successful both academically and behaviorally, whether they achieve reintegration or remain at Bridges, the desired outcome is to transition to a small, self-contained class within a base school setting. Booster students are expected to transition to their base high school after completing the one-

semester program and to graduate with their appropriate age-level cohort. Student may attend Mary Phillips for one transition semester.

Initially, each student at Mount Vernon and River Oaks is expected to build a positive, mentor relationship with at least one staff member at the school. Students are also expected to demonstrate appropriate behavior, as indicated on their daily point sheet, and to create and meet individually established personal goals. The River Oaks principal stated that they focus on raising students' academic achievement first and then correcting and managing behavior. Most students see improvements in their academics, which the principal attributes to multiple opportunities and incentives to complete work. According to the principal...

“A student really has to work hard to fail at River Oaks. ...students will not be withdrawn from River Oaks. Once they are admitted, they are ours.”

During mandatory orientations for arriving students and parents, the principal at Mary Phillips reviews student expectations and goals. A short-term goal for students is that they will accept and follow all schoolwide protocol. Aggressive behavior is not tolerated and students will receive a long-term suspension for their first fight. Students are expected to attend school. Those who are absent for 20 days or more and are failing half of their classes will be withdrawn from the school. The principal also expects students to take personal responsibility for their actions and their behavioral and academic progress. The principal expressed high expectations for students as described in the following statement.

“My expectation for you, because you were selected to come here, is that you will do your very best. I want your best and I will expect nothing less than your best whether it is behavior or academics, because I said no to someone else who wanted to be here.”

Another goal at Mary Phillips is the establishment of positive relationships between adults and students, because these relationships are key to raising students' academic achievement.

According to the principal at Longview, the initial expectation of students is that they will behave in a manner that is deemed appropriate for that alternative environment which includes not being disruptive during classroom instruction and showing respect for teachers and peers. After classroom behavior is manageable, students can work on appropriately expressing and managing their anger and frustration. As such, the intermediate goals are to help students manage their behavior, think about their responses to situations before they act, and shift their attitudes about school. To achieve these goals it is very important that students gain skills in anger management and conflict resolution to ensure a more positive school experience. Point sheets are used to record appropriate and inappropriate behavior. Although the needs of each student will vary, staff work to improve students behavior and academic skills simultaneously.

The Bridges program works to reduce behavioral issues by placing a strong emphasis on academics and time-on-task with the idea that when students are focused and engaged in their work, they are less likely to misbehave. To assist with behavior management, upon admission to the program each student must set a behavior goal. Bridges staff and students also use a daily point sheet to monitor and evaluate behavior in terms of meeting daily expectations and personal

goals. Students earn points every 15 minutes for 1) speaking respectfully to staff and students, 2) following directions, and 3) staying on-task. The intermediate goal for Bridges participants is to continue to work on their behavior while simultaneously improving their academic outcomes.

The goal for Booster students participating in the fall 8th-grade cohort is to be promoted to 9th grade at the end of the semester which will allow them to transfer to their base high school for the spring semester. It is expected that these students will be promoted to 10th grade upon completion of the spring semester; however, this is contingent on receiving a passing grade in English I. Students and base school staff are expected to work together to complete a high school plan that should enable this cohort to graduate from high school in 3 1/2 years.

During the spring semester, over-age 7th-grade students enter the Booster program. These students are fast-tracked through the 8th-grade curriculum in preparation to start 9th grade at their base high school the following fall semester. These students are expected to graduate in 4 years.

Table 8
Student Expectations and Goals

	Mount Vernon Middle	River Oaks Middle	Mary Phillips High	Longview School	Bridges Program	Booster Program
Short-term or intermediate goals	Reduce behavioral issues and improve academics. Build positive relationships. *Mary Phillips: Attend school per school attendance policy.			Reduce behavioral issues and improve academics.		Successful completion of the semester and promotion to 9 th grade.
Ultimate goals	Transition to base middle or high school. Graduation		Graduation from Mary Phillips	Transition to base high school. Graduation	Transition to a small, self-contained class within a base school setting.	Transition to base high school. Graduation

What is the length of service/enrollment and exit process?

The duration of enrollment and service at the alternative settings within the district vary. Mount Vernon and River Oaks tend to provide more short-term service (approximately six months to one academic year) whereas Mary Phillips functions to meet students' long-term educational needs (through graduation). The length of service at Longview and Bridges is based on individual need and degree of improvement. Some students remain for one semester, one year, or several years. Although no formal procedure is in place, Mount Vernon, River Oaks, Longview, and Bridges assess students' readiness for reintegration. Student academic and behavioral progress are typically reviewed prior to any transition. The structure of the Booster program is completely different from the other alternative environments. Booster students participate in the program for one semester and should be ready to take Algebra and English upon entry to high school.

The current expectation of Mount Vernon and River Oaks students is that after admittance, they will stay for the remainder of that school year and then transition to their base school for the following school year. The middle schools use a similar procedure for assessing students' readiness to transition to a base school. Student progress is assessed by examining academic and behavioral data analyses and requesting teacher recommendations. A transition is generally initiated when there is evidence that students have been responsive to interventions and have demonstrated academic and behavioral progress. If needed, these students may return to Mount Vernon or River Oaks during the 2nd or 3rd quarters of the following school year. Mount Vernon reserves one week in the summer to take referrals and hold transition meetings for students who will be returning. The school averages a 15% recidivism rate. Some students at Mount Vernon or River Oaks may not respond to the intervention services. These are typically students who need more intensive community interventions such as a wilderness camp or other social services. Less than 10% of served students fall into this category. These students are typically not allowed to return to the alternative school the following year.

Unlike the alternative middle schools, Mary Phillips is not a one-year program. Once students are accepted, it is the expectation that they will continue their enrollment until they graduate or reach age 21. According to the principal, 99% of the students usually do not want to return to their base. That being said, if students are ready to transition to their base school and desire to return, staff will initiate the transition process. The students who may request to return to their base school are generally students who are placed at Mary Phillips by the Wake County Board of Education in lieu of a long-term suspension.

The continuum of need and service at Longview and Bridges is very diverse, ranging from severely disabled students who will never transition back to a base school setting, to students who are intermittently served. In general, the student population at both schools is highly transient. Students may move in and out of the school due to changes in family circumstances. Many Longview students are admitted to Dorothea Dix Hospital or other institutions for periods of time throughout the school year or are absent due to engagement in criminal activities. Ultimately, Longview serves students as long as they want to stay, in some cases until graduation. Bridges students are continually served until they transition to a less restrictive environment or to Longview.

Longview staff conduct transition assessments twice a year for high school students to facilitate fall or spring semester reintegration. Middle school students may transition back to their base school throughout the year, so reviews are conducted on an as needed basis. Longview has a process to assess each student's level of readiness to return to a base school setting. Each student's behavioral progress is reviewed using multiple data sources. Students must consistently receive points for appropriate behavior, as recorded on the feedback point sheet, and have very few crisis referrals. Serving a short-term suspension does not necessarily diminish a student's chances for transition, unless it was for physical aggression. Additionally, two teachers must write a letter of reference providing examples and evidence of the student's behavioral and academic progress at Longview.

As previously mentioned, the length of service at Bridges is based on individual need and degree of improvement. On a weekly basis, Bridges staff assesses each student's academic and behavior progress. This frequent monitoring is important in identifying students' needs as well as informing staff of students' areas of success, which may result in a transition to a base school. In addition to improved academic achievement, students must also make significant behavior progress as demonstrated by the points and levels system to be considered for transition. Typically, a large proportion of all 5th-grade students served transition to Longview for middle school. However, Bridges is serving more children who are able to move into base middle school settings with the support of a behavior support teacher.

What transition services are offered?

Transitioning from the small, sheltered alternative school environment to the larger, more complex base school structure can be a challenge for some students. Every effort is made to provide the resources that will enable students to gain the skills that will ensure a successful transition. Reintegration into a base school environment is especially important for students preparing for high school matriculation. Mount Vernon, River Oaks, Longview, and Bridges each offer some level of service to assist students in the transition process. Since Mary Phillips expects to retain students through graduation, the school offers limited transition services. Booster program students are assisted during and after their transition to base high schools.

Although a smooth transition to a base school is important for student success, there is no systematic transition process or designated transition counselor at either Mount Vernon or River Oaks. Nevertheless, a school counselor, social worker, principal or teacher may check on each student at their base school periodically during the first semester. Staff members also ask the base schools to contact them if a problem arises that might warrant re-admission.

Longview employs two transition counselors who provide transition services to students. They accompany students on school tours and meetings with the principal and Behavior Support Teacher and develop re-entry plans. Transition counselors also stay in touch with the student's teachers, administrators, and parents to offer support. Transition counselors may provide service for up to a year. Students can return to Longview at any time and for any length of service: perhaps a day to offer a respite or longer if they are unsuccessful. According the principal, after one year "they will either sink or swim" meaning that they will either return to Longview or they will be successful at their base schools. In the past, Longview students making a transition would attend one or two periods at their base school to ease the process. Due to transportation

costs, students currently return to their base full-time; however, they are documented as visiting students at the base school. If there is evidence that the student has done well at the base school after one semester, staff will submit the IEP paperwork to remove the student from a public separate designation and assign her/him to the base school.

Services are provided to students if they transition from Bridges to their base school. There are two program liaisons who prepare students by accompanying them on school visits. These staff also support the receiving teacher by attending meetings held with the students and parents, by making strategy recommendations, and by providing crisis support and consultation services. The main priority of the program liaisons is to offer support. Students can return to Bridges if necessary.

In an effort to provide extra support and to help transition these students to high school, the first Booster cohort (Fall Cohort 2007) was admitted to Mary Phillips to complete the spring semester. Some of these students chose to remain at Mary Phillips to complete their education. Students in each successive cohort have been given the option of attending Mary Phillips for one transition semester prior to returning to their base school. The Booster cohorts who have transitioned into high school receive brief bimonthly or monthly visits from the guidance counselor to help them navigate the system, monitor their progress, and offer encouragement. These visits occur until the student graduates.

**Table 9
Transition Processes**

	Mount Vernon Middle	River Oaks Middle	Mary Phillips High	Longview School	Bridges Program	Booster Program
Length of Service	Generally 6 months to 1 year. Students who were successful may return during the 2 nd or 3 rd quarters of the following school year.		Until graduation	As long as needed Students can return at any time and for any length of service: perhaps a day to offer a respite or longer.		1 semester
Transition Timing	Students exit at the end of the year to return to their base school or high school.		Students exit upon graduation or request a transition.	Middle school students: throughout the year High school students: twice a year (prior to fall & spring semesters)	Students exit as necessary or transition to base schools as deemed appropriate.	Students transition to Mary Phillips or base high school.
Transition Assessments	Academic and behavioral data Teacher recommendations		Academic and behavioral data	Academic and behavioral data Determine if supports or IEP are needed.	Academic and behavioral data Progress in the points and levels system (no time-outs and/or physical restraints).	Ready for Algebra and English courses
Transition Services	A school counselor, social worker, principal or teacher will check on each student at their base school.		Assist with record transfer Recommend interventions	Develop student transition plans Accompany on school visits Attend meetings held with the students and parents Recommend interventions Provide crisis support and consultation services		Bimonthly or monthly visits Encouragement
Length of Support	Periodic monitoring over the first semester		Initial contact with school	Transition counselors may provide service for up to one year		Until the student graduates

How might information about the alternative school/program be more transparent?

When asked to comment on the transparency of their school/program, alternative school personnel offered an array of opinions. According to the principal at Mount Vernon, staff continually educate their sending schools on the typical characteristics of the students that they accept. The principal of River Oaks would like to improve communication about the school and get the message out that their program “is a great resource for retained students, especially for those students repeating the 6th grade.”

According to the principal at Mary Phillips, the school’s reputation for success has spread by word of mouth. Students and parents have approached their base school counselors to initiate the referral process because they have heard such good things about Phillips through their neighbors, friends, and relatives. The principal believes that the addition of another alternative high school serving similar students would defray some of the burden put on Mary Phillips to meet the needs of secondary students districtwide.

Longview’s principal is less confident that current WCPSS school administrators are as knowledgeable of the program as former administrators. The principal believes that special education administrators assigned to district areas should offer more assistance to students and staff at base schools prior to submitting referrals to Longview. Moreover, the principal believes that special education administrators are responsible for communicating information about Longview as an alternative educational environment for special groups of students. As the number of employed transition counselors at the school has been reduced from seven to two, staff have less available time to work proactively with base schools to establish interventions for students prior to referral, further reducing communication about the school. The degree to which base school personnel know about the Bridges program is more difficult to estimate. According to the coordinator, some schools send in more students than others, in fact, “some schools never make referrals, but we receive more than enough referrals, so folks seem to know about us.”

According to the Booster program counselor at Mount Vernon, the district is currently more aware of the program compared to 2007-08 when it was first implemented. The counselor estimates that between 60-70% of the middle schools in the district know about and understand the purpose of the Booster program. However, greater district awareness about the target population and application process is needed. About one fourth of the applicants received are simply over-age and do not have documentation of an academic history indicating that they would be successful in such a rigorous program.

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL/PROGRAM TRANSPARENCY: BASE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR AND STAFF SURVEY

Clearly, understandable information regarding the district's alternative education options is important to most effectively serve eligible students. Yet, alternative school administrators had different perceptions about people's awareness of their schools. In an effort to move beyond speculation, the next section of this study empirically examines the transparency of WCPSS alternative education schools and programs based on base school personnel's perceptions and reported awareness of the available options. Within this study transparency relates to the visibility and accessibility of alternative school information and the extent to which the information is clearly communicated and readily understood by school personnel.

To assess the transparency of the alternative education options within the district, five on-line surveys were distributed in February 2010 to administrative and school staff members, including principals and assistant principals (administrators) and special education chairs, school counselors and school social workers³ (staff) at base schools. Zoomerang, a software tool for on-line surveys, was used to create and disseminate the surveys. Surveys focused on the Bridges program (elementary level); Mount Vernon, River Oaks, and Longview grades 6-8 (middle school level); and Longview grades 9-12 and Mary Phillips (high school level).

A base survey was reviewed and piloted with five individuals representing the various key participant groups. This base survey was ultimately used to create the five surveys (see Appendix C for a sample survey). Fewer than 20 questions in each survey were asked of respondents. Respondents were randomly selected to participate in one survey only (see Appendix D for an explanation of sampling and survey procedures). Response rates per survey ranged from 53-63% (see Table 10), which are comparable to other surveys conducted by E&R.

One limitation of the surveys is that respondents were not asked about their knowledge level of the alternative school or program because that is what the survey intended to assess. Because respondents were not given an opportunity to skip certain questions or to select answers such as "I don't know," E&R staff received many emails from administrators and staff who explained that they could not participate due to their lack of knowledge about the issues raised within the survey. These potential respondents were encouraged to participate and to highlight their limited knowledge of the specific alternative school or program in their answers to the open-ended questions. It is unknown whether other administrators and staff did not participate in the surveys because they felt their knowledge level was inadequate. Another issue that arose was that some base school personnel completed the survey via a general survey link such that their base school was unidentifiable. Therefore, the data were not collected in a manner that allowed the researchers to sufficiently analyze the distribution of responses by school. Nevertheless, as shown in Table 10, an analysis of responses from which the base school was identified revealed that a sufficient number of schools are represented to glean important information from the findings.

³ Social workers are predominantly employed at middle schools; and therefore, were surveyed at the middle school level only.

Table 10
Base School Alternative Survey Response Rates

School	Sample Size	Total Completed Surveys	Administrator Respondents	Staff Member Respondents	Response Rate	Represented Schools
Bridges	219	130	70	60	59%	78 of 102
Mount Vernon	84	53	16	37	63%	13 of 16
River Oaks	79	47	16	31	60%	12 of 14
Longview (6-8)	73	41	14	27	56%	19 of 30
Longview (9-12)	119	71	32	39	60%	22 of 23
Mary Phillips	121	64	31	33	53%	23 of 23

Base School Personnel Survey Results

Alternative School/Program Purpose

The first survey question was intended to capture respondents' perception of the purpose or focus of the district's alternative educational options. Findings show that base school personnel who may send high school students to Longview or Mary Phillips and middle school students to River Oaks are less clear on the central focus of the schools compared to the results for Bridges and Mount Vernon.

- Nearly all of the administrators and staff who completed the Bridges survey reported academic remediation as a central focus. Counseling or social service and discipline/behavior were also viewed by most respondents as always or almost always occurring. Although short-term interventions were ranked lower, the majority of respondents still viewed this service as consistent with the Bridges program.
- Slightly more than three fourths of respondents to the Mount Vernon survey believe that the school always or almost always focuses on academic remediation, counseling or social service, and discipline or behavior. Respondents were less likely to view short-term interventions as a main focus of Mount Vernon.
- Counseling or social services, academic remediation, and discipline/behavior were perceived by about two thirds of River Oaks survey respondents as nearly always occurring. Respondents perceived that River Oaks focuses less on providing short-term interventions.
- Nearly all middle school respondents believe that the primary focus of the school is on discipline or behavior compared to two thirds of high school level respondents. Slightly more than half of each group of respondents reported short-term interventions as occurring always or almost always.

- Slightly over half of the respondents to the Mary Phillips survey perceive that academic remediation and counseling are always or almost always provided to students and almost half believe that Phillips often focuses on discipline/behavior. Short-term interventions were viewed by the majority of respondents as occurring often or occasionally/not at all.

Table 11
Perception of Alternative School or Programs Scope of Focus

Extent to which the school or program focuses on or provides the following:	Always/ Almost Always	Often	Occasionally/ Not at All
Academic remediation			
Bridges (n=126)	92%	6%	2%
Mount Vernon (n=49)	86%	12%	2%
River Oaks (n=43)	60%	33%	7%
Longview grades 6-8 (n=37)	81%	11%	8%
Longview grades 9-12 (n=63)	56%	35%	9%
Mary Phillips (n=58)	55%	41%	4%
Counseling or social services			
Bridges (n=125)	88%	11%	1%
Mount Vernon (n=49)	80%	14%	6%
River Oaks (n=43)	63%	30%	7%
Longview grades 6-8 (n=37)	79%	16%	5%
Longview grades 9-12 (n=64)	60%	29%	11%
Mary Phillips (n=58)	55%	38%	7%
Discipline/behavior			
Bridges (n=125)	83%	14%	3%
Mount Vernon (n=48)	79%	10.5%	10.5%
River Oaks (n=43)	58%	35%	7%
Longview grades 6-8 (n=37)	92%	5%	3%
Longview grades 9-12 (n=63)	64%	27%	9%
Mary Phillips (n=59)	36%	47%	17%
Short-term interventions (court-ordered, disciplinary)			
Bridges (n=123)	59%	20%	21%
Mount Vernon (n=48)	52%	27%	21%
River Oaks (n=41)	39%	27%	34%
Longview grades 6-8 (n=35)	57%	26%	17%
Longview grades 9-12 (n=63)	55%	24%	21%
Mary Phillips (n=59)	27%	37%	36%

Note: Missing data are not included in percentages.

Student Referrals

Several questions were asked solely of those respondents who stated that they had referred students to the corresponding alternative program or school over the past three years. Table 12 shows the percentage of respondents who indicated making one or more referrals during this time period. Respondents were asked to estimate how many of the referred students over the past three years were being considered to receive a long-term suspension (LTS students), were identified to receive special education services (SWD students), and/or were accepted into the alternative education program. Table 12 presents the proportion of survey respondents making student referrals and Table 13 enumerates the number and type of student referrals by school. A summary of estimated acceptance rates is shown in Table 14.

The River Oaks survey had the highest percentage of respondents indicating that they had made a referral to the school over the past three years. Base school personnel were least likely to report making student referrals to Longview whereas Mary Phillips respondents reported the largest number of total student referrals. According to Mount Vernon, River Oaks, and Mary Phillips survey respondents, between 15-30% of their referrals over the past three years have been SWD students. Ideally between 10-15% of the student population at each of these schools should be comprised of SWD students, which is proportionate to the makeup of base WCPSS schools. For the 2009-10 school year 13% of the student referrals to Mount Vernon were SWD students compared to 22% at River Oaks and 26% at Mary Phillips. Conversely, Bridges and Longview survey respondents had considerably higher estimates of SWD student referrals, as is expected. Current data show that 73% of the referrals to Bridges were students who had been identified as in need of special education services by their base schools. Additionally, all students referred to Longview during the 2009-10 school year were SWD students.

- Sixty percent of respondents to the Bridges survey reported making student referrals over the past three years. Estimates were similar for both administrators and staff members. Most of the referrals were reported to have been for SWD students.
- Among Mount Vernon respondents who made referrals (77%), the number of referrals made by administrators over the three-year period ranged from 2-15 compared to a range of 1 to 30 referrals by staff members. A small percentage of these referrals were estimated to have been for LTS students or SWD students. The range in the number of referrals accepted was wider among staff.
- Most respondents (85%) indicated that they had made student referrals to River Oaks over the past three years. Administrators referred on average six students, whereas staff members averaged four referrals over the three-year period. A small percentage of referrals for LTS students was reported, particularly by administrators who rarely referred such students. Administrators were slightly more likely to refer SWD students. They averaged two referrals compared to one referral by staff. About one third of the total referrals were for this student subgroup.

- Less than half of the respondents to the Longview survey made a referral to the school yet a total of 133 referrals were estimated. About two thirds of the referrals were for LTS students and nearly all were SWD students.
- Approximately two thirds of survey respondents reported making referrals to Mary Phillips. The number of referrals made by administrators over the three-year period ranged from 1 to 20 compared to a range of 1 to 25 referrals by staff members. These referrals were not typically for LTS students or SWD students.

Table 12
Respondents Reporting Student Referrals

	Total Completed Surveys	Total Respondents Reporting Referrals	
	#	#	%
Bridges	130	78	60%
Mount Vernon	53	41	77%
River Oaks	47	40	85%
Longview	112	48	43%
Mary Phillips	64	42	66%

Data Interpretation: Out of the 130 surveys that were completed for Bridges, 78 (60%) respondents indicated that they had referred one or more students to Bridges during the past three years.

Table 13
Student Referrals Made Over Past Three Years

		Bridges		Mount Vernon		River Oaks		Longview		Phillips	
		Admin n=43	Staff n=35	Admin n=12	Staff n=29	Admin n=16	Staff n=24	Admin n=30	Staff n=18	Admin n=30	Staff n=18
Total Referrals	Average	3	2	6	5	6	4	3	3	5	7
	Range	1-5	1-5	2-15	1-30	1-10	1-11	1-6	1-6	1-20	1-25
	Total	188		220		193		133		262	
LTS Referrals	Average	na	na	1	1	0	1	2	1	1	1
	Range	na	na	0-3	0-4	0-2	0-7	0-5	0-3	0-3	0-2
	Total	na		28		22		84		23	
SWD Referrals	Average	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	2	2
	Range	0-5	0-5	0-3	0-4	0-5	0-5	0-5	1-6	0-6	0-6
	Total	154		39		59		120		80	

Note: LTS = student considered for long-term suspension.

Data Interpretation: Of the 78 respondents to the Bridges survey who indicated that they had referred one or more students to Bridges, on average, the administrators referred 3 students during the past three years. Staff members referred 2 students on average over the past three years. Each group referred at least 1 student and no more than 5 students during that time period. In total, the 78 respondents made 188 student referrals to Bridges over the past three years and 154 of those referrals were for SWD students.

Between 8% and 24% of survey respondents who had made a referral to one of the five alternative settings estimated that none of their referred students had been accepted. The lowest acceptance rates were reported for Mary Phillips followed by Longview (see Table 14). A 100% acceptance rate was figured for slightly less than half of Bridges and River Oaks respondents. These schools in general were estimated to have accepted the greatest proportion of student referrals over the past three years.

Table 14
Referral Acceptance Rate Summary

Range of % Accepted	Bridges N=78	Mount Vernon N=41	River Oaks N=40	Longview N=48	Phillips N=42
0	18%	12%	8%	23%	24%
10-29.9	1%	5%	0%	8%	2%
30-49.9	8%	7%	15%	6%	19%
50-69.9	19%	27%	20%	21%	31%
70-99.9	6%	15%	15%	4%	10%
100	48%	34%	42%	38%	14%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note: Includes administrators and staff who made referrals over the past 3 years.

Respondents were given a list of possible reasons that they might refer students to the alternative school settings and were asked to select their top four reasons. As shown in Table 15, in general, administrators and staff members selected similar top reasons for referring students to alternative settings. Referring students who exhibit defiant and noncompliant behavior is a common trend. Mount Vernon and River Oaks respondents selected similar reasons for referral. Base schools said they would typically refer noncompliant students who may also have motivation and performance challenges. Bridges and Longview survey respondents tended to refer noncompliant students exhibiting severely disruptive or dangerous behavior. Unlike data from the other surveys, attendance issues and pregnancy were likely reasons for a referral to Mary Phillips.

- Administrative and staff members responding to the Bridges survey were in strong agreement on the type of student referral to this alternative program: those who exhibit severely disruptive behavior, are chronically defiant, or are experiencing a state of crisis.
- Chronic defiance, poor academic performance, and low motivation were the top reasons for referral to Mount Vernon and River Oaks, although administrators and staff differ in their ranking of these reasons.
- Among Longview middle and high school level respondents, chronic defiance and severely disruptive behavior were the most common reasons for referral among administrators and staff, although in reverse order.
- Lack of motivation was the top reason selected by administrators for making a referral to Mary Phillips, followed by poor academic performance and truancy/poor attendance. Staff selected the same top three reasons for referral, but in a different order.

