

Community Task Force Report
Primary Focus Area Eight: Alternative Education Delivery Model

Moorhead School District #152
November 12, 2001

The Alternative Education Delivery Model Community Task Force has concluded its study of Primary Focus Area Eight: Alternative Education Delivery Model, which includes the study and consideration of research and recommendations presented by the Alternative Education Delivery Model Administrative Project, consideration of additional information and research; development of recommendations for change to the current alternative education delivery model; and methods for involving students, staff, parents and the community in the decision making process. This report, with related recommendations, is respectfully submitted to Dr. Larry Nybladh, Superintendent of Schools, and the Facility and Grade Level Configuration Model Community Task Force for further consideration.

I. Collaborative Decision Making Process:

The Alternative Education Delivery Model Community Task Force is part of a Decision Making Process that was approved by the Moorhead School Board on April 23, 2001. The process responds to the recommendations presented by Dr. Roger Worner, the educational systems consultant who conducted the organizational study of the district earlier in the 2000-01 school year. The Decision Making Process was recommended to the School Board by Dr. Larry Nybladh, Superintendent of Schools, to proactively address primary focus areas which will enhance the educational effectiveness, economic efficiency and future position of Moorhead Public Schools through research-based decision making, community collaboration, and consensus building. The process is based upon a philosophical premise that collaborative decision making is the best approach in this context for facilitating consensus building.

Consensus is a necessity due to the complexity of the Primary Focus Areas and the reliance on broad based community support for any change initiatives which may emerge from these processes.

A. Primary Focus Areas: The recommendation provides for the following eight Primary Focus Areas: One: Student Demographics; Two: Facility and Grade Level Configuration Model; Three: Current/Future Facility Analysis; Four: Middle School Model; Five: High School Enhancement; Six: Operational and Capital Revenue Analysis; Seven: Special Education Delivery Model; and Eight: Alternative Education Delivery Model. Each of the Primary Focus Areas is associated with one or more of the recommendations offered by Dr. Worner in the Organizational Study Report.

B. Approaches: The eight Primary Focus Areas are each addressed by one or more of the following approaches: Administrative Project, Research Study Group, and Community Task Force. The Primary Focus Area Eight: Alternative Education Delivery Model is addressed by the Administrative Project and Community Task Force approaches. These approaches are described below.

1. Administrative Project: The Administrative Project is used for addressing Primary Focus Areas in those areas that the district has sufficient administrative resources to adequately research the primary focus area and provide recommendations. The administrator(s) involved in the Administrative Project provide a report and recommendations to the Superintendent of Schools. These reports and recommendations are presented to the applicable Research Study Groups and/or Community Task Forces.

2. Community Task Force: The Community Task Force approach is used for addressing Primary Focus Areas which require significant community collaboration and decision making. The Community Task Force considers information and data presented to it by the Administrative Project and Research Study Group, as well as conducts additional research as deemed necessary and appropriate. Community Task Force members are selected to serve based on their interest and ability to serve, the perspective they represent, and the experience or expertise they may bring to the process. Task force members are also asked to develop communication and deliberation processes to involve and engage the larger community. The Community Task Force provides a report and recommendations to the Superintendent of Schools and the Facility and Grade Level Configuration Model Community Task Force for their consideration

II. Community Task Force: Focus Area Eight: Alternative Education Delivery Model:

A. Composition:

The following persons were members of the Alternative Education Community Task Force:

- Denise Paulson, Chair - Parent, school/community volunteer, substitute paraprofessional;
- Linda Davidson - Parent in the Washington area with a child who previously graduated from the district. She is a member of the district's Instruction and Curriculum Advisory Committee;
- Dina Geiszler - Alumna of the district and parent of a student entering Moorhead Junior High School;
- Steve Grineski - Faculty at Minnesota State University Moorhead with educational experience at the public school and college levels and has worked on developing a mentoring program for college students and Moorhead youth;
- Brad Hawkins - Teacher at the Red River Area Learning Center and parent of students in the district;