Table 15
Selected Reasons for Referral

	Administrators (N = 70)		Staff (N = 60)	
Bridges	<i>Severely disruptive/dangerous behavior</i>	97%	<i>Severely disruptive/dangerous behavior</i>	93%
	<i>Chronic defiance/noncompliance</i>	79%	<i>Chronic defiance/noncompliance</i>	78%
	<i>Significant state of crisis</i>	71%	<i>Significant state of crisis</i>	75%
	Property destruction	40%	Property destruction	42%
	Poor academic performance	14%	Lack of motivation	20%
	Lack of motivation	11%	Poor academic performance	17%
	Truancy/poor attendance	1%	Truancy/poor attendance	2%
	Pregnancy	0%	Pregnancy	0%
Mount Vernon	Administrators (N = 16)		Staff (N = 37)	
	<i>Chronic defiance/noncompliance</i>	88%	<i>Lack of motivation</i>	87%
	<i>Poor academic performance</i>	81%	<i>Poor academic performance</i>	78%
	<i>Lack of motivation</i>	69%	<i>Chronic defiance/noncompliance</i>	60%
	Severely disruptive/dangerous behavior	50%	Severely disruptive/dangerous behavior	27%
	Truancy/poor attendance	44%	Truancy/poor attendance	24%
	Significant state of crisis	6%	Significant state of crisis	22%
	Pregnancy	6%	Property destruction	16%
Property destruction	0%	Pregnancy	5%	
River Oaks	Administrators (N = 16)		Staff (N = 31)	
	<i>Chronic defiance/noncompliance</i>	100%	<i>Chronic defiance/noncompliance</i>	84%
	<i>Poor academic performance</i>	81%	<i>Lack of motivation</i>	74%
	<i>Lack of motivation</i>	81%	<i>Poor academic performance</i>	65%
	Truancy/poor attendance	50%	Severely disruptive/dangerous behavior	36%
	Severely disruptive/dangerous behavior	38%	Significant state of crisis	19%
	Significant state of crisis	19%	Truancy/poor attendance	16%
	Property destruction	6%	Property destruction	7%
Pregnancy	0%	Pregnancy	0%	
Longview	Administrators (N = 46)		Staff (N = 66)	
	<i>Chronic defiance/noncompliance</i>	93%	<i>Severely disruptive/dangerous behavior</i>	88%
	<i>Severely disruptive/dangerous behavior</i>	89%	<i>Chronic defiance/noncompliance</i>	77%
	Significant state of crisis	52%	Poor academic performance	32%
	Lack of motivation	30%	Lack of motivation	29%
	Poor academic performance	28%	Significant state of crisis	27%
	Truancy/poor attendance	26%	Truancy/poor attendance	21%
	Property destruction	24%	Property destruction	21%
Pregnancy	2%	Pregnancy	3%	
Phillips	Administrators (N = 31)		Staff (N = 33)	
	<i>Lack of motivation</i>	71%	<i>Truancy/poor attendance</i>	79%
	<i>Poor academic performance</i>	68%	<i>Poor academic performance</i>	70%
	<i>Truancy/poor attendance</i>	65%	<i>Lack of motivation</i>	70%
	Pregnancy	52%	<i>Pregnancy</i>	61%
	Chronic defiance/ noncompliance	45%	Chronic defiance/ noncompliance	27%
	Significant state of crisis	35%	Significant state of crisis	21%
	Severely disruptive/dangerous behavior	35%	Severely disruptive/dangerous behavior	6%
Property destruction	0%	Property destruction	3%	

Note: Italicized cells are most commonly selected reasons; bold cells are least frequently identified.

Students in Need of Service

Survey respondents were asked to consider their current students and estimate the number they thought would benefit from placement at the corresponding alternative school or program. With the exception of Longview, staff members had a higher average number of students that they believe would benefit from such an environment than did administrators. It was typical for respondents to report an estimate of 0 to 25 students; however, one Mount Vernon respondent, one River Oaks respondent, and one Mary Phillips respondent estimated that 100 students would benefit from alternative education placement. Overall, the number of students that base school personnel believe would benefit from placement in an alternative environment greatly exceeds the current capacity of each alternative site.

Table 16
Number of Current Students Who Might Benefit from Alternative Education

		Average	Range	Total	Current Capacity
Bridges	Administrators (n=66)	1	0-6	179	60
	Staff (n=53)	2	0-10		
Mount Vernon	Administrators (n=16)	7	1-15	397	90
	Staff (n=33)	9	0-100		
River Oaks	Administrators (n=16)	7	2-15	390	65
	Staff (n=28)	10	2-100		
Longview	Administrators (n=39)	6	0-25	476	100
	Staff (n=46)	6	0-24		
Phillips	Administrators (n=27)	13	0-100	883	200
	Staff (n=25)	21	0-80		

Services and Interventions

Students who are referred to Bridges or one of the alternative schools typically have received services and interventions at their base schools. Ideally, students will be referred to an alternative setting when implemented strategies at the base school have been unsuccessful in producing the desired outcomes and additional resources have been exhausted. Administrators and staff were asked to select from an itemized list of services those that are commonly used at their school and those they expect students to receive at the alternative setting.

Table 17 compares the percentage of administrative and staff respondents who identified services provided at the base school and services expected at the alternative setting. Notable differences in respondents' reports of services practiced at the base schools compared to those expected at the alternative school are highlighted. Overall, offering smaller classes is the primary service respondents expect alternative programs/schools to provide. Alternative schools serving high school students appear to be viewed as offering the most unique services.

- Among the services listed, Bridges respondents reported that small classes and peer mediation are infrequently offered at the base schools yet highly expected to be available at Bridges.

- Smaller classes and self-paced instruction were reported by both groups as less commonly practiced at the base schools yet these services were expected at Mount Vernon. A small percentage of administrators indicated that psychological counseling is commonly used at their schools; however, the vast majority believes that Mount Vernon also provides this service. Most administrators indicated that they expect less flexibility at Mount Vernon than at their own schools.
- A small percentage of administrators and staff respondents to the River Oaks survey reported small classes at the base school yet nearly all expect this service at River Oaks. They also anticipate that River Oaks will provide students with more opportunities for services related to peer mediation and self-paced instruction.
- Longview respondents reported that small classes and peer mediation are expected to be more frequently offered at Longview than at their own schools. Less than half of base school staff reported that psychological services are available at the base schools, whereas most staff thought this service would be available at Longview. A greater percentage of respondents also expect social work services to be more common at Longview. Conversely, they perceive that students at Longview will receive less academic counseling.

In general, base school personnel appear to see a difference in the service offered at base schools compared to alternative schools.

Table 17
Base School Services Compared to Expected Alternative School Services

	Services at Base	Expected Services at Alternative	Services at Base	Expected Services at Alternative
Bridges	Administrators (N = 70)		Staff (N = 60)	
Flexible structure/schedules	90%	79%	85%	83%
Smaller classes	41%	94%	47%	95%
Remedial instruction	91%	89%	92%	85%
Academic counseling	49%	59%	40%	53%
Psychological counseling	56%	71%	68%	60%
Crisis/behavior intervention	93%	89%	82%	88%
Social work services	84%	97%	78%	97%
Peer mediation	27%	84%	17%	90%
Self-paced instruction	19%	30%	17%	33%
Mount Vernon	Administrators (N = 16)		Staff (N = 37)	
Flexible structure/schedules	81%	50%	73%	87%
Smaller classes	44%	94%	24%	97%
Remedial instruction	94%	88%	89%	95%
Academic counseling	81%	88%	87%	95%
Psychological counseling	13%	81%	57%	76%
Crisis/behavior intervention	75%	69%	68%	81%
Social work services	75%	81%	92%	81%
Peer mediation	31%	25%	22%	35%
Self-paced instruction	13%	63%	5%	51%
River Oaks	Administrators (N = 16)		Staff (N = 31)	
Flexible structure/schedules	75%	88%	65%	52%
Smaller classes	19%	100%	23%	97%
Remedial instruction	100%	81%	81%	77%
Academic counseling	94%	100%	81%	87%
Psychological counseling	56%	88%	48%	65%
Crisis/behavior intervention	94%	100%	77%	94%
Social work services	94%	94%	90%	71%
Peer mediation	31%	69%	29%	52%
Self-paced instruction	13%	38%	10%	48%
Longview	Administrators (N = 46)		Staff (N = 66)	
Flexible structure/schedules	89%	72%	71%	71%
Smaller classes	46%	96%	44%	92%
Remedial instruction	89%	96%	73%	79%
Academic counseling	80%	59%	83%	53%
Psychological counseling	30%	85%	42%	73%
Crisis/behavior intervention	83%	80%	85%	65%
Social work services	59%	98%	61%	83%
Peer mediation	33%	76%	23%	71%
Self-paced instruction	41%	43%	24%	38%

Table 17, Continued

	Services at Base	Expected Services at Alternative	Services at Base	Expected Services at Alternative
Phillips	Administrators (N = 31)		Staff (N = 33)	
Flexible structure/schedules	74%	87%	73%	82%
Smaller classes	<i>19%</i>	<i>94%</i>	<i>18%</i>	<i>97%</i>
Remedial instruction	77%	87%	67%	82%
Academic counseling	81%	58%	94%	70%
Psychological counseling	39%	74%	<i>39%</i>	<i>94%</i>
Crisis/behavior intervention	71%	65%	76%	46%
Social work services	39%	74%	<i>33%</i>	<i>73%</i>
Peer mediation	<i>36%</i>	<i>81%</i>	27%	55%
Self-paced instruction	39%	42%	61%	33%

Note: Italicized cells indicate a difference in practiced compared to expected services of at least 40 percentage points. Bold cells indicate a difference in practiced compared to expected services between 15 and 39 percentage points.

Student Transitions

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of several factors in determining whether a student served by the alternative program or school is ready to transition back to a base school setting. The ratings do not reflect transition criteria; rather respondents were simply given the opportunity to express their opinion about the degree to which certain factors might impact a transition decision. Although nearly all of the base school administrators and staff believe that each of the factors is important in making transition decisions, levels of priority are apparent. Top priority was placed on improved student behavior or student/family endorsement of the transition. Respondents placed less priority on improved academic performance in terms of attendance and grades, and lastly, assessments.

- Administrators and staff responding to the Bridges program selected an improvement in a student's attitudes or behaviors as top priority for initiating a transition. This factor was also rated highest by Mount Vernon, River Oaks and Longview survey respondents. Other essential factors were student and family endorsement of the transition. Improved academics were least likely to be considered very important.
- Administrators and staff responding to the Mount Vernon survey placed equivalent priority on a student's desire to transition as well as the family's support of the transition.
- The highest priority to determine transition readiness, as reported by Mary Phillips survey respondents, was a student's desire to transition to a base school. Family support of the transition was also a main consideration.

Table 18
Perceived Factors of Student Readiness to Return to Base School

	Very Important	Important	Not Important
Improved attitude/behavior			
Bridges (n=128)	93%	5%	2%
Mount Vernon (n=52)	94%	6%	0%
River Oaks (n=47)	83%	15%	2%
Longview (n=109)	86%	13%	1%
Mary Phillips (n=62)	60%	37%	3%
Student desires transition			
Bridges (n=128)	71%	27%	2%
Mount Vernon (n=52)	83%	13%	4%
River Oaks (n=47)	66%	23%	11%
Longview (n=110)	76%	19%	5%
Mary Phillips (n=62)	82%	16%	2%
Family supports transition			
Bridges (n=128)	77%	20%	3%
Mount Vernon (n=52)	81%	17%	2%
River Oaks (n=46)	61%	28%	11%
Longview (n=107)	68%	27%	5%
Mary Phillips (n=62)	76%	22%	2%
Improved attendance			
Bridges (n=128)	36%	58%	6%
Mount Vernon (n=52)	67%	31%	2%
River Oaks (n=46)	48%	48%	4%
Longview (n=110)	56%	43%	1%
Mary Phillips (n=61)	65%	33%	2%
Improved grades			
Bridges (n=128)	15%	69%	16%
Mount Vernon (n=52)	48%	52%	0%
River Oaks (n=47)	36%	58%	6%
Longview (n=110)	34%	59%	7%
Mary Phillips (n=63)	46%	52%	2%
Improved academics (per standardized assessments)			
Bridges (n=127)	10%	55%	35%
Mount Vernon (n=52)	17%	64%	19%
River Oaks (n=47)	23%	60%	17%
Longview (n=108)	19%	56%	25%
Mary Phillips (n=63)	27%	60%	13%

Note: Missing data are not included in percentages.

Administrators and staff were asked to indicate the degree to which they believe several enumerated transition outcomes occur for students who attend one of the district's alternative programs or schools. With the exception of Mary Phillips, most respondents believe that alternative school students will return to base schools and join either mainstream or self-contained settings. The perception that students matriculate from one alternative environment to another is also common. In terms of long-term outcomes, most respondents believe that alternative high school students sometimes drop out and sometimes graduate. Results are presented in Table 19.

- Most of the Bridges survey respondents believe that students always or sometimes transition back to base schools and that the transition will most likely be to self contained classrooms. Over half stated that they think students sometimes return to Bridges. When asked to consider whether students transition from Bridges to one of the alternative middle schools, 79% respondents reported that they believe this typically occurs.
- Nearly all Mount Vernon survey respondents perceive that students typically return to base school settings. Slightly less than half of respondents perceive that recidivism sometimes occurs. Most respondents also believe that Mount Vernon students frequently make a high school transition to either Longview or Mary Phillips.
- It is very common for River Oaks survey respondents to perceive that students typically return to mainstream classes in base school settings. In general, respondents do not believe students will return to River Oaks more than once. Students are expected to matriculate to an alternative high school about half of the time.
- Respondents to the Longview middle and high school surveys believe that students typically return to base school settings. Students are perceived to transition to self contained classes about half of the time. Likewise, 57% of respondents think that students will sometimes transition to Mary Phillips. Most respondents believe in the possibility that Longview students will either drop out or graduate.
- Comparatively, fewer respondents reported that Mary Phillips students will sometimes return to a base school or return to Mary Phillips after service. Most respondents reported that students sometimes graduate from Mary Phillips; however, the majority also believes that students may drop out.

Table 19
Perceived Type and Frequency of Student Transitions

	Always	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Return to base school setting				
Bridges (n=127)	18%	66%	16%	0%
Mount Vernon (n=50)	36%	64%	0%	0%
River Oaks (n=46)	43%	57%	0%	0%
Longview grades 6-12 (n=103)	10%	79%	11%	0%
Mary Phillips (n=63)	3%	52%	37%	8%
Transition to a small, self-contained class within a base school setting				
Bridges (n=127)	12%	78%	9%	1%
Mount Vernon (n=50)	0%	38%	48%	14%
River Oaks (n=45)	0%	27%	51%	22%
Longview grades 6-12 (n=104)	1%	55%	28%	16%
Mary Phillips (n=62)	0%	26%	43%	31%
Attend, exit, and return to the alternative environment more than once				
Bridges (n=124)	0%	56%	40%	4%
Mount Vernon (n=50)	0%	48%	44%	8%
River Oaks (n=45)	0%	27%	49%	24%
Longview grades 6-12 (n=98)	1%	57%	37%	5%
Mary Phillips (n=62)	1%	23%	56%	20%
Matriculate from Bridges to an alternative middle school				
Bridges (n=124)	6%	73%	19%	2%
Matriculate from Mount Vernon or River Oaks to an alternative high school				
Mount Vernon (n=49)	6%	69%	23%	2%
River Oaks (n=45)	0%	56%	29%	15%
Transition from Longview to Mary Phillips				
Longview grades 6-12 (n=102)	0%	57%	35%	8%
Drop out of Longview or Mary Phillips				
Longview grades 6-12 (n=102)	0%	75%	25%	0%
Mary Phillips (n=63)	0%	63%	37%	0%
Graduate from Longview or Mary Phillips				
Longview grades 6-12 (n=103)	1%	81%	14%	4%
Mary Phillips (n=61)	11%	82%	7%	0%

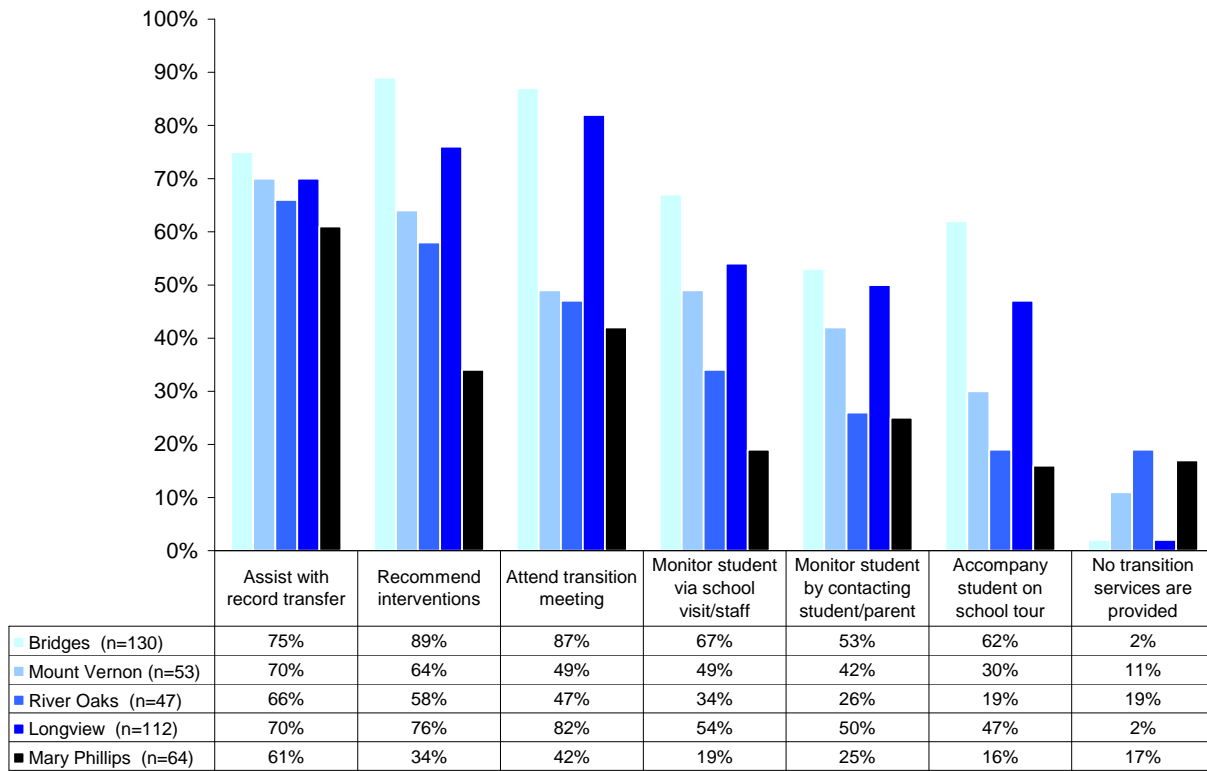
Transition Services

Several questions were posed about the type of services provided to alternative school students before, during, and after they make a transition to their base school. First, base school personnel's awareness of the types of transition services offered by alternative school staff was assessed. From a list of transition services, respondents were asked to select all that they think are provided by the various alternative education options. Second, respondents were asked to describe the services they expect or want alternative school staff to provide to students who are transitioning to the base school. Finally, they were given an opportunity to describe the services their school offers to support students during a transition.

Figure 1 shows that most respondents think that alternative schools provide some type of service to students who are returning to a base school setting. It appears that Bridges and Longview are believed to provide the greatest array of service.

- Within each survey, assisting with record transfers was most consistently perceived by respondents as a way alternative schools support student transitions.
- Perceptions regarding whether alternative school staff recommend interventions vary across survey respondents. Most of the Bridges and Longview respondents believe this is a provided service compared to the majority of Mount Vernon and River Oaks respondents and one third of Mary Phillips respondents.
- The vast majority of respondents to Bridges and Longview surveys perceive that alternative setting staff attend transition meetings. Fewer than 50% of base school personnel responding to the other surveys think that staff provide this service.
- Monitoring student progress by the visiting school or emailing staff was not commonly perceived as a transition service. The majority of respondents do think this service occurs at Bridges and Longview. Fewer percentages of survey respondents perceived that alternative staff monitor student progress through student or parent contact.
- Respondents to each of the surveys do not appear to think that alternative school staff regularly accompany students on a tour of the base school in preparation for attendance there. With the exception of Bridges, fewer than 50% of respondents to the other four surveys selected this as a provided service.

Figure 1
Transition Services Perceived to be Provided by the Alternative Program/School



The following tables summarize findings and provide sample quotations regarding the services desired and offered by base school respondents⁴. As students are transitioning, base school staff generally expect alternative school staff to monitor student progress and provide continued support, recommend interventions and services, and establish a transition plan or hold a transition meeting (see Table 20). Other services were school specific.

- Receiving behavior and academic data for students making a transition was important to Mount Vernon and Mary Phillips survey respondents.
- Base school staff mentioned that they expect Longview staff to provide behavior support during student transitions.
- Communication regarding an impending transition from Mary Phillips was desired by base school respondents. Although base schools expect notification from Mary Phillips that students are transitioning to their schools, they commented that this is not common practice.

⁴ Approximately two thirds of respondents participating in each of the following surveys provided comments: Bridges survey, River Oaks survey, Mount Vernon survey, and Mary Phillips survey. Slightly more than half of Longview survey respondents offered descriptions.

Table 20
Transition Services that Base Schools Want from Alternative Schools

Services	Schools	Sample Comments
Monitor student progress and provide continued support	All	<p>“Contact with student and teacher on a regular basis for at least the first 3 to 5 months.”</p> <p>“Monitor student progress at least for first semester back in base school.”</p> <p>“Someone who will stop by and check in on the student once a week until that student has a successful transition (or at least every other week).”</p> <p>“They should provide support as needed for the first several months of the transition. If students are unable to make a smooth transition, there should be a plan in place for Mt. Vernon to intervene and possible re-admit the student.”</p>
Recommend interventions and services	All	<p>“Dialogue about the strategies that were successful and how staff in a regular ed. setting can set that student up for success.”</p> <p>“Recommending interventions and services that have worked with the student/family would prove very beneficial.”</p> <p>“Suggestions for interventions that can reasonably be provided in base school setting.”</p>
Establish a transition plan/hold a transition meeting	All	<p>“I would hope there would be a transition meeting with all the base teachers so they can know how to best assist/support the student as he/she returns.”</p> <p>“A transition plan with "back up" strategies/plan if student is not successful in the base school setting.”</p>
Provide behavior and/or academic data or information	Mount Vernon & Mary Phillips	<p>“Good data on behaviors and academics.”</p> <p>“We would like to know what their academic and behavior needs are, what works and what motivates them.”</p> <p>“Students should return with a Personal Education Plan (PEP) type plan in place, including a narrative about their progress, areas of strength & weakness, a behavioral recap, and a report on academic and behavioral interventions and their outcomes.”</p>
Provide behavior support	Longview	<p>“Recommendations for maintaining good behavior.”</p> <p>“Maintain communication with behavior specialists for first few weeks/months. Longview typically provides this service.”</p> <p>“Be in contact with student's Behavior Support Teacher (BST) on a regular basis.”</p>
Communication regarding a transition	Mary Phillips	<p>“First of all, contact would be good. We are NEVER notified that a student has withdrawn or is returning to our school. It would be nice to know what things were worked on at the school and why the student is coming back to our school at that particular time.”</p> <p>“Advance notification prior to returning to base. Also assistance in selecting appropriate course placement.”</p> <p>“...there is no formal process to return a student back to the base school. In the 6 years I've been working with Wake County, I've never heard of a counselor being notified that a student is returning from Mary Phillips, and I've never heard of a meeting between Mary Phillips and base school staff.”</p>

As presented in Table 21, respondents to each of the surveys mentioned counseling services, transition meetings, and parent conferences as supports offered to students transitioning from alternative settings. Base school personnel also said that students transitioning from Bridges, Mount Vernon, Longview, and Phillips are offered smaller classes and half days to acclimate students to the high school environment. Respondents from base elementary schools also mentioned that special education accommodations would be available to students transitioning from Bridges. Offering behavior support and intervention plans and monitoring student progress were also commonly described as base school services provided to students from Bridges and Longview.

Table 21
Transition Services Provided by Base Schools

Services	Schools	Sample Comments
Counseling	All	<p>“Counselors may help returning students transition back to their base school by meeting with them and setting up a transition plan.”</p> <p>“Follow up by grade level counselor for monitoring progress and support.”</p> <p>“Individual counseling with counselor and administrator, regular meetings with counselor or Student Assistant Program (SAP) counselor.”</p> <p>“We have a transitional counselor on staff at our school who assists students.”</p>
Initial/transition meeting	All	<p>“We would have a transition meeting and any other meetings periodically as needed.”</p> <p>“Meet with staff, parents, and student and offer plan for transition to include academic and social support.”</p> <p>“Intake meetings and re-entrance meetings at both locations.”</p>
Parent Conferences	All	<p>“Frequent contact with parents to keep them informed of student progress.”</p>
Flexible structure and schedule	Bridges, Mount Vernon, Longview, & Phillips	<p>“Alternative scheduling; smaller class sizes through special education services and elective class enrollment; modified days.”</p> <p>Small classes, remediation, and half days.</p>
Behavior support and intervention plans	Bridges, Mount Vernon, & Longview	<p>“Create Behavior Intervention Plans to address areas of need.”</p> <p>“We have a BST who assists with behavioral and/or emotional needs of students.”</p>
Monitor student progress and continued support	Bridges, River Oaks, & Longview	<p>“Monitor student progress through classroom observations and discussions with student.”</p> <p>“Assigned adults to check in regularly with student.”</p> <p>“Document student progress (behavioral and instructional).”</p>
Special education accommodations	Bridges	<p>“Students from Bridges have transitioned into our Behaviorally Emotionally Disabled (BED) classroom. The teacher, principal, myself (counselor), and social worker have worked together to support transitions.”</p> <p>“We would provide the IEP accommodations.”</p> <p>“Strong special education teacher who builds relationships with students and collaborates with Bridges.”</p>

Qualitative Input

Toward the end of each survey, respondents were given the opportunity to provide positive feedback about their alternative program/school experiences and to offer suggestions for improvement⁵. Respondents were also asked to provide input on how the district's alternative education system might better serve WCPSS students⁶. Responses to the qualitative questions were coded by emerging themes and are summarized in the following sections. Specific examples of respondents' comments by theme are available in Appendix E.

Positive Experiences

When asked to discuss their positive experiences with the alternative program/school, two central themes, quality of staff and student success, emerged from participant responses to each of the surveys.

- Base school personnel described alternative program/school staff as caring and professional groups, dedicated to supporting the students they serve through collaboration with the base schools.
- Respondents also provided general comments about the success of students attending alternative programs/schools. Some respondents also offered specific examples of a student's academic or behavior improvement, which they attributed to the alternative education experience. Several respondents also mentioned their positive experiences with the Booster program at Mount Vernon.

Small classes were mentioned at Bridges, Longview, and Mary Phillips by survey respondents as promoting a structured and safe environment at the elementary level and flexibility and relationship building at the high school level. Respondents also cited Bridges as providing support to students with academic and behavioral needs, although they rarely elaborated on how or the extent to which that support was given, and several described their experiences with the intake process as efficient and thorough. Finally, respondents to the Mount Vernon and River Oaks surveys commented on the schools' simple referral processes and good communication about students' progress.

Suggestions for Improvement

Survey respondents were also asked to provide suggestions for how the alternative programs/schools might be improved. Within each of the surveys, respondents who provided input mentioned the need for increased capacity at each of the sites or additional alternative sites, a desire for more transparency, and more efficient admission and exit processes.

- Respondents commonly referred to the disproportionate number of students served in alternative settings compared to the number of students in need of service. They requested

⁵ Data from each survey showed that two thirds of respondents provided positive feedback about the alternative program/school and slightly less than half offered suggestions.

⁶ Between 50 and 70% of survey participants provided this general input.

increased capacity or additional alternative education sites to serve more students districtwide.

- They also mentioned improved communication from the alternative sites about their program services and how many students they can serve. Respondents would also like the criteria for student referrals to be more transparent, as well as descriptions on when and how to make a referral, and more information on the acceptance process. A couple of Mount Vernon survey respondents pointed out that although they are less likely to make referrals to the school, they have been making referrals to the Booster program.
- Respondents to almost every survey offered critiques of the program's or school's admission and exit processes. They also want simpler application processes and more thorough exit processes.

Respondents to each survey except Longview also want better communication on the progress of their referred students. Mary Phillips survey respondents, in particular, wrote very specific comments about a lack of communication from the school regarding the admission status of applicants.

General Feedback

The following quotation represents the general feedback received from respondents regarding how the district's alternative education options can better serve WCPSS students:

“Increase the availability of alternative schools/programs. There are a substantial number of students who are in need of the services.”

A common perception among survey respondents is that current elementary, middle, and high school alternative settings are not adequate to meet the needs of the district's population. Respondents also mentioned the limited number of students that can be served by the Booster program. Expanding the targeted student populations and improving transparency are two other themes that emerged from respondents' comments.

- Respondents stated that a greater number of alternative educational options are needed to serve students with behavioral issues or students with disabilities. Of particular interest is an alternative environment that serves middle school students with more severe behavioral issues than those that fit the criteria for Mount Vernon or River Oaks but who do not need special education services, and are therefore ineligible for Longview. Additionally, respondents requested an alternative setting for middle and high school students serving long-term or even short-term suspensions.
- According to survey participants, the program and service information, served student profile, and referral process of current alternative programs/schools should be made more transparent so that base school staff can more efficiently access the services.

Overall, respondents to Bridges, River Oaks, and Longview survey desire a simpler admission process and greater collaboration with base school staff on transitioning students to and from the alternative setting.

IMPLEMENTATION INFORMATION SUMMARY

Mount Vernon and River Oaks Middle Schools and Mary Phillips High School are designed to support students who are moderately at-risk of educational failure and require targeted interventions to promote success. Currently, there is no companion alternative education option for elementary students falling into this risk category, although base schools may target these students. SWD students who have severe emotional and behavioral issues and are at substantial risk of academic failure are served by Bridges or Longview.

WCPSS students attending any of the alternative schools or programs receive academic and behavior support from teachers who are as likely to be highly qualified as teachers employed at base schools. Alternative schools students have the advantage of being educated in small school settings with low teacher/student ratios, which can facilitate individualized attention and encourage positive relationships. These schools also offer more intensive counseling services. Students attending alternative settings are taught the WCPSS standard course of study and receive an array of academic and behavior supports, although electives are limited.

There appears to be equity in the treatment and education of students at alternative and base school settings. Nevertheless, based on interview discussions for this study, it became evident that principals look forward to a positive shift in people's perceptions about alternative schools and the students they serve. One alternative school principal stated that "these environments are not places for 'bad kids,' for children on drugs or in gangs." In general, administrators of these schools perceive the alternative school model simply as another approach for meeting the needs of students. Students who may not fit in the traditional educational mold are in need of additional support beyond what typical schools in the district can offer.

Although base school personnel have a general knowledge about the alternative educational options available districtwide, better communication of the purpose, target populations, unique services, and transition assistance may be necessary to enhance transparency for River Oaks, Mary Phillips, and Longview. Additionally, the current array and capacity of services may not sufficiently meet the needs of the large WCPSS school district. The estimated number of students who might benefit from an alternative educational environment greatly exceeds the current number of students able to be served in each setting. Only one elementary program is available for specific-needs students. Middle and high school SWD students with moderate to severe behavior issues who may be at risk for academic failure are particularly vulnerable to falling through the cracks due to the disproportionate number of students in need compared to those who can be served.

IMPACT AND STUDENT OUTCOMES

Using multilevel analysis, the final section of this study examines the impact and beneficial outcomes students receive from the alternative education offerings within the district. First, current student-level academic and behavioral outcomes are compared between alternative schools in WCPSS and the selected, surrounding North Carolina districts. Second, results are presented from a student survey conducted to gather student-level perspectives on the positive outcomes of attending WCPSS alternative schools. Next, the findings are shared from two longitudinal analyses used to track the progress and transitions of certain alternative school cohorts and the first two Booster program cohorts. Finally, the costs and benefits of the alternative schools are described and examined.

STUDENT ACADEMIC AND BEHAVIOR OUTCOMES FOR SELECTED ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS IN NORTH CAROLINA

This section of the study examines various standard measures of academic performance and behavior outcomes for WCPSS alternative schools compared to other alternative schools in large North Carolina school districts including Charlotte Mecklenburg, Durham, Forsyth, and Guilford. Investigating the relative performance of alternative schools across the state promotes a more accurate evaluation of outcomes because similar types of student populations are being compared. This method is preferable to comparing alternative schools to base schools that are located in the same district but may serve only a fraction of the same students. Compared to other alternative schools in proximate North Carolina school districts, WCPSS alternative schools are generally performing as well or better on standard achievement measures and behavior outcomes (see Tables 22 and 23).

Academic Achievement

The North Carolina ABCs Accountability Model includes a performance and a growth component. The performance composite is the total percentage of proficient (Levels III or IV) students test scores⁷ for all students enrolled in the school on the first day of testing. Each school also has a growth standard. Expected growth is based on previous performance, statewide average growth, and a statistical adjustment applied when comparing test scores of students across years. All this information is placed in a formula that indicates whether a school met expected growth or high growth standards. Schools meet “Expected Growth” if students, on average, show a year of growth in a year’s time. Schools meet “High Growth” if 60% of the students in a school meet their individual growth targets.

Per compliance with the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (also referred to as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 or NCLB), each year a school’s Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is computed based on a series of targets either met or not met. There are two participation targets and two proficiency targets that each of a school’s subgroups must meet as

⁷ End of Grade (EOG), End of Course (EOC), alternate assessments, 8th grade computer skills, 10th grade writing, 5th and 8th grade science EOG beginning in 2008-09

well as one academic indicator. The range in the number of targets will vary by school based on the number of subgroups. The maximum number of targets a school could have is 41.

Due to the unique populations served, comparisons between the achievement of alternative schools and base schools are not appropriate and comparisons between alternative schools should be made with careful consideration of the types of students served. To examine whether WCPSS alternative schools have reasonable academic achievement outcomes, alternative schools from selected North Carolina school districts serving similar grade ranges were selected for comparison. Although the characteristics of the students served at each setting vary across the districts, the student population was also considered when drawing comparisons.

Mount Vernon and River Oaks middle schools are most similar to the Kennedy Center in Durham and High School Ahead Academy in Guilford. The standard achievement data for Mount Vernon and River Oaks resemble the outcomes of the two comparison schools yet are somewhat higher than other alternative schools serving both middle and high school students. Students in grades K-8 at Mount Vernon performed considerably better on all indicators than students in grades 4-12 at Turning Point Academy in Charlotte.

Comparisons were made between Longview and the other special education centers in the selected school districts, Morgan School in Charlotte-Mecklenburg and Gateway and CD McIver Education Centers in Guilford. It is important to note that Longview has a considerably narrower grade span for students served than the other centers. The 2008-09 performance composite of Longview (18.9) is roughly equivalent to the CD McIver Education Center (18.7), lower than the Morgan School (30.9), and higher than the Gateway Center (8.9). Longview did not meet AYP in 2008-09, although the other schools serving SWD students did. Special education schools are not assigned an ABCs growth status.

None of the schools in the selected school districts serve students in grades 9-12 only. Mary Phillips is most similar to Charlotte's Hawthorn High School, which serves students in grades 6-12, who may or may not have behavioral issues. The schools had comparable performance composites (30.4 for Mary Phillips and 38.8 for Hawthorn High). Mary Phillips also met high growth and all AYP targets whereas Hawthorne High met expected growth and did not meet APY. Other alternative schools serving middle and high school students had slightly less favorable outcomes compared to Mary Phillips. Middle College of Forsyth County, which serves students in grades 11 and 12, met high growth and AYP and has a considerably higher performance composite (80.6) than its counterparts (but high dropout rates). As such, Middle College's performance composite was likely based on a small number of students who may also have performed academically better than those students who dropped out, thereby inflating the school's performance composite

Dropouts

The percent of students (based on 6th-month membership) who dropped out varies greatly by alternative school. The schools in Guilford that serve special education students and the High School Ahead Academy for 8th-grade students reported no drop out events in 2008-09. Mount Vernon and River Oaks middle schools also reported that no students dropped out. Middle

College had the highest percentage of members dropping out at 64.3%. Mary Phillips and Hawthorn High had similar computed drop out rates at 35% and 40% respectively.

Violent Acts

Disparity is also evident in the number of violent acts reported by each alternative school for 2008-09. Nearly all the alternative schools in Guilford reported no acts of violence. According to the data shown, very few violent acts occurred at WCPSS alternative schools with the exception of Longview. Two special education schools, the Morgan School in Charlotte and Longview, reported the highest incidence of violent acts.

Graduation Rate

The graduation rate at Mary Phillips is notably higher than the graduation rate for Hawthorn High (74.4% compared to 41.2%). Some schools serving high school students do not have graduation rates reported because they are under special evaluation rules. Other schools serving high school students do not have a graduation rate because either they chose attendance as their other academic indicator, they are considered feeder schools, or the data are simply not available.

Table 22
2008-09 ABCs Growth and Performance of Various
North Carolina Alternative Schools by District

County	School Name	Grades Served	ABCs Growth Status	Performance Composite	AYP
Charlotte Mecklenburg	Morgan School	K-12 SP-ED	No status	30.9	Yes
	Turning Point Academy	4-12	Expected	21.7	No
	Hawthorne High School	6-12	Expected	38.8	No
	Midwood High	9	High	23.7	Yes
Durham	Lakeview School	6-12	Expected	15.3	No
Forsyth	Kennedy Learning	5-9	High	31.9	Yes
	Griffith Academy	6-12	Expected	19.0	No
	Forsyth Middle College	11-12	High	80.6	Yes
Guilford	Gateway Education Center	6 months- 22 years SP-ED	No status	8.9	Yes
	CD McIver Education Center	5-22 SP-ED	No status	18.7	Yes
	SCALE - Greensboro	6-12	Expected	15.1	Yes
	Dean B. Pruett SCALE School	6-12	Expected	21.0	Yes
	High School Ahead Academy	8	Expected	43.1	No
Wake	Mount Vernon Middle Including Bridges	K-8	High	41.3	Yes
	River Oaks Middle	6-8	Expected	44.0	No
	Longview	6-12 SP-ED	No status	18.9	No
	Mary Phillips High	9-12	High	30.4	Yes

Data source: NCDPI ABCs Accountability Model page <http://abcs.ncpublicschools.org/abcs>

Note: SP-ED=special education population; ABCs status shows schools meeting expected growth or high growth;

No status= schools were not assigned an ABCs status because they are special education schools.

No data were available for Twilight School in Guilford. SCALE=School Community Alternative Learning Environment.

Table 23
2008-09 Membership, Dropout, Violent Acts, and Graduation Data for
Various North Carolina Alternative Schools by District

County	School Name	6 th Month Membership	Dropout Events	% of Members Dropping Out	# of Violent Acts	Graduation Rate
Charlotte Mecklenburg	Turning Point Academy	401	73	18.2%	21	na
	Hawthorne High School	191	77	40.3%	1	41.2%
	Midwood High	159	11	6.9%	8	~
	Morgan School	83	13	15.7%	31	na
Durham	Lakeview School	180	49	27.2%	8	na
Forsyth	Kennedy Learning	269	<5	1.9%	20	~
	Griffith Academy	205	41	20.0%	15	Special Eval
	Forsyth Middle College	70	45	64.3%	4	Special Eval
Guilford	Gateway Education Center	131	0	0.0%	0	~
	CD McIver Education Center	134	0	0.0%	0	~
	SCALE - Greensboro	57	11	19.3%	0	Special Eval
	Dean B. Pruett SCALE School	56	10	17.9%	0	Special Eval
	High School Ahead Academy	97	0	0.0%	4	~
Wake	Mount Vernon Middle Including Bridges	133	0	0.0%	2	~
	River Oaks Middle	39	0	0.0%	1	~
	Longview	105	16	15.2%	26	na
	Mary Phillips High	143	50	35.0%	1	74.4%

Data Source: NCDPI official 6th month membership from principal's monthly report -

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/fbs/accounting/data/pmr/2008-09m6pmr.xls>

Dropout: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/research/dropout/reports/2008-09/113countbylea.pdf>

Violent Acts: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/researchdisciplinereports#consolidated.pdf>

Graduation: NCDPI AYP Results 4 year Graduation Rates <http://ayp.ncpublicschools.org/2009/>

Note: Dropout events are reported for students in grades 1-13. na= graduation rates not available because attendance is the other academic indicator, they are considered feeder schools, or the data are simply not available.

~ = graduate rate is not applicable due to grade level. No data were available for Twilight School in Guilford. SCALE=School Community Alternative Learning Environment.

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL/PROGRAM BENEFITS: STUDENT SURVEY

Middle and high school students attending one of the district's alternative schools were asked to participate in a short, online survey to offer their perspectives on their alternative school experience. A link to the Zoomerang survey and survey instructions were sent to each of the principals at Mount Vernon, River Oaks, Longview and Mary Phillips (see Appendix F to view the survey). Principals and teachers were asked to assist with the survey administration by providing students with access to computers, helping students open the survey link, and going over the instructions. Alternative school personnel were also asked to survey as many students as possible based on their judgment of the survey's level of difficulty for their student groups. As shown in Table 24, a total of 239 middle and high school students attending one of the four alternative schools completed the survey. The number of students participating per school is commensurate with each school's size. For example, among the alternative schools, River Oaks has the smallest student population and the fewest survey respondents compared to Mary Phillips which has the largest population and the greatest number respondents. For analytical purposes, student respondents from Mount Vernon and River Oaks were combined since these are companion schools that serve the same student groups⁸.

Table 24
Alternative Student Survey Participants

	#	%
River Oaks	22	9%
Mount Vernon	50	21%
Longview	58	24%
Mary Phillips	109	46%
Total	239	100%

The survey was conducted at the end of the 2009-10 school year to increase the likelihood that students would have at least one year's worth of experience in the alternative school setting. As shown in Table 25, most students attending Mount Vernon, River Oaks, or Longview indicated they had started at their school during the school year or at the beginning of the school year. Very few students had attended either Mount Vernon, River Oaks, or Longview the prior school year. Mary Phillips students were most likely to say that they had started at the school before the 2009-10 school year.

Table 25
Alternative School Students' Enrollment Status

	Mount Vernon and River Oaks		Longview		Mary Phillips	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
I started before this school year.	7	10%	8	14%	45	41%
I started at the beginning of this school year.	20	28%	23	40%	41	38%
I started during this school year.	45	62%	26	46%	23	21%
Total	72	100%	57	100%	109	100%

Note: One Longview participant did not respond to this question.

⁸ Students in the Booster program were not surveyed.

Building Resiliency

One purpose of the student survey was to assess the degree to which alternative schools help to build student resiliency. Resiliency refers to the student's capacity to prevail despite difficult circumstances or to successfully adapt to challenging life experiences (Benard, 1991). According to the literature, everyone is born with an innate capacity for resiliency, although a person can learn resiliency by developing social competence, problem-solving skills, critical consciousness, autonomy, and a sense of purpose (Benard, 1995). A growing body of research suggests that youth facing multiple or severe risks in their lives can develop into productive adults with supportive family, school, and community environments that may amend the expected negative outcomes. Building resiliency or utilizing protective factors are key to this transformation. Such protection factors are typically grouped into three categories (Benard, 1995):

1. **Caring relationships:** Central to building resiliency is the presence of at least one caring person. Having a caring relationship with a teacher often raises students' motivation to succeed. Creating an ethos of caring within schools also promotes opportunities for caring relationships between students, between teachers, and between teachers and parents.
2. **High expectations:** Schools which have high expectations for all students and provide the necessary support to promote success tend to have higher rates of academic achievement and lower incidents of problem behaviors. To ensure optimal success, these high expectations should be communicated by principals, teachers, and other staff within the school and classrooms. Expectations are also communicated through a school's organization and structure in terms of a comprehensive curriculum, differentiated instruction, and clear and consistent schoolwide expectations or boundaries.
3. **Opportunities for meaningful participation:** Giving students the opportunity for meaningful involvement and responsibility is a common practice among schools that have high expectations for their students. The chance to participate in and offer support to the school community fosters social skills and life skills. Cooperative learning approaches that encourage peer collaboration and mentoring and community service are also very important for building a student's resiliency.

Schools that utilize these protective factors to create a school culture have the potential to build student resiliency. Building resiliency among the student populations served at alternative schools can be very important for ensuring their future success. The degree to which WCPSS alternative settings promote resiliency was assessed by asking students to indicate their level of agreement with statements that measured the development of protective factors at their base school compared to the alternative school.

Overall, students attending Mount Vernon, River Oaks, and Mary Phillips had high levels of agreement with the various statements indicating that the alternative schools were more effectively utilizing protective factors to build resiliency compared to the base schools. Data from Longview students are less consistently positive. As shown in Tables 26 and 27, certain factors are ranked higher than others.

- Most students indicated their agreement to statements measuring opportunities for meaningful participation. In particular, 80% of the middle school students and 85% of high school students reported that compared to their base schools, they have learned how to do better in school at the alternative setting. Over 80% of Mary Phillips students also indicated that the school has taught them more about setting and reaching goals.
- Data also indicate that the alternative schools hold higher expectations for students than base schools. The statement asking about students' beliefs that they can reach their goals in these settings is the one statement in which middle students and high school students were more likely to show strong agreement. Overall, 91% of Mary Phillips agreed with this statement. Close to 80% of both middle students and high school students agreed that adults at the alternative school offer more encouragement. Slightly over half of each group of students at Mount Vernon/River Oaks and Mary Phillips reported that their alternative school's rules were easier to understand.
- Although to a slightly lesser extent, caring relationships appear to be part of the alternative school culture. Mount Vernon/River Oaks (72%) and Mary Phillips (82%) students were most likely to agree that it is easier to talk to alternative school teachers. These students were somewhat less likely to believe that they have better relationships with their teachers and administrators than they had at their base school.

Table 26
Student Resiliency at Mount Vernon and River Oaks (N=71)

Resiliency/ Protective Factors	Compared to when I was attending a base school...	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Agreement	Total Disagreement
Caring Relationships	...it is easier to talk to the teachers at this school.	14	37	11	9	51	20
		20%	52%	15%	13%	72%	28%
	...it is easier to talk to the counselors at this school.	18	28	13	11	46	24
		26%	40%	18%	16%	66%	34%
	...I have better relationships with my teachers at this school.	15	31	13	12	46	25
		21%	44%	18%	17%	65%	35%
...I have a better relationship with my principal or assistant principals at this school.	15	28	17	11	43	28	
	21%	39%	24%	16%	60%	40%	
High Expectations	...the adults at this school encourage me more often.	18	38	10	5	56	15
		25%	53%	14%	7%	78%	21%
	...I believe that I am more likely to reach my goals at this school.	28	25	10	8	53	18
		40%	35%	14%	11%	75%	25%
	...this school's rules are easier to understand.	10	30	20	11	40	31
14%		42%	28%	16%	56%	44%	
Opportunities for Meaningful Participation	...the adults at this school are more likely to listen to me.	10	36	13	9	46	22
		15%	53%	19%	13%	68%	32%
	...I have learned how to do better in school.	23	34	5	9	57	14
		32%	48%	7%	13%	80%	20%
	...I have learned more at this school about how to set goals.	22	30	13	6	52	19
		31%	42%	18%	9%	73%	27%
...I better understand what I need to do to reach my goals at this school.	21	35	8	7	56	15	
	30%	49%	11%	10%	79%	21%	

Note: One survey participant did not respond to this question.

Table 27
Student Resiliency at Mary Phillips (N=108)

Resiliency/ Protective Factors	Compared to when I was attending a base school...	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Agreement	Total Disagreement
Caring Relationships	...it is easier to talk to the teachers at this school.	38	51	11	8	89	19
		35%	47%	10%	8%	82%	18%
	...it is easier to talk to the counselors at this school.	39	40	23	5	79	28
		36%	37%	22%	5%	73%	27%
	...I have better relationships with my teachers at this school.	36	42	21	7	78	28
		34%	40%	20%	6%	74%	26%
...I have a better relationship with my principal or assistant principals at this school.	25	41	28	14	66	42	
High Expectations	...the adults at this school encourage me more often.	35	49	20	3	84	23
		33%	46%	18%	3%	79%	21%
	...I believe that I am more likely to reach my goals at this school.	57	39	7	3	96	10
		54%	37%	6%	3%	91%	9%
	...this school's rules are easier to understand.	16	38	28	23	54	51
15%		36%	27%	22%	51%	49%	
Opportunities for Meaningful Participation	...the adults at this school are more likely to listen to me.	27	47	28	5	74	33
		25%	44%	26%	5%	69%	31%
	...I have learned how to do better in school.	40	49	9	7	89	16
		38%	47%	8%	7%	85%	15%
	...I have learned more at this school about how to set goals.	40	47	12	9	87	21
		37%	44%	11%	8%	81%	19%
...I better understand what I need to do to reach my goals at this school.	41	51	9	7	92	16	
	38%	47%	8%	7%	85%	15%	

Note: One survey participant did not respond to this question.

Seventy-six percent of the Longview respondents⁹ had attended a base school prior to their enrollment at Longview, which gave them a current base school experience on which to draw comparisons to the alternative school setting. Based on these results, Longview appears to be less consistently effective at building resiliency in their students compared to the other alternative settings (see Table 28). More students agreed than disagreed with most of the statements yet the percentage of agreement among Longview students was still lower compared to Mount Vernon, River Oaks, and Mary Phillips.

- Over half of the students agreed that Longview offers greater opportunities for meaningful participation than base schools. Slightly over 60% of respondents believe that Longview has taught them how to do better in school and to understand how to reach their goals.
- In terms of high expectations, 64% of Longview students reported more encouragement at Longview compared to their base school. Students were almost as likely to disagree as to agree that they can reach their goals better at the alternative school compared to at their base school and that Longview's rules are easy to understand.
- Students perceive that establishing caring relationships is slightly more possible at Longview than at base schools. Close to 60% of students stated that they have better relationships with Longview teachers compared to base school teachers; however, only half of students feel that it is easier to talk to their teachers. A greater proportion (59%) of students feel that it is easier to talk to the alternative school counselor.

⁹ Longview students who matriculated from the Bridges alternative program were instructed to skip the section of the survey that asked questions measuring resiliency because the questions asked for comparisons to be made to a base school rather than another alternative school.