- Jill Johnson-Danielson - Director of Mujeres Unidas and community advocate;
- Mike McCarthy - Member of the Clay County Commission and a former police officer;
- Olivia Melroe - Faculty member in the graduate program in School Psychology at Minnesota State University Moorhead with research experience and expertise with American Indian groups in the community;
- Luis Ochoa Jr. - Moorhead Community Service Police Officer with collaborative experience with the Moorhead High School, Red River Area Learning Center, Youth Educational Services, and the Outreach Programs;
- Cynthia Sillers - Coordinator of the Clay County Joint Powers Collaborative with experience as a former teacher and in working with issues related to diversity;
- Sharon Staton - Director of the Clay County Diversified Services and experience as a parent with two children who graduated from an alternative school;
- Barry Steen - Director of the West Central Regional Juvenile Center and parent of children who attended the Moorhead Schools; and
- Peter Schott, Alternate - Social Work Student with Concordia College.

B. Alternative Education Community Task Force Position Statement:

During the process of study and consideration of research and best practices in the delivery of alternative education programs and services, the following position statement evolved:

“The Alternative Education Community Task Force recognizes alternative education as a vital resource for the Moorhead School District and the community and believes that it should be recognized and supported as such. The Task Force believes that parents and students should have the right to choose an educational setting that best meets their needs for academic attainment, personal support, socio cultural development, vocational development and parent involvement; should be neither coerced nor prohibited from electing to participate in alternative

education, according to state statute, and should be given the right to sign an informed consent once a referral is made to alternative education, unless the transfer is an administrative decision based on circumstances of safety, as defined in statute. The Task Force asserts that a continuum of options and services should be delivered at traditional and nontraditional settings. The Task Force supports a delivery model that reflects best practices and encompasses a full continuum of options available through the Department of Children, Families and Learning, to include targeted services, school within a school, separate site, independent study and vocational programs, including an off campus educational program for students who cannot, and should not, attend school in traditional settings due to risk factors, such as mental health issues, chemical health issues, etc., affecting their lives.”

C. Priority Recommendations:

The Task Force identified five priority recommendations to be implemented over the next three years, as well as be aligned with the other Priority Area Initiatives being addressed in the District’s Decision Making Process. The priority recommendations are as follows:

- 1. Establish an integrated “school within a school” model within the continuum of options and services for students at risk in traditional settings to address risk factors that may contribute to placement in an offsite program (priority age for model being 12 -15 years of age).**
- 2. Offer an independent study model through the Red River Area Learning Center, within the continuum of services for at-risk learners, and designate new funding for this initiative.**
- 3. Establish a continuum of chemical health services within traditional and nontraditional settings for students experiencing chemical health issues and related**

concerns, including an offsite sober school model that addresses restorative justice practices.

4. Continue providing the option of an off campus separate site program, as well as improve its efficiencies and effectiveness, for students who cannot, or should not, be placed in the traditional settings because of risk factors (i.e. mental health, chemical health issues, etc.) affecting their lives.

5. Study the completion rates of students participating in alternative education and follow the students during their educational career to determine the success of targeted services, etc., offered by alternative education programs, in conjunction with state initiatives, and continue to examine strategies for “connecting” between the nontraditional separate setting and the traditional setting.

D. Additional Recommendations:

The Task Force categorized additional recommendations under program efficiencies and program effectiveness. The additional recommendations are as follows:

1. Program Efficiencies:

a. Establish an independent study program in an effort to increase long-term efficiencies in administrative costs, facilities, support staff, technology, sharing of materials, equipment, etc.

Work collaboratively with the Youth Educational Services Program to explore potential partnerships.

b. Assure adequate funding and available resources be available to effectively serve students at-risk attending the RRALC and other alternative educational programs.

2. Program Effectiveness:

The Task Force believes that program effectiveness relates closely to the mission of the Moorhead School District which is “to develop the maximum potential of every learner to thrive in a changing world.” The Administrative Report identified the need for alternative programming and services that support at-risk students in achieving success. The mission of the RRALC is “to provide high quality services to at-risk youth by engaging them in the learning process, preparing them to meet the proficiencies of the State Graduation Standards and Goals 2000, facilitating their transition between educational settings, supporting their achievement of a high school diploma (or equivalent) and equipping them with a solid background for meeting educational and vocational goals beyond high school.”