Table 28
Student Resiliency at Longview (N=44)

Resiliency/ Protective Factors	Compared to when I was attending a base school...	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Agreement	Total Disagreement
Caring Relationships	...it is easier to talk to the teachers at this school.	8	14	14	8	22	22
		18%	32%	32%	18%	50%	50%
	...it is easier to talk to the counselors at this school.	13	13	12	6	26	18
		30%	30%	27%	13%	60%	40%
	...I have better relationships with my teachers at this school.	8	18	10	8	26	18
		18%	41%	23%	18%	59%	41%
...I have a better relationship with my principal or assistant principals at this school.	9	17	9	9	26	18	
	20.5%	38.5%	20.5%	20.5%	59%	41%	
High Expectations	...the adults at this school encourage me more often.	10	18	6	10	28	16
		23%	41%	13%	23%	64%	36%
	...I believe that I am more likely to reach my goals at this school.	7	17	11	8	24	19
		16%	39%	26%	19%	55%	45%
	...this school's rules are easier to understand.	7	17	13	7	24	20
	16%	39%	29%	16%	55%	45%	
Opportunities for Meaningful Participation	...the adults at this school are more likely to listen to me.	10	15	11	7	25	18
		23%	35%	26%	16%	58%	42%
	...I have learned how to do better in school.	11	16	12	5	27	17
		25%	37%	27%	11%	62%	38%
	...I have learned more at this school about how to set goals.	6	18	13	7	24	20
		14%	41%	29%	16%	55%	45%
...I better understand what I need to do to reach my goals at this school.	8	19	11	6	27	17	
	18%	43%	25%	14%	61%	39%	

Improving Behavior and Academics

The alternative school student survey also sought to measure whether students perceived an improvement in their behavior and academics. Students were asked to report on the problems they were having prior to their attendance at their current alternative school. A categorical list of behavioral and academic problems was provided to students from which they could select as many areas of difficulty as applied to them. Prompted problem behaviors were getting in trouble for behavior, not handing in homework on time or participating in class, and poor school attendance. Academic issues that were investigated included getting bad grades and having difficulties learning to read or learning mathematics. Students were also asked to select which of the problem areas they felt they had improved in since attending their current school.

Data show that getting in trouble for behavior, bad grades, and school attendance were the common problems for alternative students prior to moving to one of the alternative settings. Overall, very few students thought that they had a problem learning to read or learning

mathematics. Some students wrote in other problems, such as gangs and fighting. Mary Phillips students were also likely to write in that they were having problems with fighting and racism, receiving class work support, and being a teen parent. Finally, a few Longview students had problems with being off-task in class. Students attending Mount Vernon, River Oaks, or Mary Phillips perceived the greatest improvement in their problem areas. However, students at each of the alternative schools were most likely to report receiving better grades.

As shown in Table 29, Mount Vernon and River Oaks respondents most commonly selected getting in trouble for behavior and bad grades as initial problems, whereas learning to read was a problem for only a few students. Data presented in Table 29 also allow for direct comparisons to be made between areas that students identified as being an initial problem and areas in which they think they have improved.

- As shown in the bold cells, in every area but one, most or nearly all of the students reported that their initial problem improved. The exception is seen in the first cell, where 66% of the students who reported having a problem with their behavior indicated that this issue had improved since attending the alternative school.
- Regardless of their problem, nearly all students (92%-100%) were likely to report improvements in their grades.

Table 29
Mount Vernon and River Oaks Student Problems (N=72)

Before you came to this school, which of these were a problem for you?	Since you started coming to this school, in which of these areas do you feel you have improved?						
	Getting in trouble for behavior n=34 (47%)	Grades n=61 (85%)	Handing in homework on time n=44 (61%)	Participating in class n=36 (50%)	School attendance n=30 (42%)	Learning math n=24 (33%)	Learning to read n=16 (22%)
Getting in trouble for behavior n=50 (69%)	33 (66%)	46 (92%)	30 (60%)	26 (52%)	20 (40%)	20 (40%)	14 (28%)
Bad grades n=49 (68%)	29 (59%)	48 (98%)	36 (74%)	29 (59%)	24 (49%)	22 (45%)	13 (27%)
Handing in homework on time n=44 (61%)	24 (55%)	42 (96%)	36 (82%)	29 (66%)	21 (48%)	21 (48%)	13 (30%)
Participating in class n=26 (36%)	17 (65%)	26 (100%)	20 (77%)	22 (85%)	13 (50%)	13 (50%)	10 (39%)
School attendance n=19 (26%)	12 (63%)	18 (95%)	16 (84%)	15 (79%)	17 (90%)	11 (58%)	10 (53%)
Learning math n=15 (21%)	9 (60%)	14 (93%)	10 (67%)	10 (67%)	6 (40%)	13 (87%)	7 (47%)
Learning to read n=9 (12%)	6 (67%)	9 (100%)	5 (56%)	7 (78%)	6 (67%)	6 (67%)	8 (89%)

Note: Students were asked to choose all answers that were true for them. Bold cells indicate the same problem area.

Overall, school attendance and bad grades were the primary problems selected by students prior to attending Mary Phillips. Learning to read was not a problem for most students. Patterns of improvement by problem area were less consistent for Mary Phillips students ranging from 56% reporting improved attendance to 100% in learning to read.

- Although 65% of students selected attending school as their main problem area, as shown in the first cell, just over half (56%) of these students indicated that the problem had improved since attending Mary Phillips.
- Nearly all students (93%) who had bad grades experienced improvements; however, students were likely to think their grades were better, regardless of their initial problem (71%-93%).
- Although few students had a problem learning to read, all said the problem was better.

Table 30
Mary Phillips Student Problems (N=109)

Before you came to this school, which of these were a problem for you?	Since you started coming to this school, in which of these areas do you feel you have improved?						
	School attendance n=45 (41%)	Grades n=88 (81%)	Getting in trouble for behavior n=35 (32%)	Handing in homework on time n=43 (39%)	Participating in class n=60 (55%)	Learning math n=27 (25%)	Learning to read n=13 (12%)
School attendance n=71(65%)	40 (56%)	59 (83%)	29 (41%)	33 (47%)	44 (62%)	15 (21%)	8 (11%)
Bad grades n=69 (63%)	33 (48%)	64 (93%)	27 (39%)	35 (51%)	45 (65%)	19 (28%)	8 (12%)
Getting in trouble for behavior n=49 (45%)	27 (55%)	43 (88%)	33 (67%)	27 (55%)	35 (71%)	11 (23%)	5 (10%)
Handing in homework on time n=48 (44%)	24 (50%)	41 (85%)	24 (50%)	32 (67%)	35 (73%)	15 (31%)	8 (17%)
Participating in class n=42 (39%)	21 (50%)	39 (93%)	19 (45%)	25 (60%)	36 (86%)	11 (26%)	6 (14%)
Learning math n=15 (14%)	6 (40%)	13 (87%)	5 (33%)	10 (67%)	11 (73%)	10 (67%)	2 (13%)
Learning to read n=7 (6%)	2 (29%)	5 (71%)	2 (29%)	4 (57%)	4 (57%)	4 (57%)	7 (100%)

Note: Students were asked to choose all answers that were true for them. Bold cells indicate the same problem area.

According to Table 31, getting in trouble for behavior was the primary initial problem for most (71%) students prior to attending Longview and learning to read was a problem for the fewest (5%) students. As shown in the blue shaded cells, inconsistent patterns of improvement for each problem area are apparent, ranging from 38% to 100% of students reporting positive changes.

- As seen in the first blue shaded cell, 46% of students who got in trouble at their base school for their behavior felt that their behavior had improved since attending Longview.
- Each of the three students who had problems learning to read reported that the problem had improved.

Table 31
Longview Student Problems (n=58)

Before you came to this school, which of these were a problem for you?	Since you started coming to this school, in which of these areas do you feel you have improved?						
	Getting in trouble for behavior n=23 (40%)	Handing in homework on time n=14 (24%)	Participating in class n=22 (38%)	Grades n=23 (40%)	School attendance n=17 (29%)	Learning math n=18 (31%)	Learning to read n=11 (19%)
Getting in trouble for behavior n=41 (71%)	19 (46%)	12 (29%)	20 (49%)	17 (41%)	15 (37%)	14 (34%)	10 (24%)
Handing in homework on time n=21 (36%)	11 (52%)	8 (38%)	12 (57%)	10 (48%)	10 (48%)	8 (38%)	6 (29%)
Participating in class n=20 (34%)	7 (35%)	8 (40%)	13 (65%)	10 (50%)	10 (50%)	7 (35%)	5 (25%)
Bad grades n=15 (26%)	8 (53%)	6 (40%)	9 (60%)	8 (53%)	9 (60%)	4 (27%)	4 (27%)
School attendance n=13 (22%)	7 (54%)	7 (54%)	7 (54%)	8 (62%)	9 (69%)	5 (38%)	3 (23%)
Learning math n=5 (9%)	3 (60%)	2 (40%)	2 (40%)	3 (60%)	3 (60%)	4 (80%)	3 (60%)
Learning to read n=3 (5%)	2 (67%)	1 (33%)	1 (33%)	2 (67%)	2 (67%)	3 (100%)	3 (100%)

Note: Students were asked to choose all answers that were true for them. Bold cells indicate the same problem area.

A statistical analysis was conducted to assess whether the proportion of students who said a particular problem improved was significantly higher than the proportion of students who said the problem had not improved. The results for Mount Vernon, River Oaks, and Mary Phillips indicate that the alternative schools were influential in bringing about positive changes in nearly all problem areas. Longview results are less conclusive.

- Among Mount Vernon and River Oaks respondents, a significantly higher percentage of students made improvements in each problem.
- The same pattern occurred for Mary Phillips students with the exception of one problem area, school attendance.
- Longview results indicate a weaker pattern. Data show a significantly higher proportion of students who indicated improvements in the following areas: school attendance, class participation, learning to read, and learning mathematics.

Table 32
Statistical Analysis of Improvement in Initial Problems
since Alternative School Attendance

Initial Problem	Significantly higher proportion of students who said the problem improved compared to those who indicated no improvement.		
	Mount Vernon & River Oaks	Mary Phillips	Longview
School attendance	X	ns	X
Handing in homework on time	X	X	ns
Participating in class	X	X	X
Getting in trouble for behavior	X	X	ns
Bad grades	X	X	ns
Learning to read	X	X	X
Learning math	X	X	X

Note: ns = No significant difference; z statistic was computed to test for significance at ≤ 0.05 .

Qualitative Input

At the end of the survey, alternative school students were asked to describe what they like best and least about their school. Responses to these qualitative questions were sorted by school and analyzed for emergent themes. Findings indicate that the aspects of attending an alternative school that students like best include the positive relationships with their teachers, small classes, and some of the benefits they receive. Students dislike being required to wear a uniform and conform to the school's dress code. Ironically, some students also mentioned the teachers when describing what they like least about their alternative school.

What do students like best about their alternative school?

Among each of the alternative schools, the presence of caring and supportive teachers was a common theme within student responses to the inquiry about what they like best about their alternative school. Student responses varied from simple statements such as "the teachers," to

more detailed examples about how they feel about the teachers. One middle school student stated that, "I like how the teachers like to listen and they care...." Other students made similar comments such as, "It's easy to talk to teachers" and "...there's always some type of adult who you can go to talk to if you are having a bad day or have a problem." Longview students mentioned the academic support provided by teachers. One student reported that "One of the teachers in this school would not give up on me, she won't let me fail." Another notable comment from a student speaks to teacher support at Longview: "...teachers do work with you through the good and the bad." Finally, some student parents described the support they receive from teachers at Mary Phillips. For example, one teenage mom said that "I like that I have a closer relationship with my teachers and that the school helps me with my situation (being a teen mother)."

Small class size was another shared positive aspect of attending the various alternative schools. Most students simply cited "small class size" as something they like best about the alternative school. Occasionally, students offered their perspective on the benefits of small classes, for example, "...teachers can spend one on one time with you" and "the classes are small so that individual students can get the help they need!"

Students at Mount Vernon/River Oaks and Mary Phillips also like certain benefits they receive at the alternative schools. Middle school students talked about being rewarded for their good work and behavior. For instance, students often mentioned "Friday specials" as being "...rewards for doing your work and doing good." High school students at Mary Phillips mentioned the opportunities they are given to succeed, such as being allowed to finish their work, having extra time to learn, and feeling less pressure about grades. Other students commented on how attending Mary Phillips promotes a successful future. One student stated that "It (Mary Phillips HS) helps you get back on track so that you are able to graduate and go to college." Another student commented that "If it wasn't for Mary E. Phillips I know I wouldn't have [gone] this far and wanted to complete school. I would have stayed dropped out." Furthermore, several students mentioned their ability to "graduate quicker" due to fewer required credits for graduation.

What do students like least about their alternative school?

A theme that was clearly evident in both the middle and high school surveys is student aversion to the alternative school dress code. The majority of alternative students from each school simply wrote "the dress code" or "uniforms" when asked about what they like least about the alternative school. No one provided an explanation for why he or she dislikes this requirement.

Teachers were mentioned by students as either one of the features they like best about the alternative school or the least. Whereas many students commented on the positive relationships they have with their teachers, other students spoke less favorably about their teachers. Some students' dislike of teachers seemed to be focused on individuals and personalities based on comments such as "I don't like the way certain teachers act," and mentioning teachers specifically by name or the subject they teach. Other students offer more general perspectives of the teachers based on statements such as not liking "teachers' attitudes about the kids," or "the way the teachers talk to students." One student in particular mentioned that "I don't like that some teachers look at us differently, as if all of us are bad."

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL STUDENT OUTCOMES: LONGITUNDINAL ANALYSES OF ENTERING COHORTS OF ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

The following analyses track the educational progression of a cohort of students who in 2005-06 entered Mount Vernon as 6th-grade students or were admitted as 9th-grade students to either Longview or Mary Phillips. Demographic characteristics of the cohorts are provided as well as important attributes that are associated with being at-risk for academic failure. The students were followed for five years, through the end of the 2009-10 fall semester, based on available academic records. Significant transitions such as transferring out of the district or back to a base school, dropping out of school, and graduating are indicated.

At the end of the 2005-06 school year, 11 students were enrolled as first-time 6th-grade students at Mount Vernon. Of these 11 students, four entered during the fall or early winter months and seven other students entered during second semester. Thirty students were enrolled at Longview as first-time 9th-grade students¹⁰ at the end of the 2005-06 school year. Of those 30 students, 23 entered during the fall or early winter months and seven other students entered during the second semester. During the same school year, 72 students were newly enrolled as freshmen¹¹ at Mary Phillips. Of these 72 students, 50 (69.4%) entered during the fall or early winter months, and 22 other students entered during the second semester.

As shown in Table 33, a commonality among the alternative schools is that their served populations tend to be disproportionately FRL students.

- Males composed the vast majority of the 6th-grade class at Mount Vernon. The racial identifications of the students were more diverse than at either Longview or Mary Phillips; although slightly over half were identified as Black students.
- The majority of the 9th-grade students enrolled at Longview were Black male students with disabilities. All of the 9th-grade students were identified as SWD students in a public separate setting. Of these 30, 24 students (80.0%) were identified as having a serious emotional disability.
- Over two thirds of the freshmen attending Mary Phillips in 2005-06 were classified as Black females.

¹⁰ Eight other students were in the 9th-grade class in September 2005, but were removed from the research file because they were enrolled at Longview as 9th-graders during the previous year (2004-05) and were retained.

¹¹ Four other students were in the 9th-grade class as well, but were removed from the research file because they were enrolled at Mary Phillips in 2004-05 and had been retained at the end of the year.

Table 33
Demographics of Entering 6th or 9th-Grade Student Cohort, 2005-06

		Mount Vernon 6 th -grade N=11		Longview 9 th -grade N=30		Phillips 9 th -grade N=72	
		#	%	#	%	#	%
Gender	Male	9	81.8	25	83.3	23	31.9
	Female	2	18.2	5	16.7	49	68.1
Race	Asian	1	9.0	0	0	0	0
	Black	6	54.5	23	76.7	66	91.7
	Hispanic/Latino	0	0	0	0	1	1.4
	Multiracial	2	18.2	0	0	3	4.2
	White	2	18.2	7	23.3	2	2.8
At-Risk Categories	FRL	8	72.7	20	66.7	45	62.5
	LEP	0	0	0	0	1	1.4
	SWD	2	18.2	30	100	0	0

Mount Vernon Cohort

Each of the 11 students entering Mount Vernon as 6th-grade students in 2005-06 had been identified at their base schools as in need of instructional assistance because of academic difficulties due to retention, course failures, and/or suspensions. Almost all (90.9%) of these students repeated the 6th grade, 8 of the 11 students had failed at least one course in 2004-05, and over half of the students had been suspended prior to their admission to Mount Vernon, with three students having served long-term suspensions.

Figure 2 displays the yearly educational paths of this Mount Vernon cohort. After receiving approximately two years of service at Mount Vernon, four of the 11 students comprising the 6th-grade Mount Vernon cohort in 2005-06 made successful transitions to their base schools in 2007-08 as 8th-grade students. They started high school at their base schools the following year and were promoted to 10th-grade in 2009-10. One student who was retained in 2008-09 dropped out as of December 2009.

Year 1: Of the 11 students who entered 6th grade during the 2005-06 school year, two transferred out of the district, one transferred with no available data, and eight continued their education at Mount Vernon as 7th-grade students in 2006-07.

Year 2: Of the eight remaining students in the cohort, five students completed the 7th-grade and transferred to their base school. Two students transferred to the base schools during the fall semester and one during the summer, but no subsequent data are available to follow these students.

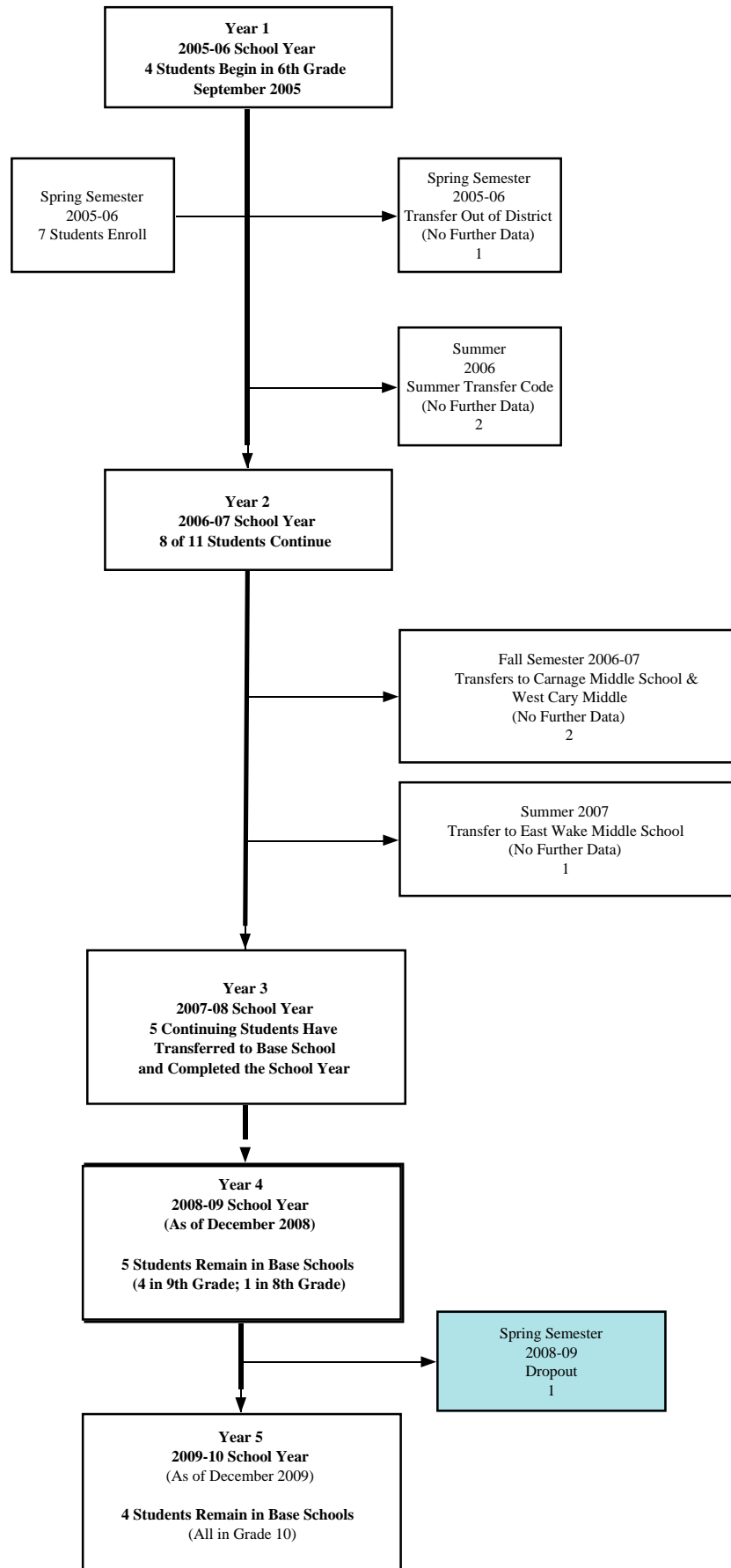
Year 3: The five students started as 8th-grade students at their base schools

Year 4: Four of the five students started high school at their base school. One student was retained in-grade.

Year 5: The 4 students continued their high school education and the other student dropped out of school.

Based on complete data for five of the 11 students as of December 2009, four students had made successful transitions to the base schools, started high school and had been promoted to 10th-grade. These students are making adequate process toward on-time graduation. The other student who can be following throughout the five year period was retained in 2008-09 and eventually dropped out.

Figure 2
Mount Vernon: 5-Year Educational Path of a 6th -Grade Cohort



Longview Cohort

Overall, 30 students were enrolled as first-time students in Longview's 9th-grade class at the end of the 2005-06 school year. Of those 30 students, 23 entered during the fall or early winter months, and seven other students entered during the second semester. The majority of these students are Black males with significant disabilities.

Figure 3 displays the yearly educational paths of this Longview cohort. Of the 30 students entering Longview High School 9th grade in school year 2005-06, three transferred to their base high schools during the spring semester of 2006-07. One of the three students graduated from their base schools in 2008-09, another dropped out and the other transferred. Over the next three years, thirteen students initially in the 9th-grade Longview cohort dropped out and nine transferred out of the system. Two students graduated from Longview in 2008-09. The remaining three students were retained and were attending Longview as of December 2009 (two in grade 10 and one in grade 11).

Year 1: Eighteen students entered Longview as 9th-grade students in September 2005. During the fall semester, five additional students started as 9th-grade students and one transferred out of the system. Seven other 9th-grade students were admitted in the spring semester. By this semester two students had dropped out and two others had transferred out of the district.

Year 2: Twenty-five of the thirty students who completed the 2005-06 school at Longview returned for the 2006-07 school year. Of those 25, three dropped out, one transferred out of the district, and three transferred to their base school.

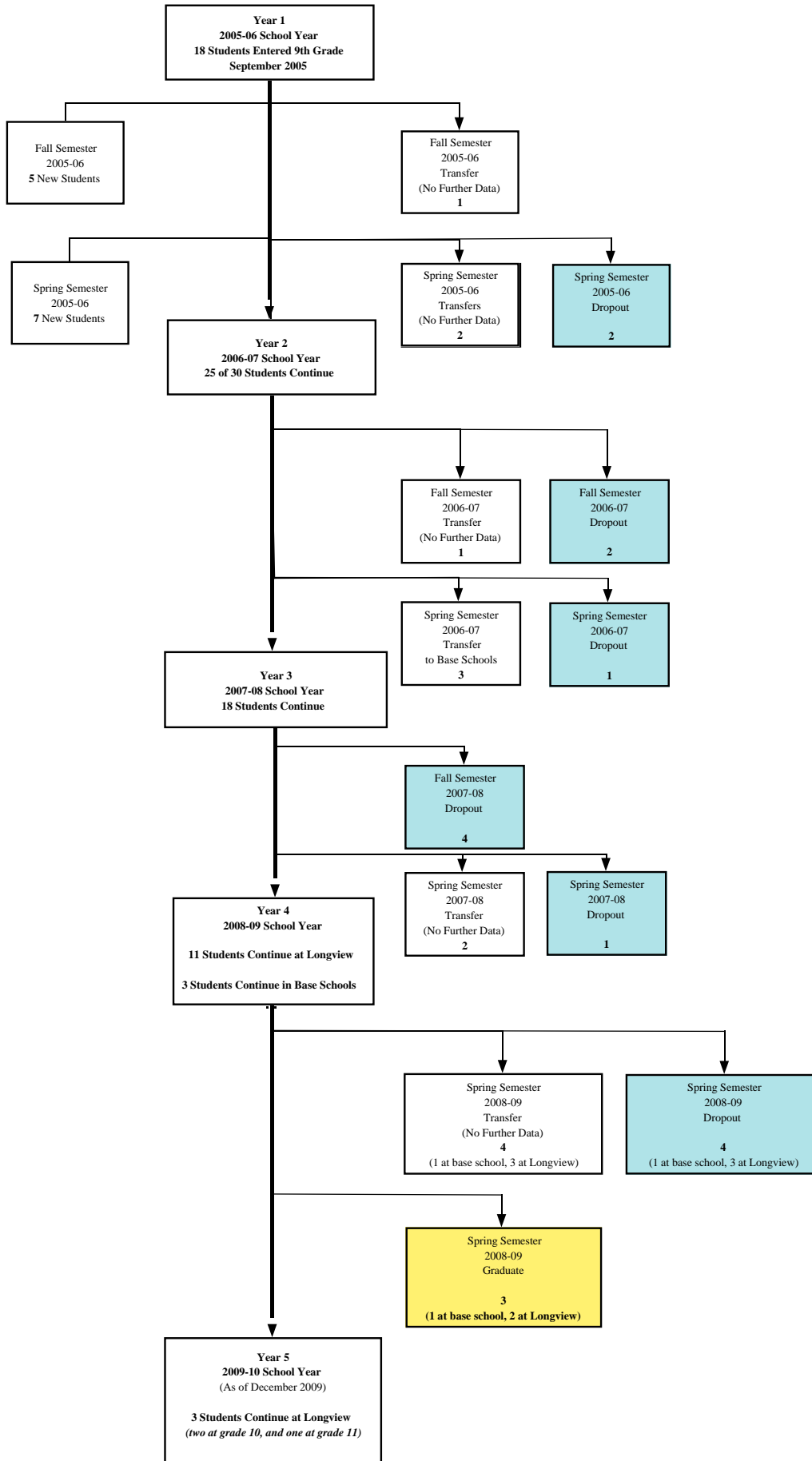
Year 3: Eighteen students were served another year at Longview. Five of these students dropped out and two transferred out of the district.

Year 4: Of the eleven students who returned to Longview in 2008-09, by the spring semester three had transferred out of the district, three dropped out, and two graduated. Of the three students who transferred to their base school, one transferred, one dropout out, and one graduated during the spring semester.

Year 5: The remaining three students were attending Longview (two in grade 10 and one in grade 11).

Based on complete data for 20 of the 30 students, three students graduated on-time during the 2008-09 school year. More than half of the students were academically unsuccessful as these 14 students dropped out of school. Three students were still attending Longview as of December 2009.

Figure 3
Longview: 5-Year Educational Path of a 9th - Grade Cohort



Mary Phillips Cohort

Prior to entering Mary Phillips as freshmen in 2005-06, many of the 9th-grade students had been retained in-grade, failed courses, and received suspensions. Although all 72 students were entering Mary Phillips for the first time as 9th-grade students, 39 of those students (54.2%) had been retained in 9th-grade one or more times. Nineteen of the 72 students had failed at least one class, with 14 students failing three or more courses. Twenty students had failed at least one EOG test and none of the students had taken alternative EOG tests. Less than one fourth (20.8%) of the students had been suspended in 2004-05 with seven of these 15 students receiving long-term suspensions.

In 2005-06, 72 students entered Mary Phillips as 9th-grade students. Slightly over one fourth (26.4%) of these students were early graduates, completing their high school education at Mary Phillips in two or three years (12 in 2006-07 and seven in 2007-08). Another student graduated from Mary Phillips in 2008-09 after 4 years of attendance. The progress for the other students is less impressive. Over half (58.3%) of the entering freshman class eventually dropped out of school. Some of these students were enrolled at Mary Phillips and others had transferred to another high school within the district when they abandoned their education. The majority (61.9%) of these drop outs occurred in 2005-06, during the students' 9th-grade year, a transition period when research indicates students are most vulnerable. The remaining nine students transferred out of the district. Figure 4 displays the educational paths of the analytical cohort from Mary Phillips by year.

Year 1: Forty-six students entered the Mary Phillips freshman class in September 2005. Four additional students started as 9th-grade students in the fall semester. The cohort was reduced by 15 students that semester, two from transfers out of the system and 13 who dropped out. An additional 22 students entered the freshman class in the spring. By this semester 12 students had dropped out and another had transferred out of the district. Three more students transferred during the summer and another student dropped out of school.

Year 2: Of the 40 students who continued their education at Mary Phillips in 2006-07, one transferred and six dropped out of school during the fall semester. An additional three students dropped out in the spring and another student transferred out of the system. There were 12 students who graduated this semester.

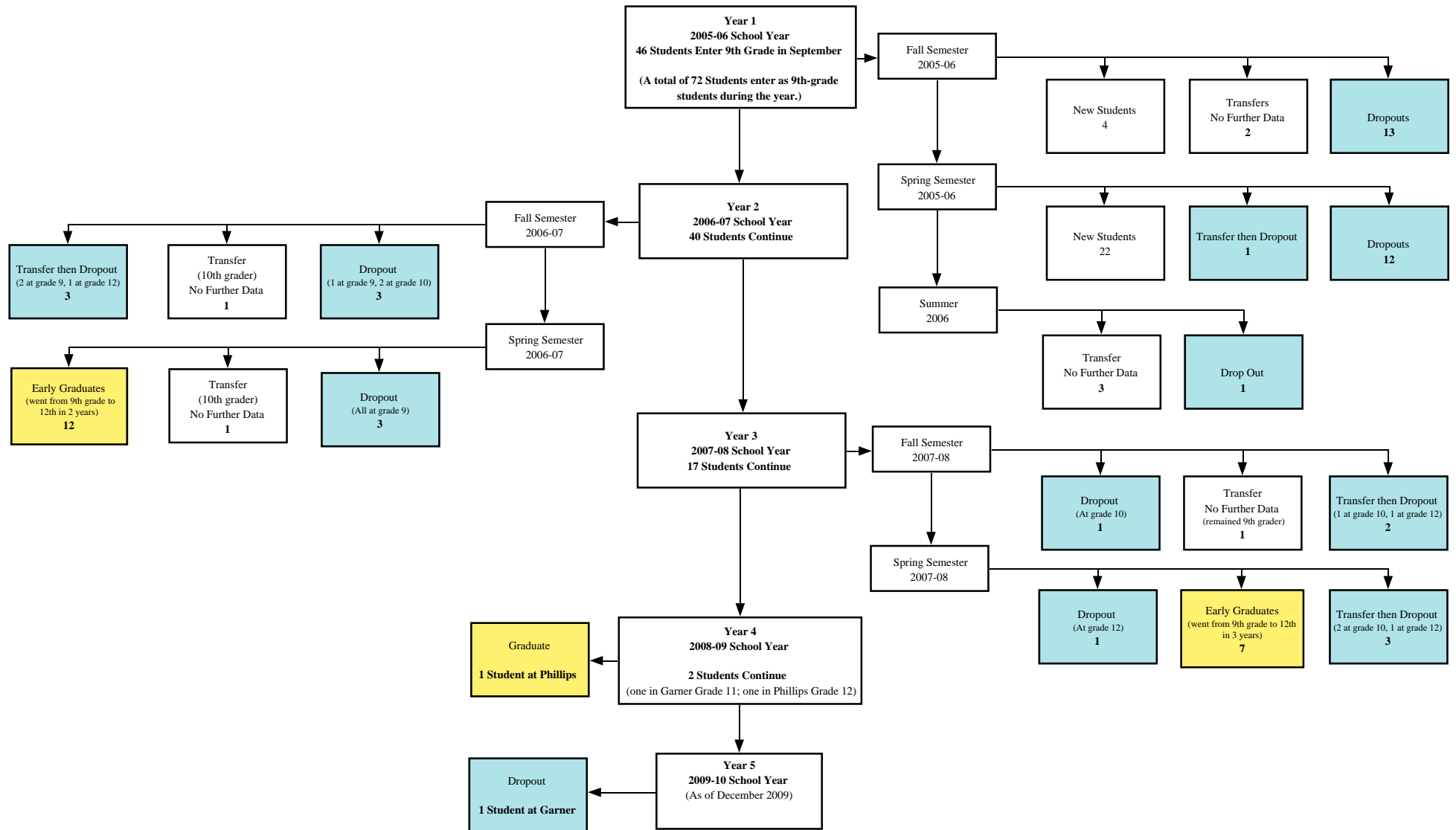
Year 3: Seventeen of the original 9th-grade cohort continued at Mary Phillips in 2007-08; however, seven of these students dropped out before completing the academic year at either Mary Phillips or another high school. There was one student transfer. An additional seven students graduated at the end of the spring semester.

Year 4: Only two students remained in the initial cohort by year 4 of the analysis. One student who had been on-track to graduate did so at the end of 2008-09. The other student moved on to Garner High School as an 11th-grade student.

Year 5: The remaining student had dropped out of Garner as of December 2009.

The progress of each of the 72 students is accounted for as of December 2009. Over half (44 students) of the cohort dropped out, many during their 9th-or 10th-grade year, and eight students transferred out of the district. The remaining 20 students graduated from Mary Phillips early or on-time. In fact, nearly all of the graduates (19) completed the graduation requirements in two or three years.

Figure 4
Mary Phillips: 5-Year Educational Path of a 9th - Grade Cohort



ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL STUDENT OUTCOMES: LONGITUDINAL ANALYSES OF BOOSTER COHORTS 1 AND 2

Students who have been retained in grade are at significantly greater risk of dropping out of school than students who are promoted to the next grade every year. A similar outcome may come to students who are over-age in grade for reasons such as parental choice or placement due to limited English proficiency. Dropping out of school may become an attractive option as these groups of students begin middle school and the age gap becomes more awkward. Regardless of their reason for being behind in grade level—academic difficulties or language proficiency—the Booster program gives motivated, over-age students a chance to catch up by taking on an increased workload, rejoining their class, and getting back on track to graduate on time.

The Booster program was implemented at Mount Vernon in the fall of 2007 with its first cohort of students. Spring of 2010 marked the initiation of the sixth cohort. A second Booster site was created at River Oaks and started serving students in the fall of 2009. Between 2007 and 2010, 77 students have participated in the Booster program. This analysis tracks the academic progress of 22 students in either Cohort 1 (Fall 2007) or Cohort 2 (Spring 2008).

Although each Booster cohort can serve as many as 15 students each semester, 11 over-aged 8th-grade students comprised the first Booster cohort and 12 over-aged 7th-grade students participated in the second cohort. Table 34 shows the demographic characteristics of each cohort. Cohort 1 consists of primarily Black/African American students receiving free or reduced-price lunch. There is slightly more ethnic diversity in Cohort 2, with fewer Black/African American students and more multiracial students. Additionally, one fourth of the students in the second cohort were LEP students and half were male. Fewer Cohort 2 students were FRL students compared to Cohort 1.

Table 34
Student Demographics, Cohorts 1 and 2

	Fall 2007 (n=11)	Spring 2008 (n=12)
Asian	1	1
Black	7	5
Hispanic/Latino	1	2
Multiracial	0	2
White	2	2
% Male	36%	50%
% FRL Students	82%	67%
% LEP Students	0%	25%
% SWD Students	9%	8%

Data Source: WCPSS Student Locator 2007 (June and September).

Graduation Requirements

Cohort 1 students were fast tracked through the 8th grade curriculum and were expected to transition to Mary Phillips as second semester 9th-grade students in the spring of 2008. These students would likely graduate in June of 2010 or June of 2011, depending on their educational progress and whether they remained at Mary Phillips. Cohort 2 students were fast tracked through the 8th grade curriculum and were expected to start 9th grade in Fall 2008 at their base high school, unless they preferred to attend Mary Phillips for a transition semester. They are expected to graduate in June of 2012.

Successful graduation is ultimately dependent on the number of credits earned and proficient scores on the major End-of-Course exams. At the time Cohort 1 or Cohort 2 students entered Mary Phillips, 20 credits were required for graduation compared to 26 credits at most base high schools¹². Most WCPSS high schools follow a 4x4 block schedule which allows students to attempt four credit hours a semester. Some Booster students have semesters with only three credit hours attempted due to mid-semester transfers or having a non-credit course. Alternatively, Booster students may have earned more than four credits in a semester if they transferred out of the district and came back again or if they have taken Nova Net courses.

To graduate with a diploma, the students also need to pass all of the "Big 5" EOC tests: Algebra I, English I, Civics/Economics, Biology, and US History. Students who do not pass these EOCs will receive a "certificate of achievement." A student may be considered to have passed an EOC under several circumstances:

- The student passed the EOC by scoring at or above proficiency Level III.
- The student passed the EOC within one standard error of measurement (SEM).
- The student passed the EOC through a principal's decision.

Booster Cohort 1

Table 35 shows the educational progress for each student in Cohort 1 by semester beginning in the Spring of 2008 through the Spring of 2010. Overall, about half of the students from the first Booster cohort have made or appear to be making expected progress toward on-time graduation. Among the initial 11 students who comprised the cohort, two students dropped out and two moved out of the district. Five other students have or will likely be successful in fulfilling the graduation requirements: one student graduated in June of 2010, one year earlier than expected; two other students are on-track to graduate during the 2010-11 school year, as expected; and considering their current progress, it is possible that two other students will graduate on-time as well.

Spring 2008: Each of the 11 students enrolled and completed the first semester at Mary Phillips as 9th-grade students. Each student took four credits this semester and 9 earned three or more.

¹² As of the 2009-10 school-year, entering freshmen at Mary Phillips must complete 21 credits toward graduation.

Seven students attempted the English I EOC and six passed. No other EOC tests were taken by the cohort in the spring of 2008.

Fall 2008: Out of the 11 students, six transferred to their base high school and the other five remained at Mary Phillips. One student who had transferred to a base school returned to Mary Phillips mid-semester. During the semester, Student J moved out of state and Student K, who was withdrawn from Mary Phillips on a long-term suspension, eventually dropped out. Seven of the nine remaining students had seven or more cumulative credits. By the end of the semester, Student B had met three of the EOC requirements. Three students (C, D, and G) had not passed any EOCs (only Student D had made an attempt).

Spring 2009: By the end of this semester, students should have earned 12 high school credits. Two of the nine remaining students (A and C) are on-track in terms of credits earned. Student B had met four of the EOC graduation requirements and Student A met three.

Fall 2009: Student H was withdrawn from Mary Phillips this semester due to poor attendance and Student I moved out of the district. Three of the remaining seven students (A, B, and C) earned 15 or more credits by the end of the semester. Student B also met all EOC exit requirements this semester. Both students A and C still need to pass one other EOC.

Spring 2010: Student A graduated from Mary Phillips, one year ahead of schedule. Student G dropped out. Of the remaining students, Student B and Student C have completed the EOC graduation requirements and are on-track to graduate during the 2010-11 school year from Mary Phillips. There is a chance that Students E and F can still graduate on-time from their base schools. The other students are not on a successful path toward on-time graduation: Student D has not passed any EOCs, and although Student H re-enrolled at her base school, she will likely not graduate on-time.

Of the seven Cohort 1 Booster students who were still attending WCPSS high schools as of the Spring 2010 semester, one student graduated early in June of 2010. Given their current progress and with careful planning, four additional students in Cohort 1 could graduate on-time during the 2010-11 school year.

**Table 35
Booster Cohort 1: Semester Data**

	Spring 2008		Fall 2008			Spring 2009		Fall 2009			Spring 2010	
	Cumulative Credits Earned	EOC Exit Requirements	Current Grade Level	Cumulative Credits Earned	EOC Exit Requirements Met	Cumulative Credits Earned	EOC Exit Requirements Met	Current Grade Level	Cumulative Credits Earned	EOC Exit Requirements	Cumulative Credits Earned	EOC Exit Requirements
Student A Graduate	4	English I - Met	10th	8	Algebra I - Met	12	Civics/Econ - Met	12th	16	Biology - Met	20	US History - Met
Student B progress on track	4	English I - Met*	9th	7	Algebra I - Met* Civics/Econ - Met	11	Biology - Met*	11th	15	US History - Met	18	
Student C progress on track	4		9th	8		12	English I - Met Civics/Econ - Met		16	Algebra I - Met US History - Met	20	Biology - Met
Student D not on track	3		9th	7	English I - Not Met	10	Biology - Not Met	11th	13	Algebra I - Not Met	16	Civics/Econ - Not Met
Student E possibly on track	4	English I - Met*	10th	8	Biology - Not Met	11	Civics/Econ - Met* Algebra I - Not Met	11th	14	US History - Not Met	18	Algebra I - Met
Student F possibly on track	4		9th	7	English I - Met+ (P) Biology - Met+ (P)	9	Algebra I - Not Met	11th	12		17.5	
Student G Dropout	1		9th	1		1		9th	2		Dropped Out	
Student H not on track	4	English I - Met	9th	8		11		11th	Withdrew this semester due to attendance.		13	Algebra I - Met Civics/Econ - Met
Student I out of district	2	English I - Met	9th	4		6	Civics/Econ - Not Met	10th	Withdrew - Moved out of County			
Student J out of district	4	English I - Not Met	9th	Withdrew - Moved out of County 12/2/08								
Student K Dropout	3	English I - Met	9th	Withdrew - Long-term suspended 10/3/08 - Dropped Out								

Note: Students A-D attend Mary Phillips, E-G transferred to their base school, Student H did not attend Fall '09, and students G-K withdrew or dropped out.
Met*: The student passed the EOC within one standard error of measurement (SEM). Met+ (P): The student passed the EOC through a principal's decision.

Booster Cohort 2

Table 36 shows the educational progress for each student in Cohort 2 by semester beginning in the Fall of 2008 through the Spring of 2010. Twelve over-age students participated in the Booster program in the Spring of 2008. Each of the 12 students was on-track to begin the 9th grade in the Fall of 2008, with seven of the students attending their base high school. One student moved out of the state that first semester and another student was incarcerated the following semester and eventually dropped out. The remaining 10 students have completed two years of high school. Thus far, at least two students are making sufficient progress toward on-time graduation and most of the others appear to be on the right track as well.

Fall 2008: Student L withdrew before the school year began due to a move out of state. Of the remaining 11 students, four attended Mary Phillips and the other seven attended their base high school. Student I withdrew that semester. The remaining 10 students attempted four credits this semester and six of them earned three or more. Student G did not earn any credits. Student A attempted the English I EOC and passed. No other student took an EOC.

Spring 2009: Student I, who withdrew in the Fall semester to have a child, re-enrolled. Student K was withdrawn due to incarceration and eventually dropped out. Three of the 10 students had eight cumulative credits and Student G continued with a cumulative total of zero. Four students took EOCs and Students A and C passed the English and Algebra EOC.

Fall 2009: Six students of the ten remaining students were promoted to the 10th grade. Students A and B have earned a total of 12 credits. Student A has passed three EOCs. Student C earned 11 credits and passed four EOCs. By the end of the semester, only Students E and F had not yet passed the English EOC.

Spring 2010: By the end of the semester, Students A and C were excelling academically and making good progress toward graduation compared to the other students in the cohort. After two years of high school, Students E and F have not yet passed the English EOC.

Of the ten Cohort 2 Booster students who were still attending WCPSS high schools as of the Spring 2010 semester, two are on-track to graduate in June of 2012. Given their current progress and with careful planning, six additional students in Cohort 2 could graduate on-time. It does not appear that the remaining two students can meet the graduation requirements prior to the expected graduation date.

**Table 36
Booster Cohort 2 Semester Data**

	Fall 2008			Spring 2009		Fall 2009			Spring 2010	
	Current Grade Level	Cumulative Credits Earned	EOC Exit Requirements Met	Cumulative Credits Earned	EOC Exit Requirements Met	Current Grade Level	Cumulative Credits Earned	EOC Exit Requirements	Cumulative Credits Earned	EOC Exit Requirements
Student A <i>progress on-track</i>	9th	4	English I - Met	8	Algebra I - Met	10th	12	Biology - Met	16	Civics/Econ – Met
Student B <i>possibly on-track</i>	9th	4		8	English I – Met Algebra I – Not Met	10th	12	Civics/Econ – Not Met	16	Biology – Not Met
Student C <i>progress on-track</i>	9th	4		8	English I – Met Algebra I - Met	10th	11	Biology – Met Civics/Econ - Met	15	
Student D <i>possibly on-track</i>	9th	1		5	English I - Met	10th	9		13	
Student E <i>not on-track</i>	9th	2		4		9th	7		11	Biology – Met Civics/Econ – Not Met
Student F <i>not on-track</i>	9th	3		5		9th	6*		7*	
Student G <i>possibly on-track</i>	9th	0		0		9th	4	English I - Met ¹ Biology - Met	6	Civics/Econ – Not Met
Student H** <i>possibly on-track</i>	9th	3		3		9th	5	English I - Met	7	
Student I <i>possibly on-track</i>	9th	0 (WF)		3		10th	7	Algebra I – Met English I – Met*	11	Biology – Not Met
Student J <i>possibly on-track</i>	9th	1		3		10th	6	English I - Met Algebra I – Met*	8	
Student K <i>Dropout</i>	9th	3		Withdrew – Student was Incarcerated 3/27/2009 – Dropped Out						
Student L <i>out of district</i>	9th	Withdrew – Student moved to Virginia 9/18/2008								

Note: Students A-G returned to their base school. Student H enrolled in base after being withdrawn from Mary Phillips due to attendance, I-J enrolled at Mary Phillips, and students K-L have withdrawn or dropped out. ¹Student G attended school out of state one semester and met the EOC exit requirement for English I. *Student F received incompletes on Nova Net courses and was given 1 credit in anticipation of completing and passing each course. Student I withdrew from Mary Phillips in the Fall of 2008 and re-enrolled the next semester. Met*: EOC requirement met within one standard error of measurement (SEM); Met+ (P): EOC requirement met through a principal's decision.

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL COSTS AND BENEFITS DESCRIPTION

This section of the study offers a description of the costs and benefits of the alternative schools and poses two key questions:

1. How are allotments different for alternative schools compared to base schools?
2. Do variations in allotments across alternative schools seem reasonable?
3. Have alternative school funds been fully utilized?

It was not possible to conduct a more comprehensive cost benefit analysis for several reasons: alternative schools have unique student populations, comparative data from other alternative schools across the state were not readily available, and it was not possible to monetize the alternative school's benefits. Clearly, alternative schools and base schools are different in many ways. Specifically, they differ in the allotments they receive. Providing small classes with greater support is a recognized strategy utilized by alternative schools to promote student time-on-task, decrease opportunities for misbehavior, and build meaningful relationships. As such, it is more difficult to calculate equitable allotments between base and alternative schools because they are different institutions. Alternative schools are characterized by small class sizes and the specific needs of the student populations served. The allotments of base and alternative schools also differ because it costs more to educate at-risk or SWD students because of the extra time, interventions, and resources needed to improve their behavior and academic outcomes. Although it is clear that the allotments vary, a more appropriate and informative question is how the allotments vary.

Two primary data sources were used for the descriptive analysis: the 2009-10 allotment calculation pages and the 2008-09 budget reports for each of the alternative schools. The 2009-10 allotment calculation pages for the alternative schools were examined and compared to representative base schools (which are not year-round or magnet schools) for key positions such as administrators, teachers, teacher assistants, and support staff. The base schools were not selected because they are similar to the alternative schools; rather, the base schools represent an average base school in WCPSS. Mount Vernon and River Oaks were compared to a representative base middle school (Holly Ridge) and Longview and Mary Phillips were compared to a representative base high school (Sanderson) to distinguish how alternative school's allotments and funding are provided in contrast to non-alternative schools. This analysis is important because allotment methods vary for the two sets of schools. Whereas non-alternative schools receive both instructional Months of Employment (MOEs) and non-instructional funds by a set WCPSS formula using a day 10 Average Daily Membership (ADM), alternative schools are staffed through decisions made by the Student Support Services Department (SSS)—namely the Assistant Superintendent for SSS and the Senior Director of Counseling and Student Services with input from schools. The alternative schools' non-instructional funds such as supplies and materials, travel, and contracts are based on a student count calculated by a WCPSS Senior Budget Analyst. These student counts (125 at River Oaks, 110 at Mount Vernon, 100 at Longview, and 300 at Phillips) are higher than the capacity at River Oaks and Mary Phillips, and lower than the capacity of Mount Vernon when considering the students served by Bridges.

The 2008-09 budget reports, which was the most recent complete budget available, were used as a second data source. These reports were analyzed to determine whether the schools spent all allotted funds and whether any surplus funds were transferred to the 2009-10 budget. The results may be helpful in determining whether allotments can be adjusted without negatively impacting the schools.

Alternative Schools Allotments for 2009-10

The 2009-10 allotment pages for Mount Vernon and River Oaks were compared to a representative base middle school (Holly Ridge) to distinguish how alternative school allotments and funding are provided in contrast to non-alternative schools. Likewise, the 2009-10 allotments for Longview and Mary Phillips were compared to a representative base high school (Sanderson). Funding for the Bridges program is included in the Mount Vernon allotment. The Booster program monies are also part of the Mount Vernon allotment, but were not identified separately in the River Oaks allotment.

Alternative schools have different staffing patterns than base schools based on standards for alternative school staffing set by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) as well as the characteristics of the student populations served in those settings. NCDPI standards recommend between 10-15 students per teacher. Funding for classrooms is determined by a state formula. The allotment for students in self-contained, special education programs for behavioral disorders, such as Bridges and Longview, is 8 students to 1 teacher and 1 teacher assistant. Longview is classified by NCDPI as a special school. All of the students served at Longview are eligible and receive special education services. Teacher assistant MOEs for Mount Vernon (based on the Bridges program) and Longview are allotted either by a state formula for classrooms serving SWD students or for specific students who require one-to-one assistance.

Table 37 summarizes the total staff allotments at the middle and high school level (see Appendix G for complete middle and high school level allotment information). In alignment with their purpose, the alternative schools offer smaller classes and greater support to students than the base schools.

- The most notable difference between the alternative middle schools and Holly Ridge is found within the support category in which River Oaks and Mount Vernon have 28 and 24 students per support personnel whereas Holly Ridge has 240 students.
- The pupil to teacher ratio is also considerably smaller for the alternative schools compared to Holly Ridge (4-5 to 1 compared to 17 to 1).
- There is a sizable difference between the alternative high schools and Sanderson among the teacher MOEs resulting in a very low pupil to staff ratio at Longview and Mary Phillips (4 and 7 to 1, respectively) compared to 17 to 1 at Sanderson.
- Longview also has larger MOE allotments for the given categories compared to Mary Phillips, even though its capacity is half the size, because it is a special education school that serves students with behavioral and emotional issues. The pupil staff ratio at Longview is

largely determined by state formulas and the majority of teachers are funded through special education funding, which is formula driven.