The Task Force concluded that the alternative education delivery model for the Moorhead School District should provide a full continuum of programs and services to students at-risk which address existing gaps in the traditional and nontraditional settings. The Task Force analyzed the current delivery model and identified the need for advocacy, the wraparound process, expanded services in traditional and nontraditional settings, and facilities where the expanded services can be provided. The specific recommendations for program effectiveness are as follows:

a. Advocacy:

- i. Increase public relations activities that promote a more positive image of alternative education and related programs.
- ii. Develop a protocol for admission, retention and reintegration of students in alternative education settings to assure nonbiased decision making. Assure that staff in traditional schools understand the role and function of alternative education as choice options and promote them as

such to students and parents; and that, in the referral process, students and parents are informed of options and services in traditional and nontraditional settings prior to making placement decisions, except where students pose serious safety risks whereby building administrators have statutory responsibility to assign short-term placement in an alternative setting.

iii. Develop Student Assistance Teams, in the traditional settings, that are empowered to develop options for students prior to their placement in a separate site alternative program; assure that support services for at-risk students are available to address academic, mental health, chemical health needs, truancy, etc.; and provide ongoing evaluation of the support services.

iv. Expand the role of the Advisory Council for Alternative Education in the Moorhead District and include representation on the Council by the District's Human Rights Committee, School to Work Initiative, Collaborative Partners, Post Secondary Education, etc., to address bias present in the "referral," placement, and delivery of alternative education services.

v. Assure that due process has been followed for students with IEPs who are referred to offsite alternative programs.

vi. Delegate study of the Outreach Day Treatment Delivery model to a task force to study whether or not there is any bias present in the placement and delivery of services to students of diverse racial and socio-economic backgrounds.

b. The Wraparound Process

i. Develop a Learner Support Team that engages in the Wraparound Process to address the needs of students and their families for advocacy, liaison services, public health services, mental health services, homelessness, chemical health (i.e. sober school model), etc.

ii. Offer nontraditional mental health services for diverse student needs.

- iii. Continue providing linguistic and cultural support for students of diverse cultural backgrounds and recommend that this is also offered at the traditional settings.
- iv. Study/research the possibilities, and funding, for establishing an onsite child care program.
- c. Expanded Services in Traditional and nontraditional Settings:
 - i. Develop a continuum of vocational and advanced educational options for at-risk learners.

3. Provide Facilities:

- a. Provide access to gym space and media services for students enrolled in the separate site program, as noted in the literature as best practices in facility planning for alternative schools.

III. Additional Research:

A. Comparative Analysis of Alternative Education Delivery Models Among Like Size Districts:

The recommendations of the Task Force are supported by a comparative analysis of Moorhead's current alternative education delivery model and those of districts of like size that were identified in the Worner Report. The Director of Alternative Education for each district provided information about the student population and program options available in his/her district. The analysis generated the following conclusions:

1. Fewer students are served in the Moorhead School District's alternative high school programs than in the seven other districts, including students served by both the RRALC and the Youth Educational Services (YES) Programs.
2. All districts provided an off campus separate site program.
3. Two districts provided a high school model that included some "school within a school" programming for 9th and 10th grade students.
4. All of the districts had an independent study program within their Area Learning Center with

some of the districts identifying neighboring alternative learning programs that served the district's students, as well.

5. All of the districts had a middle level alternative program for students, ages 12 - 15, with only one other district serving as many middle level students as Moorhead. The other district moved its middle level program to the traditional campus for the 2001-02 school year with preliminary conclusions being favorable.

6. All of the districts, except Moorhead, had an offsite special education program, other than the Area Learning Center, for students with disabilities who displayed severe behavioral problems. All of the districts had day treatment services available, as well. Some of the districts provided a separate day treatment site, while others provided day treatment services at the offsite educational program for students with disabilities who displayed severe behavioral problems.

B. Survey of RRALC Students:

The recommendations of the Task Force are also supported by a survey of the RRALC students by the Mujeres Unidas Organization. The findings were generally supportive of alternative education. The need for additional program resources was a dominant theme, including: (1) improved facilities, i.e. bigger classrooms, gym access, media access; (2) upgraded curriculum, i.e. books, instructional supplies; (3) upgraded equipment; and (4) improvements to the school lunch program, i.e. comparable quality and selection to traditional settings. Some students were very satisfied with the current delivery model and felt that no changes were needed. Other students expressed a desire for a model that resembled a more traditional facility and curricular approach. Findings also indicated student interest in having a stronger voice in program affairs, including the development of a student council.