- The TA allotment at Mount Vernon and Longview is comparatively higher than the other schools because of the high SWD student population served by Bridges and by Longview.

Table 37
2009-10 Total Allotments

	River Oaks N = 65		Mount Vernon including Bridges and Boosters N= 165		Holly Ridge N = 1,224		Longview N = 100		Mary Phillips N = 200		Sanderson N= 1,988	
	MOE	Pupil to Staff Ratio	MOE	Pupil to Staff Ratio	MOE	Pupil to Staff Ratio	MOE	Pupil to Staff Ratio	MOE	Pupil to Staff Ratio	MOE	Pupil to Staff Ratio
Admin	24	33:1	24	83:1	41	358:1	24	50:1	12	200:1	60	398:1
Teacher	185.8	4:1	339	5:1	736	17:1	278.5	4:1	289.5	7:1	1191	17:1
TA	0	0	118	14:1	68	180:1	190	5:1	20	100:1	130	153:1
Student Support	23	28:1	69	24:1	51	240:1	41	24:1	21	95:1	66	301:1

Note: N = school capacity. Student support includes counselors, psychologists, and social workers.

Funding Deficits and External Funding Sources at Alternative Schools

When analyzed as a group compared to their non-alternative counterparts, the four alternative schools were noted to have zero employment or non-instructional fund allotments in the following areas:

- Academically Gifted MOE
- Curriculum and Instruction MOE
- LEP MOE
- Athletic funds
- Band equipment repair funds
- Instructional supplies - special programs funds
- Special Education - Field Trip funds
- Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

At the middle school level there was an absence of alternative school funding in the areas of teacher MOEs based on average daily membership (ADM). Middle school teaming MOEs and college preparatory success MOEs were also absent at both River Oaks and Mount Vernon. At the high school level, neither Longview nor Mary Phillips received child nutrition, transportation, speech or Student Assistant Program coordinator MOEs although Sanderson did. Additionally, the schools offer fewer electives than base high schools. Conversely, base schools are not funded by at risk MOEs, at risk field trip funds, and other teacher MOEs.

Alternative school principals also provided information about external sources of funding that have procured. Mount Vernon has a business alliance that was started in 2008-09. The school also receives a yearly contribution from the Women's Club to support Friday specials. Outside resources were anticipated to be scarce for the 2009-10 school year due to stark economic conditions. Mount Vernon does not have a PTA. According to the principal, River Oaks does not have a PTA either, or a business alliance, or any organized fundraising. Teachers and staff generously donate money and items and hold yard sales and bake sales to raise money. Mary Phillips has a business alliance which offers support to the school and a small PTA that holds fundraisers and assists with individual after-school tutoring. In 2008-09 the school received a 21st Century grant which provided after-school tutoring and activities for students. During the 2009-10 school year, another grant paid for a mentor to be in the school four hours each day. Longview has a business alliance which helps with fundraisers, but it does not have a PTA.

Alternative School Budget Reports for 2008-09

The 2008-09 adjusted year-end budget reports for River Oaks, Mount Vernon, Longview, and Mary Phillips were examined to determine whether the alternative schools had any surplus funds at the end of the year. Although base schools are allotted funds based on their 10th day ADM, alternative schools are not funded in this manner. In 2008-09, each of the alternative schools had a surplus that included funds that could be converted to cover other needs. Among the four alternative school budgets, each had a surplus from textbook funding in state dollars. It is typical for schools (alternative and base) to have a textbook surplus because they must be ordered before the next year's budget. Beginning in the 2010-11 school year, all surplus textbook funds will be recaptured.

Mary Phillips had a considerably larger surplus compared to the other alternative schools due to two sources unique to the school: grants and enterprise funds. Most of the surplus was from a 21st Century Community Learning grant. This money was carried over to the 2009-10 budget, which is typical of many multi-year grants. The daycare center at Mary Phillips also had a sizable surplus. When these surplus sources are not considered, the school's total surplus more closely matched Mount Vernon and River Oaks.

In 2008-09, the total **Mount Vernon** budget, including the Bridges program, was \$112,167 with a surplus of \$22,713 (20.2%).

- Most of the surplus for Mount Vernon (\$16,388) was textbook funding from state dollars.
- Local funds for the Bridges program are included in the total budget for Mount Vernon. Bridges had a surplus of \$1,330.
- A \$4,995 surplus was also found from local dollars.

The total **River Oaks** budget was \$51,078 with a surplus of \$23,609 (46.2%).

- \$22,099 of the surplus was in textbook funding from state dollars which could be converted to instructional supplies.
- River Oaks had additional staff development dollars from 2007-08 that carried over into 2008-09 and were fully utilized.
- A surplus of \$1,509 in local dollars was also noted.

In 2008-09, the total **Longview** budget was \$27,785 with a surplus of \$6,200 (22.3%).

- Nearly the entire surplus (\$5,098) came from textbook funds.
- Longview also had \$909 in surplus from local dollars.

The total state and local funds base budget for **Mary Phillips** was \$94,522. The total budget, including grant and enterprise funds was \$304,181. The surplus including grant and enterprise surplus funds was \$157,213 (without the grant surplus funds the total was \$82,045 and without the enterprise funds it was \$31,976 [33.8%].)

- In 2008-09, the Mary Phillips budget included monies from a 21st Century Community Learning grant in the amount of \$135,000. That same year there was a \$75,168 surplus of this funding, which presumably carried over to 2009-10.
- Additionally, the budget had an enterprise fund for their onsite childcare center with a surplus of \$50,070.
- Traditional surplus for Mary Phillips included a textbook surplus of \$26,425 and staff development surplus of \$106 from state dollars.
- There was a staff development fund surplus of \$964 from local dollars.
- Other local funds went to instructional supplies with a surplus of \$4,480.

Alternative School Benefits

The primary benefits students gain from attending one of the district's alternative schools compared to base schools are individual attention, individualized instruction, targeted interventions, social skills development, and greater opportunities to develop positive relationships with teachers due to the small teacher to student ratios. The small population size of the schools and allotments also give students greater access to counselors and social workers. Base school staff praise the academic and behavioral success of specific students attending the alternative schools. In general, River Oaks and Mount Vernon provide students with a structured and positive environment so that they can succeed academically and behaviorally. Longview and Mary Phillips also support positive academic and behavior transitions that will help students graduate. Students at Longview and Mary Phillips have fewer credits to earn toward graduation compared to most other high schools. The schools have comparable performance measures on state assessments and rates of dropouts, violent acts, and graduates as other alternative schools in North Carolina, with the exception of the larger number of violent incidents at Longview. Students attending Mount Vernon, River Oaks, and Mary Phillips believe that the schools had helped them to become more resilient through caring relationships, high expectations, and opportunities for participation. These students also perceive that these alternative school settings have helped to improve their grades.

IMPACT AND STUDENT OUTCOMES SUMMARY

The array of alternative educational options in WCPSS is similar to those available in other North Carolina school districts, although some gaps in service are present. The number of students capable of being served at each WCPSS setting is generally smaller than other districts of comparable size. Nevertheless, alternative school student outcomes based on state assessments and federal standards tend to be equivalent or higher compared to similar options in North Carolina school districts.

Data provided by survey participants indicate that Mount Vernon, River Oaks, and Mary Phillips are building resiliency in most students, based on agreement with statements measuring protective factors, caring relationships, high expectations, and opportunities for meaning participation. Survey data from Longview students offers less uniform findings. Overall, the small alternative settings that promote positive relationships with teachers are amenable to students. Alternative middle and high school students are not enthusiastic about the enforced dress code.

The longitudinal analyses of certain cohorts of students attending Mount Vernon, Longview, and Mary Phillips show that students have been academically successful whereas others have not. Based on complete data for five of the 11 Mount Vernon students, one student dropped out and the other four transferred to their base schools and are making adequate progress toward on-time graduation. Twenty of the initial 30 students in the Longview cohort could be followed over five years. Three of the 20 students graduated on-time during the 2008-09 school year, 14 students dropped out, and the other three were still enrolled at Longview as of December 2009. Of the 72 students in the Mary Phillips cohort, 20 students graduated from Mary Phillips early or on-time, over half (44 students) dropped out, and eight moved out of the district.

Students in the first Booster cohort are expected to complete high school in the 2010-11 school year. Two students have dropped out of school, two moved out of the district, and one student graduated early from Mary Phillips in June of 2010. Among the remaining six students, four appear to be making adequate progress toward on-time graduation. One student from Cohort 2 dropped out and another moved out of the district. Among the 10 students who were still attending WCPSS high schools as of the Spring 2010 semester, two are on-track to graduate in June of 2012. Given their current progress, six additional students could graduate on-time.

Unlike base schools, alternative schools do not receive both instructional Months of Employment (MOEs) and non-instructional funds based a 10 day ADM. Alternative schools have different staffing patterns than base schools based on standards for alternative school staffing set by the state, as well as the characteristics of the student populations served in those settings. The alternative schools' non-instructional funds such as supplies and materials, travel, and contracts are based on a student count, which in most cases do not match the school's capacity.

DISCUSSION

Although base school personnel know about some of the options and make appropriate student referrals, specific information about the alternative schools and program should be more transparent. Better communication on the purpose, target populations, unique services, and transition assistance may be necessary to enhance transparency for River Oaks since its repurposing and at Mary Phillips and Longview. Base high school personnel need more clear information about the alternative options for high school students, exactly who to refer and what and how long services are offered.

WCPSS alternative schools serve similar student groups as other alternative settings in North Carolina school districts. The largest gaps appear to be in serving more at-risk elementary students, supporting a site for students with severe behavioral issues who are not eligible for special education services, providing comprehensive services, in the form of a separate setting, to students serving long-term suspensions, and collaborating with community agencies to support students. The capacity at the alternative educational options in WCPSS is lower than similar schools in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Guilford, and FCPS. Overall, the needs of students district-wide seem to be disproportionate to the number of students the alternative settings are currently able to serve.

Alternative school principals were asked to provide referral and acceptance data for the 2009-10 school year. As shown in Table 38, although the number of referrals Bridges, Mount Vernon, and River Oaks received did not exceed their student capacity; however, acceptance rates were not at 100%. It is likely that Bridges, Mary Phillips, and Longview had to maintain seats for returning students, which reduced the number of students they could accept. For instance, a large number of students remain at Mary Phillips each successive year as students typically maintain their enrollment until they meet the graduation requirements. The students who request to return to their base school are generally Booster program students and students who were placed at Phillips by the Wake County Board of Education in lieu of a long-term suspension. It is also possible that some referred students simply did not meet profile criteria. Clearly, additional resources are necessary to meet the needs of middle and high school students with moderate to severe behavior issues who have also been identified as SWD and may be at risk for academic failure.

Table 38
2009-10 Referral Data

	2009-10 Referrals	2009-10 Acceptance Rate	School Capacity
Bridges	46	84%	60
Mount Vernon	89	79%	90
River Oaks	81	69%	65
Longview	44	not available	100
Phillips	228	44%	200

WCPSS alternative school student outcomes are generally comparable or higher than alternative schools in other North Carolina districts based on state assessments and federal standards.

Beyond academic achievement, WCPSS alternative school students reap other benefits. According to WCPSS staff and student survey data, the primary benefit of the district's alternative schools and programs is the availability of smaller classes. Because the student population size is considerably lower within these settings compared to base schools, students benefit from lower teacher/student ratios which promote relationship building and individual attention. Students have greater opportunities to access school-based counseling services at alternative schools because the counselors and social workers serve fewer students and can allot more individual time to helping students manage their mental, emotional and/or behavioral challenges.

Alternative environments have the potential to build student resiliency. When asked about the benefits alternative schools provide to students that have the potential to make a long-life impact, none of the administrators mentioned helping students becoming more resilient. Utilizing protective factors to improve resiliency may not be part of their current goals. Student data do indicate that protective factors are being used to build resiliency for many middle and high school students in WCPSS alternative settings, though not in a consistent or uniform manner across the schools.

Because behavior problems and academics are often tightly linked, each can affect the other, which may pose a challenge in determining which area should be the primary focus of intervention. That is why many alternative schools try to focus on each area simultaneously. The majority of students at Mount Vernon, River Oaks, and Mary Phillips reported having a behavior problem and an academic problem.

Nearly all students who were earning poor grades at their base school reported getting better grades at Mount Vernon, River Oaks, and Mary Phillips. This is likely due to more individual attention from teachers and the extra support and opportunities students are given to complete their work at each of these schools. According to the principals, students are given multiple chances to succeed academically, so if they put in an effort, they are likely to see improvements in areas such as grades, participating in class, or handing in homework on time. Data indicate that these alternative settings have been helpful in improving students' grades, although students may still get in trouble for behavior.

Students in the first Booster who remained at Mary Phillips for their high school education appear to have made greater academic advancements than those who returned to their base school. This is not the case, however, for Cohort 2 students. Other than requiring fewer credits toward graduation, the impact of staying at Mary Phillips on the student's progress toward on-time graduation is unclear. Although they started out with roughly equivalent numbers of students, Cohort 1 lost twice as many students than Cohort 2. Within Cohort 1, two students dropped out and another two moved out of the district compared to one dropout and one out-of-district transfer from Cohort 2. The Booster program has been beneficial to some students. In June of 2010, the first Booster student graduated early and several others are on-track to graduate on-time. It is premature to predict whether Cohort 2 students will graduate on-time, as they have only completed two years of high school. That being said, current data indicate that most students are likely to be successful if they continue on their current trajectory. The support and guidance of the Booster counselors and school counselors may contribute to their success.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Increase the capacity for serving students districtwide by creating more alternative options for students

Given survey respondents' estimates of the numbers of current students who would benefit from an alternative educational experience, the need for service exceeds current capacity. Several respondents expressed the opinion that capacity at Bridges and the other alternative schools is inadequate given the needs of the district. WCPSS should consider expanding alternative options for at-risk elementary students in particular.

Additional settings are needed for students with severe problem behaviors who do not qualify for special education services, as well as centers for students who are serving long-term suspensions. Currently, the SCORE program is available for long-term suspended middle and high school students to continue their education in an online learning environment. This program was recently implemented, so its effectiveness is not yet known. The district should also explore how it handles long-term suspended students and whether a separate alternative setting could be created to serve these students. Currently, students who have been long-term suspended cannot attend any WCPSS school. Additionally, WCPSS should investigate alternative education models that partner with community agencies to serve the comprehensive needs of students and their families within a shared site.

Base schools could implement onsite programs that would offer extra support to students who might otherwise be referred to an alternative environment. Providing service to base students might mitigate the need for opening additional alternative sites. Base schools are often not capable of reducing their student populations and creating smaller classes; however, other small groups can be created to offer remediation, after-school support, tutoring and mentoring, and more intensive positive behavior interventions and supports. Opportunities for supplemental individual or small group assistance may also support relationship building.

Recommendation 2: Make information about the alternative education options more readily available and accessible and clearly specify the purpose and target population served.

Current Web sites may include some of this information; however, improvements can be made. School Web sites should offer consistent and comprehensive information about the purpose of program, target population served, referral process dates, unique services offered, typical length of service, and transition expectations. Each school might have a "Frequently Asked Question" link. Additionally, Mount Vernon and River Oaks might consider having a link for which base school personnel can obtain information about the Booster program. Ideally, Mount Vernon should add a link to the Bridges program on their Web site. Perhaps information about the available alternative options could also be shared at meetings for principals.

There is little consensus among River Oaks survey respondents on its primary focus. It is possible that sending schools are less aware that River Oaks was recently repurposed to be the companion school to Mount Vernon. Improved communication about this change may be necessary. Alternative schools serving high school students may more effectively serve the district by promoting their school and its mission or even recreating a school mission. Base high

school personnel were much less certain of the primary focus of Longview than were base middle school personnel. Longview's mission, in particular, offers vague information about the purpose of the school. Responses to the Mary Phillips survey also suggest a lack of information and awareness about the school's primary purpose. Improved communication about the alternative high schools is very important in ensuring that services are provided to students who may be at-risk of dropping out.

Survey findings of base school personnel indicate that in some instances, sending schools have a general idea of where to send students with certain risk factors. The primary reasons for referral to Mount Vernon and River Oaks align well with their mission and target student population. Typically noncompliance students with academic issues are referred. Although student behavior is an area of consideration for referral to these schools, the behavioral challenges are relatively minor. Nevertheless, administrators and staff indicated that they would refer some students with severely disruptive or dangerous behavior to Mount Vernon, River Oaks, and Mary Phillips, even though these school are not designed to support these students. Respondents seemed less certain of the types of student to refer to Mary Phillips, although poor attendance and academic performance were most common reasons for referral. Overall results suggest a need for greater transparency regarding the targeted student population at these schools.

Recommendation 3: Increase communication to base schools regarding the services available and student progress and establish a more standardized transition process.

Districtwide, alternative schools and programs are most commonly characterized by alternative and base school personnel as giving students the opportunity to be educated in small classes with a low teacher to student ratio. Survey results show that offering smaller classes is the primary service respondents expect alternative settings to provide. Yet, alternative schools and programs also offer counseling services that differ in frequency or intensity compared to base schools. According to the survey data, base school administrators and staff expect the extra counseling and social work services yet are less aware that Mount Vernon also promotes peer mediation. Similarly, the River Oaks and Mary Phillips administrators stated that the small size of the schools allows students to more frequently access the counseling services. Students also receive peer mediation and social skills training more often than they might at a base school. The school's social workers also work very closely with families.

In contrast to the survey findings in which base school personnel expected Bridges to offer peer mediation services and to a lesser extent, psychological counseling, neither of these services are available according to the program coordinator. As expected, Bridges does offer more intense crisis and behavioral intervention and social work services. Longview offers students fewer academic counseling services and more intensive psychological counseling and social work services compared to what they might receive at their base schools.

Data also suggest WCPSS staff are not consistently aware of the expected length of service and transition expectations at alternative settings and would like improved communication about student progress and impending transitions. Mary Phillips respondents are more likely to believe that students will remain there rather than transition back to their base schools. Given that Mary Phillips intends for students to remain at their school until they graduate, this belief aligns with

reality. It is a misconception that students attending Mount Vernon or River Oaks tend to matriculate to Longview or Mary Phillips. In general, these students attend their base schools.

The first Booster cohort is expected to graduate during the 2010-11 school year. One student graduated early in June of 2010 and data indicate that some other students may graduate on-time. The progress of the other Booster cohorts should continue to be monitored and evaluated at an appropriate time. Joint efforts should be made by counselors and students to judiciously select courses that are required for graduation to optimize student's potential advancement each semester.

Most respondents think that alternative schools do provide some services to students who are returning to a base school setting. As shown in the survey data, Mary Phillips is perceived to offer the fewest transition services and in fact, students do not often transition from the school. It appears that Bridges and Longview are believed to provide the greatest array of service, and this perception appears to reflect reality.

Recommendation 4: Frequently review and adjust alternative school allotments.

The alternative schools' non-instructional funds such as supplies and materials, travel, and contracts are based on student counts that tend to be higher or lower than the capacity for nearly all of the schools, with Longview being the exception. These counts should be reviewed and adjusted annually.

Recommendation 5: Increase the intentional building of protective factors at alternative schools to increase resiliency among students facing life challenges.

It is not clear whether alternative school principals are purposefully building protective factors and resiliency in their students. However, student survey data show that most students at Mount Vernon, River Oaks, and Mary Phillips, and about half of the students at Longview believe they have learned resiliency skills in the alternative setting. This finding may suggest that staff prioritize and intentionally build protective factors to foster student resiliency.

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**Appendix A
Alternative Schools in Selected North Carolina Districts**

Purpose and Population Profiles

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS)					
	Mission/Goals	Target Student Population	Capacity	Teacher Student Ratio	Referral Process
Morgan School (Grades K-12)	The mission of Morgan School is to assure that its students: Learn new behaviors that will enable them to improve their academic and social growth; Receive guidance, training, and experience to successfully transition from school to perform productively in the workplace; Learn the academic and social skills necessary to function independently in society; Receive coordinated services from the agencies who serve their needs, and teach them to advocate for themselves; and Learn that success is possible.	Students in need of special education services. Every student has an IEP.	100	2:6 to 2:10 (1 Teacher and 1 TA)	Students are placed here through the IEP process
Turning Point Academy (Grades 4-12)	To redirect student behavior through positive programs that provide rigor, relevance and relationships geared towards building self-esteem, responsibility, leadership, community service and academics.	Students who have violated the student code of conduct (level IV or V offenses) and are suspended.	200	Approx. 16:1	Area discipline administrators assign students.
Hawthorne High School (Grades 6-12)	Hawthorne High School was established with a vision that all students have academic potential and when provided a nurturing and challenging academic environment, each can achieve success.	Students who are behind academically or like smaller classes, but all others can apply. This is a technology oriented school.	350-400	Approx. 1:20	Students are not assigned to this school; they apply through a counselor referral. The school decides whether they will accept the student.
Midwood (Grade 9)	Midwood is a 9th grade transitional, drop-out prevention initiative, school whose focus is building character and achieving academic success through educating the whole child and providing remedial instruction to underachieving students to ensure their readiness for the high school experience.	Students who passed the eighth grade gateways but have aged out of middle school and whose home schools are: West Mecklenburg High, West Charlotte High, and E.E. Waddell High.	250	1:10	The students are selected from a list generated after the first End of Grade (EOG) exam is given.

Durham Public Schools					
<p>Lakeview School (Grades 6-12)</p>	<p>To empower each student utilizing a systematic approach that maximizes academic potential, promotes life-long learning, and develop skills necessary for re-entry into a traditional setting.</p>	<p>Middle and high school students who have a history of chronic misbehavior and/or who have received a long-term suspension. Students must be at least 12 years old.</p>	<p>124</p>	<p>1:12</p>	<p>Students attend during the long-term suspension process--even while in process of review. Special education students can attend for short-term suspensions (5-10 days) and some 45 day placements. Principals can also recommend based on security risk through the superintendent.</p>
Forsyth County Schools					
	Mission/Goals	Target Student Population	Capacity	Teacher Student Ratio	Referral Process
<p>Kennedy Learning Center (Grades 5-9)</p>	<p>The mission of Kennedy Learning Center is proficiency for all students in all subjects in an atmosphere that is safe and caring.</p>	<p>LEAP- retained middle school students.</p> <p>Gateway Prep Academy – grades 6-8 who are below grade level.</p> <p>Millennium Academy – middle school students suspended for serious or repeated behavior disruption.</p> <p>ESL Academy – Immigrant students who have limited education experience and speak limited English.</p>		<p>1:12 to 1:15</p>	<p>LEAP- Spring application and interview process</p> <p>Gateway Prep Academy – Spring application and interview process</p> <p>Millennium Academy – assigned by assistant superintendent of middle schools.</p> <p>ESL Academy – screened at Newcomer’s Registration Center.</p>
<p>Griffith Academy (Grades 6-12)</p>	<p>To afford students the opportunity to experience success academically and behaviorally in an environment conducive to learning. Griffith Academy goals include increasing the graduation rate and reducing the dropout rate; to become a successful, productive member of society; to be successful in the school environment and the community, and to respect themselves and others with high esteem.</p>	<p>Middle (MS) and high (HS) school students who are long-term suspended.</p>	<p>60 in MS 125 in HS</p>	<p>1:20 in MS 1:3 – 1:25 in HS</p>	<p>Students are referred by the assistant superintendent.</p>
<p>Forsyth Middle College (Grades 11-12)</p>	<p>Forsyth Middle College is a program designed for High School students that may need an alternative academic environment to do his or her best academic work. The Forsyth Middle College will provide a student with a student-centered learning environment where each student will focus on individual educational choices, academic and vocational, relevant to a successful future.</p>	<p>High school juniors and seniors who are at least 16. They are academically motivated and mature enough to handle a college environment yet are potential drop-outs. May be mentally challenged, recovering alcohol users and drug addicts, pregnant teens, or young moms and dads.</p>	<p>100 (currently at 180)</p>	<p>1:12 to 1: 15</p>	<p>School counselor, self-referral, parent referral, social worker referral.</p>

Guilford Public Schools					
	Mission/Goals	Target Student Population	Capacity	Teacher Student Ratio	Referral Process
Gateway Education Center (6mos -22yrs)	To dignify and respect children, follow IEP goals, make students as successful as possible. Embedding medical and therapeutic with instructional goals.	Students with severe mental and/or physical disabilities.	247	2:7 (1 Teacher and 1 TA)	IEP team at school refers students.
CD McIver Education Center (5-22 years)	A public separate school that prepares students to transition from school to work; and school to community; with dignity, humanity, and purpose.	Students ages 5-22 who are moderately to severely mentally challenged (developmental delays and autism), and whose special needs require a separate school setting.	130	Approx. 1:6	Students are referred by an IEP team.
SCALE-Greensboro (Grades 6-12)	We are implementing a positive behavior support model which teaches students responsibility of their actions, appropriate interactions with school staff and students, and thinking their way through road blocks and obstacles in a positive manner.	Grade 6-12 students with a long-term suspension.	200		Students are referred by a hearing officer.
Dean B. Pruette SCALE School (Grades 6-12)	To utilize a collaborative approach, which will empower each student to develop skills necessary for re-entry into a traditional setting, maximize their individual academic potential, and continue life-long learning.	Students in grades 6-12, who have been referred for long-term suspension, but assigned to Pruette SCALE, in lieu of out-of-school suspension. ~70% minority male.	150	1:18	Home school principals recommend long-term suspension and the hearing officer can decide on SCALE assignment. Students are referred through May.
High School Ahead Academy (HSAA) (8 th Grade)	The ultimate goal is to enable students to graduate from high school within a time frame that is in line with other students of their age group. Through immersion in core academic subject areas of language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, staff seek to accelerate student readiness for transition into high school.	Overage 8 th -grade students. Typical age is 13-14 yrs old.	99	11:15	Age criteria—current 6 th -grade students who would turn 14 while in 7th grade. It is a school of choice. No student is placed at HSAA. It is an agreement with HSAA, the student, and the parent.
Twilight School (12 th Grade)	To minimize educational loss for students excluded from classrooms or school. To bring about behavioral changes needed for re-entry. Behavioral models emphasizing self-discipline, social responsibility, and appropriate conflict management will enable excluded students to more successfully return to the regular classroom. To provide a system approach to serve excluded students. Providing a continuum of services for excluded students requires a strong collaborative effort between schools and the community.	Students meeting one or more of the following criteria who are within one year of attaining sufficient credits for graduation: Poor attendance Chronic misbehavior Other circumstances that make the regular school setting not a good fit.	125	Approx. 1:10	Students will be enrolled through a referral from their high school principal.