The findings are consistent with student feedback concerning alternative education that was

gathered during the Justice Circle process in the Spring of 2001. Students were supportive of alternative education and emphasized the need for small class sizes, remedial assistance, personal support, and extracurricular activities. Many of the students expressed feelings of academic frustration and social alienation in the traditional setting. The students found the diverse racial composition of the students and faculty at the RRALC to be a strength of the program.

The student feedback encourages the continued development of alternative programming options in traditional and nontraditional settings.

C. Matrix for the Analysis of Programs and Services for Students At-Risk:

The Task Force believes that the study of Focus Area Eight: Alternative Education Delivery Model has implications for students at-risk in all settings. The Task Force believes that both traditional and alternative education settings need to be “user-friendly” for students at-risk and their families. The Task Force recommends further analysis of traditional and nontraditional environments to examine practices and policies that may alienate students at-risk and/or identify gaps in programs and services. Dr. Olivia Melroe, Task Force Member, developed a tool to guide this process (see Appendix I. Matrix for Analysis of Programs and Services for Students At-Risk in Traditional and Nontraditional Settings).

D. Department of Children, Families and Learning:

Glory Kibbel, Alternative Education Specialist, Department of Children, Families and Learning, participated in a teleconference with the Task Force on November 8, 2001. Having reviewed a copy of the “draft” report prior to the teleconference, Ms. Kibbel discussed her perspective on the “direction” the Task Force was taking, as well as clarifying issues related to the delivery of alternative education, i.e. state trends, best practices, etc. Comments made by Ms. Kibbel were as follows:

1. The “draft” report is quite aggressive but excellent. It is very comprehensive.
 2. Moorhead School District has done a lot with alternative education in a short amount of time.
 3. Developing a “school within a school” model can be an effective strategy for “preventing” students from dropping out of the traditional setting, but a separate site will be critical for students who cannot, and should not, attend school at the traditional school.
 4. Communication is essential for student success. The quality of communication between the alternative program and other district entities impacts program effectiveness.
 5. The intake process, i.e. criteria for admittance, etc., for alternative programs should include exclusionary factors, i.e. denial of students who may not be able to succeed at an alternative school. The district should provide other options for students who are unable to succeed in an alternative program, i.e. students with severe emotional and behavioral needs.
 6. The development and implementation of “sober schools” within alternative education delivery models is a trend being evidenced statewide. The Task Force may want to consider a “sober school” model that includes “restorative justice” practices.
 7. Ms. Kibbel supported the Task Force recommendation for ongoing study and evaluation of the alternative education delivery model. She suggested that members refer to the Department of Children, Families and Learning web site for “completion rate” data, i.e. dropout rates, graduation rates, etc., that may be helpful in evaluating program models now and in the future.
- In summary, Ms. Kibbel expressed support for the Task Force recommendations and she commended the Task Force for its work.

IV. Summary and Conclusions:

The Alternative Education Community Task Force recommends to the Facility and Grade Level Configuration Community Task Force that a full continuum of alternative education programs and services be provided to at-risk learners in traditional and nontraditional settings, including the five priority recommendations and related recommendations outlined above. Last, the Task Force recommends that the development of programs and services within the alternative education delivery model be integrated with other Priority Areas, as appropriate, including the Middle School and High School Enhancement Initiatives. The recommendations of the Alternative Education Community Task Force have implications for facility planning, including appropriate space for school within a school programs in the traditional secondary buildings and the need for a separate off campus facility. The Task Force recommends that consideration be given to collocating the separate site program with other community based educational programs in the Moorhead District. The Task Force recommends that the expanded alternative education delivery model be viewed as an enhancement for traditional settings, as well as an expanded community resource. The needs of at-risk learners and related alternative programs are often misunderstood by the community. The Task Force recommends that strategies be developed to counter the stigma that is often associated with alternative education and learners at-risk, including the promotion of alternative education programming and related benefits. Last, the Task Force recommends that ongoing evaluation of programs and services for at-risk learners be conducted to ensure that these students are supported appropriately in traditional and nontraditional settings.

**Appendix I. Matrix for Analysis of Programs and Services for Students At-Risk in
Traditional and Nontraditional Settings.**

Developed by:
Dr. Olivia Melroe, Minnesota State University Moorhead
Alternative Education Delivery Model Community Task Force

Behavior							
	RAALC	Shelter Care	Out reach	YES	Juvenile Center	ESL	HS JH
<u>Oppositional</u>							
Maturity							
Stress							
Truancy / Attendance							
Attention							
<u>Mental Health</u>							
Counseling							
EBD							
<u>Chemical</u>							
Maintain sobriety							
<u>Cultural Diversity</u>							
	RAALC	Shelter Care	Out reach	YES	Juvenile Center	ESL	HS JH
<u>Socio-Linguistic</u>							
English Language Learner							
Academic Support for Language diversity							
<u>Socio-Cultural</u>							
Indian Education Curriculum							
Liaisons							
<u>Poverty</u>							
Mobility- missed skills							
Academic Attainment Needs							
	RAALC	Shelter Care	Out reach	YES	Juvenile Center	ESL	HS JH
<u>Gifted</u>							

<u>Post secondary Options</u>							
During HS							
Preparation following HS							
<u>Special Education</u>							
Health							
<u>Socio Linguistic</u>							
<u>Grad Standards</u>							
Attainment							
Make up							
Catch up							
<u>Course Requirements</u>							
<u>Legal</u>							
	RAALC	Shelter Care	Out reach	YES	Juvenile Center	ESL	HS JH
Truancy							
Chemical							
<u>Flexible</u>							
	RAALC	Shelter Care	Out reach	YES	Juvenile Center	ESL	HS JH
Work Release							
Vocational							
Child Care							
Pregnant or Parenting students							
Parent component							
Makeup							
Catchup							
Distance Learning							
Drop out							

Appendix II. Minnesota State Approved Alternative Programs

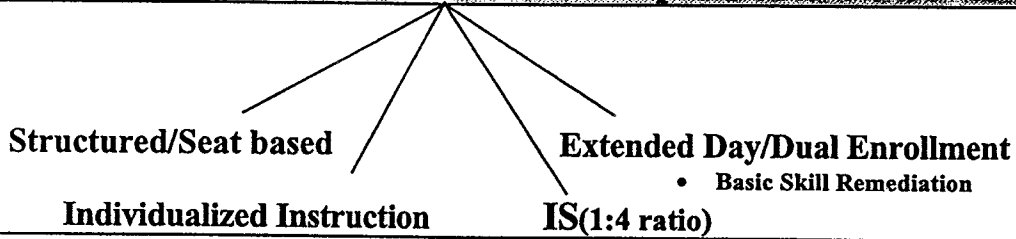
Alternative Education Delivery Handbook
Learner Options Division
Department of Children, Families and Learning

Minnesota State Approved Alternative Programs

Area Learning Centers (ALC)	Alternative Learning Programs (ALP)	Private Contracted
75	53	22

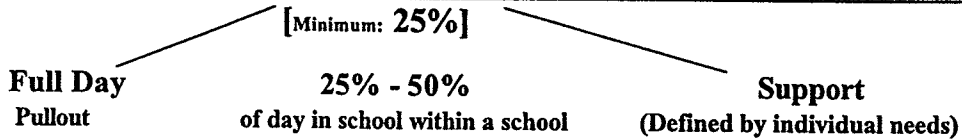
MN Statute 123A.05 Area Learning Center Organization;
MN Statute 123A.06 Center Programs and Services;
MN Statute 124D.68 Graduation Incentives Program;
MN Statute 126C.05 Subd. 15. Learning year pupil units

High School/Adult Diploma



TEACHER-INITIATED *verses* **SELF-DIRECTED**

Middle Level → ALP optional



Targeted Services → ALP No

(K-8 Prevention/intervention services to assist students to be successful in the traditional classroom)

- Graduation Incentives Criteria must be met
- Programming must be for an entire year
- Cross section of all students must be served
- Continual Learning Plan (CLP) must be developed on each student
- The *Whole Learner* needs to be addressed
- Variety of learning techniques must be provided