Note: SCALE = School Community Alternative Learning Environment.

Appendix A, Continued: Program and Transition Services

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS)				
	Program Services	Student Goals	Length of Service	Transition Process
Morgan School (Grades K-12)	Morgan School is the most restrictive placement and requires an IEP team decision. A points system is used for social and academic skills. The focus is to initially provide a high level of social skills instruction and later, to reduce reinforcement in an effort to help students become accustomed to logical consequences of their behavior.	Success is measured by a change in behavior as documented through SWIS data (Swis.org). which is used to track referrals and develop IEP's.	Average length of stay is 18 months to 4 + years.	Transitions involve a transition team, application, and contract. Expectations for transition include but are not limited to academic progress, regular attendance, ability to maintain a positive attitude, and self-monitoring skills.
Turning Point Academy (Grades 4-12)	Comprehensive Counseling Services; No Easy Walk - Social Skills/Gang Prevention Program; Future Seekers - Career/College Introduction Program; LEAP-for over-aged 8 th -grade students; Learning-Community and academic integration program; Character Education Program; ISS-Improving Student Stability in the classroom program.	Return to the home-school; No more than 3 suspensions; "C" average in course work; 80% attendance rate; and an improved attitude based on Positive Behavior Intervention and Support goals.	Assignments are 180 days with some 45 day exceptional children placements	The Transition Coordinator facilitates a meeting consisting of the student, parent, and representative from the home school upon the student's completion of assigned days. At this time, expectations are discussed for students returning and success plans are developed. The Transition Coordinator visits students periodically after returning to the home school as an intervention.
Hawthorne High School (Grades 6-12)	<u>The Day Program</u> , for grades 9-12, provides flexible scheduling and smaller classes that allow teachers to work directly with students while personalizing the learning experience. <u>TAPS</u> (Teenage Parent Services) provides a safe environment where students in grades 6-12 pursue academic growth while receiving support to ensure a healthy pregnancy. TAPS offers on-site child care, homebound teacher visits, and individual and group counseling. <u>Day Mastery Program</u> provides an opportunity for day students to earn additional credits through Mastery Learning. The Concurrent <u>Evening Program</u> operates from 3:30 to 6:30 p.m.; students from other CMS schools earn credits toward graduation requirements. Seniors are given priority in course registration.		Once accepted, students stay until they graduate	There are no transitions.
Midwood (Grade 9)	Midwood provides remedial instruction to underachieving students to ensure their readiness for the high school experience. The curriculum will provide students with an opportunity to complete English, Math, and a choice of five elective classes before exiting.	Students can earn up to eight credits and are promoted to 10 th grade if they pass the English I class and End of Course (EOC) exam.	Students are assigned for one or two years (depending on the number of credits earned).	Upon successful completion of the year long program, students can enter their assigned high school.

Durham Public Schools				
	Program Services	Student Goals	Length of Service	Transition Process
<p>Lakeview School (Grades 6-12)</p>	<p>Lakeview offers core subjects plus computer technology, reading and reading readiness, horticulture, skills for success, PE, and the arts. Services include counseling, case management, small classes, and crisis and behavior management. Any student suspended for more than 10 days with a recommendation for long-term suspension is eligible for "triage" services in the Intervention Center. Transition/blended classes with peers in a flexible structure that offers small group opportunities. A therapeutic setting for students with mental health issues. A detention center for adjudicate youth.</p>	<p>85% attendance, no out of school suspensions, passing 3 of 4 courses</p>	<p>Students remain for a determined period of time or until stated goals are met. They then return to home school or a less restrictive environment.</p>	<p>Transition meeting with home school representative, parents and others as appropriate at Lakeview. Students only return if suspended again.</p>
Forsyth County Schools (FCS)				
<p>Kennedy Learning Center (Grades 5-9)</p>	<p>There are four programs for unique populations.</p> <p>LEAP- small classes and intense instruction to get students back to correct grade by completing two years in one.</p> <p>Gateway Prep Academy – small classes to increase skills and get back on grade level.</p> <p>Millennium Academy – focus on academics, behavior, and good decisions.</p>	<p>Gateway and Leap use EOGs for indicators of success.</p>	<p>Millennium Academy – 2-3 months, depending on the severity of offense and the student reform.</p>	<p>Millennium Academy is the only program that transitions students back to regular school during the year.</p>
<p>Griffith Academy (Grades 6-12)</p>	<p>PBIS and a therapist are utilized for student’s behavioral problems.</p>	<p>No out-of-school suspensions.</p>	<p>A full quarter completed successfully.</p>	<p>Students “may” be allowed to return to their home school if the following criteria is met: A – Attendance must be 80% or higher B – Behavior must be acceptable C – Credits, passing 75% or more classes. Students must complete the quarter (start to finish) to be eligible to return to their home school.</p>
<p>Forsyth Middle College (Grades 11-12)</p>	<p>Forsyth Middle College is a choice high school that offers college credits to high school students. Dual enrollment in the Middle College and Forsyth Technical Community College allow students to take courses for credit toward both their high school diploma and college degree. Electives such as foreign language or advanced math can be taken from the community college. The school provides a fast paced individualized environment.</p>	<p>Students gain 23 credits and meet the graduation requirements.</p>	<p>Until graduation</p>	<p>Students who experience difficulty with the fast pace and want to transition back to a regular school. Conferences are held to make a decision.</p>

Guilford Public Schools				
	Program Services	Student Goals	Length of Service	Transition Process
Gateway Education Center (6mos -22yrs)	Greensboro Cerebral Palsy Association's Infant Toddler Program, an early intervention program focused on the needs of children 6 months to 3 years old. Pre-K program for children ages 3-5. School-based program for students age 5-22. Each student's curriculum is unique and guided by an IEP which may include areas of cognitive ability, self-help, vocational training, leisure and recreation, communication, physical and/or occupational therapies, and medication. The IEP is developed with the collaboration of teachers, therapists, parents/guardians, and students.	Due to the severe nature of each student's disability, all student goals are IEP-driven.	Until age 22, unless student is capable of moving to a regular school.	IEP process
CD McIver Education Center (5-22 years)	Instruction is offered to meet the needs of the individual student, focusing on math, language, and cognitive skills needed for everyday living. The programs are provided in the intensity required by the needs of the student, as determined by the IEP.	IEP dependent	Length of stay depends on the IEP team decision. A few months, a few years or until students are 22.	Some students who experience problems with early adjustment (kindergarten) may be able to transition back to their school after receiving services to develop speech, communication and behavior skills. IEP decision and process
SCALE-Greensboro (Grades 6-12)	Provides service during long-term suspensions.	Examines number of "write-ups" for behavior and grades.	Students typically attend until the end of the semester, 45 days on average, but some may stay up to an entire year.	A signed contract is used, but the principal makes the final transition decision.
Dean B. Pruette SCALE School (Grades 6-12)	Provides service during long-term suspensions.	Daily point sheet to evaluate student success each block, each day and each week. Quarterly benchmark assessments in all core subjects and quarterly grades are examined.	Average stay is 60+ days.	Base school is notified. SCALE Transition Counselor sets up the transition conference, prior to the student's reenrollment at the home school. At this conference, the student's progress (grades, attendance, behavior, etc.) at SCALE is discussed, the new schedule is developed, all paperwork for enrollment is completed, and a plan for follow-up is developed.
High School Ahead Academy (HSAA) (8 th Grade)	Small class sizes and students are able to benefit from individualized attention.	Examines teacher formative assessments, benchmarks, EOG, progress reports, and teacher assigned student projects.	1 year	Students will attend their zoned high school once they successfully complete the year at HSAA.
Twilight School (12 th Grade)	Diplomas available are the College/University Prep and the College Tech Prep with a Business Pathway. Regular or resource level services are provided as indicated on an IEP.	Graduation	2 semesters and summer school	Students do not transition back to their base school.

Appendix B
Base Middle School Assignments for Alternative Schools

River Oaks Middle Base Schools	Mount Vernon Middle Base Schools
Centennial Middle	Apex Middle
Dillard Drive Middle	Carnage Middle
East Millbrook Middle	Carroll Middle
East Wake Middle	Daniels Middle
Fuquay-Varina Middle	Davis Middle
Heritage Middle	Durant Middle
Leesville Middle	East Cary Middle
Martin Middle	East Garner Middle
Moore Square Museums Magnet Middle	Holly Ridge Middle
Wakefield Middle	Ligon Middle
Wake Forest Middle	Lufkin Middle
Wendell Middle	North Garner Middle
West Millbrook Middle	Reedy Creek Middle
Zebulon Middle	Salem Middle
	West Cary Middle
	West Lake Middle

Note: This table was originally provided by the alternative middle schools. Daniels Middle School was listed in the original table as a sending school to River Oaks. Administrators and staff at Daniels Middle School reported to E&R staff that they send students to Mount Vernon, so the table for this report was modified to reflect that information.

Appendix C
Sample Alternative Schools and Programs Survey

Alternative Schools and Programs Survey
Mount Vernon Middle School

Page 1 - Heading

The purpose of this survey is to evaluate district-level awareness of the Mount Vernon Alternative Middle School. Your feedback will help inform district decision makers as they strive to provide services to promote the academic achievement of all WCPSS students. The survey consists of fewer than 20 questions and should take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Page 1 - Question 1 - Rating Scale - Matrix

To what extent does the Mount Vernon Alternative Middle School do the following:

	Always	Almost always	Often	Occasionally	Not at all
focus on discipline/behavior management					
focus on academic remediation (direct instruction, remedial academic coursework, academic planning)					
provide counseling or social services (conflict resolution, anger abatement, mental health services, or therapeutic needs)					
provide short-term interventions (court-ordered, disciplinary consequence)					

Page 2 - Heading

Student Referrals

Page 2 - Question 2 - Choice - One Answer (Bullets)

Have you referred any students to Mount Vernon over the past three years?

- Yes
- No [Skip to 4]

Page 3 - Question 3 - Open Ended - One Line

Approximately how many students have you referred to Mount Vernon over the past three years?

Page 3 - Question 4 - Open Ended - One Line

How many of the referred students were identified to receive special education services?

Page 3 - Question 5 - Open Ended - One Line

How many of the referred students were being considered for long-term suspension?

Page 3 - Question 6 - Open Ended - One Line

Of those students referred to Mount Vernon, how many were accepted?

Page 4 - Question 7 - Open Ended - One Line

Currently, how many students in your school do you think would benefit from placement in Mount Vernon?

Page 4 - Question 8 - Choice - Multiple Answers (Bullets)

For what reasons might you refer a student to Mount Vernon? (Select your top four reasons.)

- Significant state of crisis
- Severely disruptive or dangerous behavior
- Destruction of property
- Chronic defiance/noncompliance
- Truancy/poor attendance
- Poor academic performance
- Little motivation to achieve
- Pregnancy
- Other, please specify

Page 4 - Heading

Interventions

Page 4 - Question 9 - Choice - Multiple Answers (Bullets)

Typically, school staff have provided interventions prior to referring students to Mount Vernon. Which of the following interventions are commonly used at your school? (Select all that apply.)

- Flexibility in structure, scheduling, and programming
- Smaller class size
- Remedial instruction for students performing below grade level
- Academic counseling
- Psychological counseling
- Crisis/behavioral intervention
- Social work services
- Peer mediation
- Opportunity for self-paced instruction
- Special education referral
- Student Support Team (SST) referral
- Other, please specify

Page 4 - Question 10 - Choice - Multiple Answers (Bullets)

What types of services/interventions do you expect students to receive at Mount Vernon? (Select all that apply.)

- Flexibility in structure, scheduling, and programming
- Smaller class size than regular schools
- Remedial instruction for students performing below grade level
- Opportunity for self-paced instruction
- Academic counseling
- Psychological counseling
- Crisis/behavioral intervention
- Social work services
- Peer mediation
- Social skills training
- Other, please specify

Page 4 - Heading

Transition to Mainstream Schools

Page 4 - Question 11 - Rating Scale - Matrix

In your opinion, how important is each of the following factors in determining whether a student served by Mount Vernon is ready to transition back to a regular school setting?

	Very important	Important	Not important
Student has improved grades.			
Student has improved in academics as measured by a standardized assessment.			
Student has improved attitude/behavior.			
Student has improved attendance.			
Student desires to transition.			
Student's family supports the transition.			

Please indicate the degree to which you believe the following scenarios occur for students attending Mount Vernon.

	Always	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Students return to a traditional education setting after attending Mount Vernon.				
Students transition to a small, self-contained class within a regular school setting after attending Mount Vernon.				
Students attend, exit, and return to Mount Vernon more than once.				
Students matriculate from Mount Vernon to one of the district's alternative high schools.				

Page 4 - Question 13 - Choice - Multiple Answers (Bullets)

To your knowledge, what types of transition services do staff at Mount Vernon provide? (Check all that apply.)

- Accompany student to tour base school
- Attend initial meeting with student and base-school administrators or staff
- Assist with record transfers
- Recommend interventions and services to be used at base school
- Monitor student progress via school visits and emails to staff
- Monitor student progress through direct student and/or parent contacts
- No transition services are provided

Page 4 - Question 14 - Open Ended - Comments Box

What services do you expect or want Mount Vernon staff to provide to students who will be transitioning to your school?

Page 4 - Question 15 - Open Ended - Comments Box

What services do your staff offer to assist students in making the transition from any alternative school setting or program to your school environment?

Page 4 - Heading

Personal Feedback

Page 4 - Question 16 - Open Ended - Comments Box

Please use this space to provide positive feedback regarding your experiences with Mount Vernon.

Page 4 - Question 17 - Open Ended - Comments Box

Please use this space to offer suggestions for how Mount Vernon might be improved.

Page 4 - Question 18 - Open Ended - Comments Box

Please give us your input on how the district's alternative schools and programs in general might better serve WCPSS students.

Page 4 - Question 19 - Choice - One Answer (Bullets)[Mandatory]

Which school-based position do you currently hold?

- Principal
- Assistant Principal
- Counselor
- Special Education Chair
- Social Worker
- Other, please specify

Thank You Page

Thank you. We appreciate your participation.

Appendix D Sampling and Survey Procedures

A SAS procedure, PROC SURVEYSELECT, was used to randomly assign participants to comprise the sample for each survey. A personnel list from the WCPSS Human Resources Department and a group email list provided respondent information such as name, position, email, and school on which the samples were drawn. Key participants were selected because of their job position, which were identified by the Senior Director of WCPSS Counseling and Student Services as positions most likely to be responsible for referring students to alternative schools and/or programs. The samples of respondents generated for each survey were mutually exclusive.

At the elementary level, slightly over 400 elementary school administrators and staff constituted the sampling pool. A sampling weight of 0.5 was set so that half of the population within each stratum of principals, assistant principals, special education chairs, and school counselors was randomly selected to participate in the survey pertaining to the Bridges program. In sum, slightly over 200 elementary school administrators and staff were invited to provide input about the Bridges program via the electronic survey.

Over 200 principals, assistant principals, special education chairs, school counselors and social workers at each of the 30 middle schools comprised the middle school survey sampling pool for the three surveys: Mount Vernon, River Oaks, and Longview (for grades 6-8). As previously discussed in this report, about half of the district's middle schools send students to Mount Vernon, whereas the other half send to River Oaks. Prior to sample selection, the base alternative school (either Mount Vernon or River Oaks) was identified for each group member. This helped to ensure that respondents from schools sending to Mount Vernon comprised the sample for the Mount Vernon survey and vice versa. Respondents from any middle school were part of the Longview survey sample.

The base population of over 200 middle school administrators and staff was essentially divided into thirds in order to generate sufficient sample sizes for each of the three surveys. The sample for the Longview survey was generated first. A sampling weight of 0.3 was set to randomly select one third of the total population within each stratum (principals, assistant principals, special education chairs, school counselors, and social workers). This process resulted in a sample of about 80 respondents, slightly more than half (53.4%) from personnel at schools identified to send referrals to Mount Vernon and the remainder from schools sending to River Oaks. The sample for the Mount Vernon survey included the remaining 80 or so administrators and staff members employed at the schools identified to send referrals to Mount Vernon. Likewise, the other 80 or so administrators and staff members at schools identified to receive service from River Oaks were invited to participate in the River Oaks survey.

A sampling pool of close to 250 administrators and staff members within the district's high schools was available. A sampling weight of 0.5 was used to randomly select half of the total population within each group (principals, assistant principals, special education chairs, and school counselors) to participate in either the Mary Phillips survey or the Longview survey. Although two samples were generated for the Longview survey, one based on middle school

personnel and the other from high school personnel, only one survey was launched. Respondents were required to select whether they worked primarily at a middle school or a high school¹³.

Respondents for each survey were sent an email via Zoomerang or Lotus Notes (the district's email system) with an explanation of the survey, an invitation to participate, and a link to the on-line survey. Questions were asked in a variety of ways and response formats including yes/no, Likert scales, multiple choice, and open-ended. Each survey contained identical questions, with a few exceptions¹⁴. A two-week timeframe for survey completion was given. One email was sent to remind administrators and staff to complete the survey.

¹³ Two respondents indicated that they worked at both levels and were included with the high school summary results only.

¹⁴ The elementary level survey did not pose a question about student suspensions, whereas the middle and high school level surveys did. Likewise, dropout and graduation related items were only asked of high school respondents.

**Appendix E
Alternative Schools and Programs Qualitative Survey Results**

Alternative Education Positive Experiences

Theme	Level	Sample Comments
Quality of Staff	Elementary Level	<p>“...have always been most impressed with the staff’s dedication, professionalism and compassion for families, students and sending school staff.”</p> <p>“The staff at Bridges have always been helpful with any questions or concerns. They are always available to assist if a student and/or teacher needs support.”</p> <p>“I have found the staff at Bridges to be very supportive and honest in their appraisal of a student and the situation.”</p> <p>“Bridges staff is extremely interested in the success of students who transition from their service. They work well with administrators, teachers, and parents to provide suggestions and assistance.”</p>
	Middle School Level	<p>“They are a caring group of professionals who work hard to academically support the students who they accept into their school.”</p> <p>“River Oaks staff have always been professional and they appear to want what’s best for the student. The staff make careful decisions and provide the students what they need to be professional.”</p> <p>The River Oaks staff has always provided personal attention to our students, treating each as an individual. Evident is the desire to build positive relationships between staff and students.”</p> <p>“I have always found the staff at Longview receptive to working with me and my students, they have an understanding of our school environment and work with students to transition back.”</p> <p>“I have had the opportunity to work with Longview staff over the past 25 years. I have always found the staff to be very committed to their students and to work very hard with them to assist them in being successful. They also are skilled and knowledgeable, providing a variety of resources to other teachers, parents, and students.”</p>
	High School Level	<p>“Staff is supportive, provides suggestions to base school, and communicates with base school in a timely manner.”</p> <p>“When the counselors from Longview have been a part of the planning at the base school level, the transitions have been smooth. These counselors are also very good at suggesting things the school can do to help students.”</p> <p>“They really seem to care about their students.”</p> <p>“I’ve always had a good experience with Longview staff. I feel they have always supported me and been available for consult.”</p>

Student Success	Elementary Level	<p>“Bridges has helped students from my school who were really struggling to achieve success. Students who have gone to Bridges in crisis have been able to come back with good coping skills.”</p> <p>“Bridges has done an EXCELLENT job with two students I worked with at a previous school--the small group setting and individualized support assisted both of these students in dealing with some major psychological and behavior issues.”</p> <p>“I have had positive experience with the Bridges program. One student who returned to us this year has entered back into a CCR self contained classroom. Due to his progress and support at Bridges we have had very few issues behaviorally or academically and believe this child will be exited from his special ed program and returned to the regular ed setting upon his next IEP meeting. It was a remarkable change.”</p>
	Middle School Level	<p>“My experience has been positive. We know the type of student who will be successful at Mount Vernon and that's who we recommend.”</p> <p>“When students are accepted, the experience is positive. Finding students that meet the sometimes narrow profile is difficult but when it is possible, results are great!!”</p> <p>“All the students I have referred to Mt Vernon have been successful in the program, both socially and academically.”</p> <p>“Most students are doing better academically and behaviorally in the smaller setting with the extra support from staff.”</p> <p>“I have found that most of the students who attended River Oaks have done better academically because of the low student to teacher ratio. I have also found that they mature while they are there. They are typically better at making good decisions when they return to us.”</p> <p>“They have helped students to work through crisis situations and have helped students to manage emotions and reduce negative behaviors.”</p> <p>“Booster program has been a life changing program for several students who might be older than their peers but are academically successful.”</p> <p>“The Booster Program is also excellent and helps students accelerate their pace to graduation which is critical for overage students.”</p>
	High School Level	<p>“Many of the students who have been a part of the program have been successful and either returned to school or another alternative to complete their high school experience.”</p> <p>“Our students were successful there.”</p> <p>“On most occasions Longview has been a successful alternative for students who may find little or no success in a traditional setting.”</p> <p>“The students at Mary Phillips seem to graduate, even after struggling mightily at a traditional school.”</p> <p>“One of our graduates from Philips credited the school with turning his life around.”</p>

Services Provided	Elementary Level	<p>“Bridges is a valuable program that can assist schools with the most difficult behaviorally challenged students. They provide support through direct observation and on going feedback to the school when a child is placed at Bridges.”</p> <p>“Bridges has a lot of support for students to target academics, social, and psychological needs.”</p> <p>“My experience is that Bridges provides a small class setting with structures and strategies that really do help students to be successful.”</p> <p>“Bridges provides a safe environment for these students so they can be supported and start to feel success in school once again.”</p>
	High School Level	<p>“Longview is supportive in setting the student up with a shared site education/two classes at Longview and transition classes at the base school.”</p> <p>“Students go to Phillips because it has flexible scheduling and smaller classes than what are offered at our school.”</p> <p>“I think Phillips offers a great opportunity for those students who are older and behind because of discipline or academic issues. Because the student does not need as many credits to graduate many students decide to stay on path with lots of support from the staff at Phillips. Because the site is smaller the staff and students get to know each other and build a bonding relationship.”</p>
Admission Process	Elementary Level	<p>“They were very quick to respond to applications and understanding of families' needs and adjusted to the child's needs.”</p> <p>“The intake meeting with the parent was very positive--detailed, supportive, and very informative.”</p> <p>“The intake meetings have been thorough. Staff has responded to the need for observations, strategy ideas, etc.”</p> <p>“Bridges really goes through a great screening process to decide if a student will best be served by them. Bridges is very supportive of the students when they are transitioning back to a regular school setting.”</p>
Transparency	Mount Vernon & River Oaks	<p>“Mt. Vernon keeps us informed about student progress. We are invited to celebrate when students are promoted.”</p> <p>“Good communication - with schools, parents.”</p> <p>“Quick response on whether a child will be admitted after the intake meeting.”</p> <p>“Referral process is clear, concise and meetings are promptly scheduled to consider acceptance of student.”</p>

Appendix E Continued: Suggestions for Alternative Education Improvement

Theme	Levels	Sample Comments
Capacity	Elementary Level	<p>“It would be wonderful if the program could expand to accommodate more students. It's the only avenue for elementary schools.”</p> <p>“There needs to be more than one program available. Bridges frequently cannot accept students due to a lack of space.”</p> <p>“We need more programs like Bridges. Often by the middle of the year, there is "No Room in the Inn." This is unfortunate for those students in dire need of an alternative program.”</p>
	Middle School Level	<p>“Serve more students who could really benefit from the program.”</p> <p>“I wish we had the ability to refer more students and they had the space and resources to provide them the help they need.”</p> <p>“We need more alternative schools. There seems to be more students needing this type of help than there are spaces for them.”</p> <p>“We need MORE schools like this - 2 schools (along with River Oaks) are NOT enough.”</p> <p>“I wish there were dozen other programs like Mt Vernon.”</p> <p>“More alternative resources are needed or expand the capacity of River Oaks to accept more students.”</p> <p>“I wish we had more throughout the county, maybe one in each region. I would not want to make this a larger school but there is definitely a need for this type of program.”</p>
	High School Level	<p>“I wish more students could access the services available through Longview.”</p> <p>“Expand and accept more students. We cannot get enough into the school who really could benefit.”</p>

Information Transparency	Elementary Level	<p>“Flow chart explaining in detail how and who and why a student can be selected to attend Bridges.”</p> <p>“I am confused about the differences in admitting regular ed versus special ed students.”</p> <p>“More public relations to counselors about it & when to do an appropriate referral.”</p> <p>“More communication with system on purpose of program.”</p>
	Middle School Level	<p>“A clear 1 to 2 page information sheet on who should attend and how to apply. Try to keep the application process simple.”</p> <p>“The initial process for acceptance and referral may need to be made clearer to counselors so they all have a common understanding; my three counselors have different opinions on who would benefit from a referral.”</p> <p>“I always question the proper candidate for Longview. I would like clarity on what a Longview child looks like and how to begin the process for admittance and more about the goals of the program.”</p> <p>“Clear communication/guidelines regarding student enrollment. A description of what a Longview student is/is not would help teachers to determine if the setting would be appropriate for a student they are considering.”</p>
	High School Level	<p>“Communication regarding who is eligible to attend Longview and the referral process.”</p> <p>“More communication about what services Longview provides, how it supports students, and the application process. I'm under the impression that it's nearly impossible for a high school student to be accepted into Longview, that they have to have an IEP, and that extensive documentation has to be in place indicating that no other strategies have worked.”</p> <p>“Annual update to principals about who would benefit and how students should be referred to Phillips.”</p> <p>“Provide more information concerning criteria of whom Mary Phillips serves.”</p> <p>“More direct communication with traditional schools regarding programs/services.”</p> <p>“Better communication regarding the number of seats available.”</p>

Admission and Exit Processes	Elementary Level	<p>“Better transitioning to the regular school setting which may include temporary placement there.”</p> <p>“Don't know how to make transitions back to base schools more successful or to occur at a higher rate...this is an area for continued work.”</p>
	Mount Vernon & River Oaks	<p>“Easier application process.”</p> <p>“Screening process is entirely too rigorous. Criteria to accept students entirely too narrow! Students that "fit" the criteria, would have relatively few problems, & for the most part could stay here according to what is requested on paper.”</p> <p>“Consider that transition back to the base may need more "steps". The unique structure of Mt. Vernon allows much more flexibility than is sometimes possible at the base due to limited resources.”</p> <p>“The transition phase could be enhanced, particularly for students who are struggling with the transition.”</p>
	High School Level	<p>“The referral process is lengthy and intimidating, as are most of the faculty that one deals with in the placement process. There is a prevailing feeling of ‘Longview won't take the students’.”</p> <p>“I think the process can be too long in evaluating, documenting, meeting and deciding whether the student will be accepted at Longview.”</p> <p>“Make the referral process more accessible and easier.”</p> <p>“The application is long and cumbersome for staff to complete.”</p>

Communication	Elementary Level	<p>“Provide feedback as to student progress at Bridges back to the base school.”</p> <p>“The staff at Bridges needs to better communicate with us so that we can better help our students transition. If there is a problem and a staff member from Bridges feels that a student is having difficulties, that staff member needs to communicate that to the appropriate teacher.”</p>
	Mount Vernon & River Oaks	<p>“Communicate more frequently with Principals regarding space availability and progress of students enrolled.”</p> <p>“More communication with schools via Web site, monthly updates.”</p> <p>“Communicate regular updates on how students are doing without base school having to initiate.”</p> <p>“There needs to be more communication between River Oaks and the base school concerning the student's progress and needs.”</p>
	Mary Phillips	<p>“In nine years, I've only had one student accepted. There is no feedback from Mary Phillips staff about the status of applications, which makes it discouraging to make referrals that seemingly go nowhere.”</p> <p>“Follow up with the counselor to inform if the student was accepted or rejected to Mary Phillips.”</p> <p>“I have made several referrals for students and the only way that I know whether or not a student gets accepted is from the student or the previous base school. It would be helpful to be notified by Phillips whether a student is accepted or not. And if a student does not get accepted an explanation for the decision would be helpful.”</p> <p>“Once a student has been selected to attend ME Phillips the base school should be emailed or contacted.”</p> <p>“I've worked in WCPSS high schools for 20 years; Mary Phillips is a good resource but there is little communication with 'base' schools. I seldom, if ever, receive feedback from the application process. As a result of the non-responsive admissions process, I rarely suggest Mary Phillips as an option to families/students who could benefit from the services of an alternative school.”</p>

<p>Target Student Population</p>	<p>Mount Vernon & River Oaks</p>	<p>“We are very hesitant to refer to Mt. Vernon because they do not want disruptive students or ones with a high number of discipline write-ups. They seem to be focused on their Booster program, primarily.”</p> <p>“Make the process of accepting students with behavioral issues easier for the sending school. Most of our referrals have been for the boosters program.”</p> <p>“They should accept students who are having some minor behavior issues and students who are having issues with attendance.”</p> <p>“It is our understanding that River Oaks does not take students with IEPs and behavioral concerns, however these students may benefit from your smaller learning environment.”</p> <p>“More students identified as LD math or language arts should be admitted.”</p> <p>“Provide for acceptance of carefully screened Special Ed students if they can benefit from the program offered.”</p>
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Appendix E Continued: Feedback on How Alternative Schools and Programs Might Better Serve WCPSS Students Districtwide

Theme	Levels	Sample Comments
Capacity	Elementary Level	<p>“I think we need more options. Often Bridges is full.”</p> <p>“We only refer the most severe cases to Bridges. I only wish there were more room in the program.”</p> <p>“We need to provide more alternative schools at the elementary level. By helping students early in their school careers, we can avoid problems in middle and high school.”</p> <p>“There is a large need for alternative schools in Wake County and a growing need for students at the elementary level.”</p> <p>“I think the main issue is for WCPSS to have enough alternative programs to serve all of the students who need them. I work at the elementary level, but know that in middle and high school there is even greater need for alternative programs for students.”</p> <p>“Bridges is outstanding when you can get a student accepted. There is not enough room for the needs of the 100 elementary schools to be supported by Bridges alone.”</p>
	Middle School Level	<p>“I believe that we need more spaces as there seems to be more students in need than we are able to serve.</p> <p>“Increase the number of seats for students who are not successful in a regular setting and are not responding to school based support systems.”</p> <p>“Wake County desperately needs more alternative settings. Students who do not meet the criteria for River Oaks or other alternative schools need somewhere else to go.”</p> <p>“...we need MORE alternative schools. With the loss of Milburn, we are down to River Oaks, Longview, Mt.Vernon and Phillips. That is not enough for the size of our county.”</p> <p>“An expansion of the Boosters program at Mount Vernon is truly needed.”</p>
	High School Level	<p>“Expanding capacity to serve students.”</p> <p>“We need more spaces for high school students, at like Mary E. Phillips, and more alternatives for students who do not fit into their regular school settings.”</p> <p>“We need more alternative schools! Mary Phillips cannot accommodate all the students who could benefit from their programs/graduation requirements.”</p> <p>“Judging from the wait list at Mary Phillips, it seems clear that there are many more students in Wake County in need of a non-traditional setting than we have resources available.”</p> <p>“Increase the availability of more alternative schools/programs. There are a substantial number of students who are in need of the services.”</p>

<p>Target Student Population</p>	<p>Elementary Level</p>	<p>“We need an alternative school placement for severely emotional or behavioral students beyond Bridges.”</p> <p>“We need more programs for short term interventions; Bridges over the years has tended to be more long term; we need to address student behaviors and intervene before extreme misbehaviors occur.”</p> <p>“Please provide services to more students who have mental illnesses or need severe behavioral interventions.”</p>
	<p>Middle School Level</p>	<p>“There needs to be more alternative school resources for students who are served by IEP's.”</p> <p>“We need more SPED spaces in our alternative schools.”</p> <p>“We need a middle school for more severe behaviors than what Mount Vernon and River Oaks accept.”</p> <p>“We need somewhere for students who need special programs and who might not be quite severe enough for Longview, but are not successful in a traditional school setting.”</p> <p>“We NEED somewhere for students who are getting suspended and have severe behavioral difficulties who are not special education (i.e., can't go to Longview).”</p> <p>“I would love to see a WCPSS school that is devoted to serving students that are short term suspended - providing a place for academic support and counseling while students are out of school.”</p> <p>“Students who are long-termed suspended but who aren't special education have nowhere to go. There needs to be a school where these students can go to help them with their issues in the regular school and to get them caught up academically.”</p> <p>“Accept students who need to go. They will not take them if they are too bad, are in a gang, have been suspended before for having a weapon... It has been tough to get our students in.”</p>
	<p>High School Level</p>	<p>“We need more programs, settings, and alternative offerings for students who receive long-term suspensions.”</p> <p>“The absence of a school setting for students who are long term suspended is very troubling -- particularly with the push from SPED to not have students on home hospital.”</p> <p>“Need an alternative school for students with less severe problems as those referred to Longview—one for non IEP students.”</p> <p>“We need alternative schools to assist those students who may not demonstrate severe behavior problems, but the traditional setting is not working.”</p> <p>“We need more alternative programs to meet different types of needs.”</p>

Information Transparency	Elementary Level	<p>“It would be great if counselors could have better knowledge of what these alternative schools are all about. It seems that they are a fantastic resource.”</p> <p>“Information about these programs should be provided to special education teachers. I have heard about Bridges but do not know the qualifications for this setting or what services they provide.”</p> <p>“Demystify what occurs at Bridges. Help share best practices that work with challenging students.”</p> <p>“The environment and purpose of alternative schools need to be clearly defined. Sometimes staff members are unsure of what exactly "Bridges" does and entails. This is generally true of alternative schools. Staff members, especially school administration and special ed support staff, need a list and descriptions of alternative options for students.”</p>
	Middle School Level	<p>“To have informational sessions on all services provided and the process.”</p> <p>“... more information about program offerings.”</p> <p>“More communication and information to the school counselors/social workers/school psychologists at the middle/high school level. With information such as who to refer, how to refer, what types of students are accepted, how long will the students be there, and any other pertinent information.”</p> <p>“Staff at traditional schools could use additional information on the process for applying and what students would look like.”</p> <p>“Make WCPSS staff more aware of the importance of early referral. If referred too late, the student will not be accepted.</p>
	High School Level	<p>“I would greatly benefit from more information about Longview and all of the alternative options for high school students.”</p> <p>“Invite administrators from area schools to visit the alternative schools.”</p> <p>“Informational pamphlets and brochures provided to the local high schools would be very helpful to share with parents.”</p> <p>“Increase awareness of who is the appropriate student for the program and the process for referral.”</p> <p>“Provide better communication of what they offer and type of student who is best served at their school.”</p>

Admission and Exit Processes	Bridges	<p>“Easier and quicker application process to place students where they truly belong.”</p> <p>“...the hoops that have to be jumped through to get a placement frequently cause a delay and in some cases that delay results in some sort of crisis on the regular school level....We are frequently given the impression that our asking for a Bridges placement is viewed as our way of "getting rid" of a student.”</p>
	River Oaks	<p>“More flexibility in criteria and consideration of referred students.”</p> <p>“Easier placement procedures.”</p> <p>“There should be goals determined prior to the student going into the alternative school which should be used as an evaluation of the student's progress while at the alternative school.”</p> <p>“Students who are not identified as Special Ed and are getting suspended frequently from the base school should be considered by WCPSS alternative schools without weeks of school based interventions when the student is not at the base school long enough to implement these interventions.”</p>
	Longview	<p>“Transition students to base school slowly, including modified day programs. Provide transportation so that this type of program is possible.”</p> <p>“If the traditional schools and alternative schools worked together and agree on a plan that would allow students to return back to their original school under a successful plan.”</p> <p>“Close communication with the counselors and other essential parties upon transition both to and from the programs regarding interventions and services.”</p>

Student Views of Alternative Schools Spring 2010

Created: May 03 2010, 11:03 AM
Last Modified: May 03 2010, 11:03 AM
Design Theme: Basic Blue
Language: English
Button Options: Labels
Disable Browser "Back" Button: False

Student Views of Alternative Schools Spring 2010



WAKE COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

Page 1 - Question 1 - Choice - One Answer (Drop Down)

[Mandatory]

Please select your current school from the list below:

- River Oaks [Skip to 3]
- Mount Vernon [Skip to 3]
- Longview
- Mary Phillips [Skip to 3]

Page 1 - Question 2 - Choice - One Answer (Drop Down)

Please select your current grade level from the list below:

- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12

Page 1 - Question 3 - Choice - One Answer (Bullets)

When did you start coming to this school?

- I started at the beginning of this school year.
- I started during this school year.
- I started before this school year.

Page 2 - Question 4 - Yes or No

[Mandatory]

Did you attend Bridges before coming to Longview?

- Yes [Skip to 4]
- No [Skip to 3]

For each statement below, please choose the response that best describes your experience at this alternative school compared to your experience at your base (non-alternative) school setting.

(1=Strongly Agree; 2=Agree; 3=Disagree; 4=Strongly Disagree)

Compared to when I was attending a base school...

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
...it is easier to talk to the teachers at this school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...it is easier to talk to the counselors at this school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...the adults at this school encourage me more often.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...I believe more that I can reach my goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...the adults at my school are more likely to listen to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...I have better relationships with my teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...I have a better relationship with my principal or assistant principals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...the school's rules are easier to understand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...I have learned how to do better in school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...I have learned more about how to set goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...I better understand what I need to do to achieve my goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Before you came to this school, which of these were a problem for you? (Please choose all answers that are true for you.)

- School attendance
- Handing in homework on time
- Participating in class
- Getting in trouble for behavior
- Bad grades
- Learning to read
- Learning math

Since you started coming to this school, in which of these areas do you feel you have improved? (Please choose all answers that are true for you.)

- School attendance
- Handing in homework on time
- Participating in class
- Getting in trouble for behavior
- Grades
- Learning to read
- Learning math

What do you like best about your school?

.....

.....

.....

Page 4 - Question 9 - Open Ended - Comments Box

What do you like least about your school?

Page 4 - Heading

This is the end of the survey. Please click the "Submit" button below to save your responses. You may review and change any of your responses prior to clicking on this button.

Thank You Page

Thank you for your participation!

Now that you have completed the survey, please close this window.

Screen Out Page

(Standard - Zoomerang branding)

Over Quota Page

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Survey Closed Page

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**Appendix G
Alternative School Allotment Data**

Middle School Months of Employment (MOE) Allotments, 2009-10

	River Oaks n = 65	Mount Vernon including Bridges and Booster students n = 165	Holly Ridge n = 1,224
Administrative and Management MOE Allotments			
Principal	12	12	12
Assistant Principal	12	12	29
Total Admin MOE	24	24	41
Child Nutrition	0	10	60
Clerical	24	36	77
Custodians	12	24	84
Media Specialist	5	5	20
Teacher MOE Allotments			
Teacher MOE based on ADM	0	0	490
Academically Gifted	0	0	10
Alternative Program	0	10	0
At Risk Teacher	75.82	101	0
Career & Technical Ed	10	25	65
C&I Allotment	0	0	24
College Preparatory Success	0	0	4
Intervention	3	5	23
LEP	0	0	10
In-School Suspension	10	10	10
Middle School Teaming	0	0	10
Nova Net	0	10	0
Other Teacher	77	116	0
Special Education Teachers (K-12)	10	62	90
Total Teacher MOE	185.8	339	736
Other Teacher Assistant	0	20	0
Special Education TA (K-12)	0	98	68
Total TA MOE	0	118	68
Student Support MOE Allotments			
Counselor	11	21	40
Psychologist	1	15.4	5
Social Work	11	33	6
Total Support MOE	23	69.4	51

Note: N = school capacity

Total Administrative Months of Employment (MOE): Mount Vernon, River Oaks, and Holly Ridge each received 12 principal months. All schools in North Carolina receive a principal. Each middle school also received assistant principal (AP) months based on the WCPSS formula: 12 AP months per middle school with up to 699 students and 29 AP months for middle schools with between 950 and 1,399 students. Of course, the small size of the alternative schools means that administrators have a smaller student load than at a base school (but students with greater needs).

Total Teacher MOE: Most of the teacher MOEs at Holly Ridge were provided through the 10 day ADM, however, the alternative schools teacher MOEs are found in the “Other Teacher” category. Both alternative middle schools received a high number of MOEs for “At Risk Teachers.” These months are noted on the school’s allotment pages as being used for various purposes such as behavior specialists, teacher assistants, and Boosters. Whereas both Mount Vernon and River Oaks house the Booster program, Mount Vernon received 10 MOEs each in Alternative Programs and Nova Net. A specific number of Other Teacher and Special Education (specifically BED) were commented on in the Mount Vernon’s teacher allotments as being designated for the Bridges program.

Total Teacher Assistant (TA) MOE: Of the three schools, Mount Vernon received the only allotment of Other Teacher Assistant MOEs and the highest number (98) of Special Education MOEs. Those allotments were for the Bridges program. River Oaks did not receive a TA allotment and Holly Ridge received TAs for Special Education only.

Total Instructional Support MOE: At a total of 69.4 MOEs, Mount Vernon has the highest level of instruction; support per student, followed by River Oaks. Both of these alternative schools have low numbers of students. Mount Vernon has a full-time psychologist to serve Bridges students. In comparison, Holly Ridge has 51 MOEs for a population of 1,224 students (1 MOE per 24 students). These numbers comprise counselor, social worker, and psychologist months. Each of these positions have flexibility for alternative schools or special circumstances as stated in the following quote: “The allotment formula provides approximately one MOE per 191 students in pre-K through grade 8, although our alternative programs have a more concentrated staffing pattern.” Also, River Oaks converted At Risk Teacher MOEs to have a Counselor net total of 11 MOEs. In 2009-10, River Oaks did not have a Booster counselor allotted, but the position was converted from a teaching position.

Middle School Non-Instructional Funds in Dollar Allotments

	River Oaks	Mount Vernon including Bridges	Holly Ridge
Athletic Funds	\$0	\$0	\$2,620
02.5500.061.411.0119.0438			
Band Equipment Repair	\$0	\$0	\$1,000
02.5110.061.311.0215.0438			
Contracted Services	\$756	\$666	\$7,405
02.5110.061.311.0207.0438			
Instructional Supplies-Local	\$3,228	\$2,582	\$31,604
02.5110.061.411.0207.0438			
Instructional Supplies-State	\$7,478	\$5,982	\$73,220
01.5110.061.411.0207.0438			
Principals In-System Travel	\$1,375	\$781	\$1,144
02.5400.061.332.0109.0438			
Staff Development-Local	\$0	\$0	\$0
02.5110.061.312.0217.0438			
Staff Development-State	\$0	\$0	\$0
01.5110.028.312.0217.0438			
Textbooks-Advance	\$0	\$0	\$0
01.5110.130.412.0377.0438			
Textbooks-Current Year	\$5,094	\$4,483	\$49,878
01.5110.130.412.0277.0438			
Instructional Supplies - Special Programs	\$0	\$0	\$50
02.5210.032.411.0136.0438			
At Risk - Field Trip Funds	\$500	\$500	\$0
01.5310.069.333.0108.0438			
Special Education Field Trip Funds	\$0	\$0	\$400
02.5210.032.333.0136.0438			
CTE Supplies			
01.5120.014.411.0180.0438	\$100	\$400	\$13,274
Total	\$18,531	\$15,394	\$180,595

Non-Instructional Funds: All of Holly Ridge’s non-instructional funds appear to be calculated with their day 10 ADM and WCPSS stated formulas. Mount Vernon’s non-instructional funds were determined by multiplying the stated formula by 110 students even though the school’s *planned* student count was 125; however, both contracted services and the “current year” textbook total were based on 110 students whereas state and local instructional supplies calculations were based on 100 students. Similarly, River Oaks allotment page stated that calculations were based on a 10 day count of 27 students but all calculations were completed using the 125 count.

High School Months of Employment (MOE) Allotments, 2009-10

	Longview n = 100	Mary Phillips n = 200	Sanderson n = 1,988
Administrative and Management MOE Allotments			
Principal	12	12	12
Assistant Principal	12	0	48
Total Admin MOE	24	12	60
Child Nutrition	0	0	70
Clerical	29	30	117
Custodians	27	27	36
Media Specialist	5	10	25
Transportation	0	0	762.1
Teacher MOE Allotments			
Teacher MOE based on ADM	0	0	750
Academically Gifted	0	0	2
Alternative Program	0	0	0
At Risk Teacher	22	40	0
Career & Technical Ed	32	59	180
C&I Allotment	0	0	5
Intervention	5.5	2.5	5
LEP	0	0	30
In-School Suspension	0	0	0
Minimum Competency	0	0	30
Nova Net	5	5	10
Other Teacher	24	173	0
Special Education Teachers (K-12)	190	10	176
Speech	0	0	3
Total Teacher MOE	278.5	289.5	1191
Other Teacher Assistant	0	10	0
Special Education TA (K-12)	190	0	130
Tuition or Fund 6 Positions	0	10	0
Total TA MOE	190	20	130
Instructional Support MOE Allotments			
Counselor	20	10	52
Psychologist	11	1	4
Social Work	10	10	0
SAP Coordinator	0	0	10
Total Support MOE	41	21	66
Grants	0	10	0

Note: N = school capacity

Total Admin Months of Employment (MOE): Typically, each school receives a minimum of 12 Principal months based on the number of students enrolled. Longview received 12 Assistant Principal months and Sanderson High received 48. Both of these fall into the formula set by WCPSS. Mary Phillips did not receive an AP allotment for the 2009-10 school year. This assistant principal position was funded from a converted teaching position.

Total Teacher MOE: Neither Longview nor Mary Phillips receive teacher MOEs based on day 10 Average Daily Membership (ADM). They are allotted positions from “Other Teacher” months described as, “Teacher MOE for special purposes not defined by other categorical allotments.” Sanderson High School did not receive an “Other Teacher” allotment. Longview and Mary Phillips had similar Total Teacher MOEs (278.5 and 289.5, respectfully) even though enrollment at Mary Phillips is considerably larger than Longview. The high number of Special Education teachers at Longview directly corresponds to NCDPI standards for its student population. Sanderson had a total of 1,191 Teacher MOEs. This is 4 times the number of Mary Phillips even though Sanderson’s ADM is more than 12 times the student population at Mary Phillips.

Total Teacher Assistant (TA) MOE: Of the three schools, only Mary Phillips was provided the “Other Teacher Assistant” and “Tuition or Fund 6 Positions” MOE, which may be used for the onsite daycare.

Total Instruction Support MOE: Sanderson had the largest Support MOEs – as the WCPSS allotment formulas for these specific positions reflect Sanderson’s high student population. Counselors, for example, are allotted at 10 MOE per grade level, an additional 2 MOE for “dean of student services,” and another 10 MOE for student ADMs over 1,830 students (which equals Sanderson’s 52 MOE). This allotment, however, does not coordinate with Longview and Mary Phillip’s allotments that show much lower numbers than the grade-level dependant high school formula. Additionally, they are not congruent between each other as Longview has about half the ADM used for Mary Phillips, but twice the counselor MOEs. Longview has a full-time psychologist to serve the special education student population. At 41 MOEs, Longview has the highest per student support of the three schools.

While social worker allotments are not assigned to base high schools, they are assigned to alternative schools. However, base high school Student Assistant Program (SAP) coordinators “...fulfill some social work functions, and they may request assistance from our central office based social work staff, as needed, for court attendance situations.” The alternative high schools do not receive SAP allotments.

Other MOE – Grants: Of the three high schools, only Mary Phillips received MOEs towards a grant coordinator. Their school-based budget report reflects that they have been awarded the 21st Century Community Learning grant.

High School Non-Instructional Funds in Dollar Allotments

	Longview	Mary Phillips	Sanderson
Athletic Funds	\$0	\$0	\$945
02.5500.061.411.0119.0438			
Band Equipment Repair	\$0	\$0	\$1,000
02.5110.061.311.0215.0438			
Contracted Services	\$605	\$1,815	\$12,027
02.5110.061.311.0207.0438			
Instructional Supplies-Local	\$3,302	\$9,006	\$59,680
02.5110.061.411.0207.0438			
Instructional Supplies-State	\$6,580	\$17,946	\$118,922
01.5110.061.411.0207.0438			
Principals In-System Travel	\$1,144	\$1,144	\$1,243
02.5400.061.332.0109.0438			
Staff Development-Local	\$0	\$0	\$0
02.5110.061.312.0217.0438			
Staff Development-State	\$0	\$0	\$0
01.5110.028.312.0217.0438			
Textbooks-Advance	\$0	\$0	\$0
01.5110.130.412.0377.0438			
Textbooks-Current Year	\$1,791	\$12,225	\$81,011
01.5110.130.412.0277.0438			
Instructional Supplies - Special Programs	\$0	\$0	\$340
02.5210.032.411.0136.0552			
At Risk - Field Trip Funds	\$500	\$500	\$0
02.5310.069.333.0108.0438			
Special Education . Field Trip Funds	\$0	\$0	\$1,230
02.5210.032.333.0136.0438			
CTE Supplies			
01.5120.014.411.0180.0438	\$818	\$1,184	\$17,239
Total	\$14,740	\$43,820	\$293,637

Non-Instructional Funds: All of Sanderson’s non-instructional funds appear to be calculated with their day 10 ADM and WCPSS stated formulas. Phillips non-instructional funds were determined by multiplying the stated formula by 300 students even though the school’s day 10 count was 162. Longview’s allotment page stated that calculations were based on 104 *planned* students; however, contracted services were based on 100 students, state and local instructional supplies calculations were based on 110 students, and the current year textbook total was based on 44 students.

AN EVALUATION OF THE WAKE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS

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The author would like to thank the following WCPSS administrators and staff for their contributions to this report:

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E&R Report No. 10.15

November 2010

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