



PHIL BREDESEN
GOVERNOR

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
6th FLOOR, ANDREW JOHNSON TOWER
710 JAMES ROBERTSON PARKWAY
NASHVILLE, TN 37243-0375

TIMOTHY WEBB, Ed.D.
COMMISSIONER

MEMORANDUM

To: The Honorable Phil Bredesen, Governor of Tennessee
The Honorable Ron Ramsey, Lt. Governor of Tennessee
The Honorable Kent Williams, Speaker (House of Representatives)
The Honorable Harry Brooks, Chair (House Education Committee)
The Honorable Dolores Gresham, Chair (Senate Education Committee)

From: Timothy Webb, Ed.D.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Timothy K. Webb".

Re: A Feasibility Study Related to the Establishment of Pilot Alternative
Education Programs in Tennessee

Date: February 2, 2009

Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-3404 provides that the Advisory Council for Alternative Education submit a feasibility study relating to the establishment of pilot alternative education programs in Tennessee. Transmitted herewith is the report authored by the Advisory Council in conjunction with Department staff. Information presented in this report summarizes qualitative data provided by other states funding alternative education and draws upon the experience of seasoned professionals in the field.

Alternative education programs in Tennessee attempt to meet the most at-risk students' educational and social needs while addressing the negative behavior patterns and attitudes that often serve as a barrier to learning. When done effectively, alternative programs have the ability to recover potential dropouts, help school districts meet performance standards, and reduce overall juvenile crime related costs. The attached report provides an overview of how this initiative might enhance current alternative education services across our state.

Questions regarding this report may be directed to James Vince Witty, Alternative Education Coordinator in the Office of School Safety and Learning Support. Mr. Witty may be reached by phone at (615) 532-4768 or via email to james.witty@state.tn.us.

TW/jw

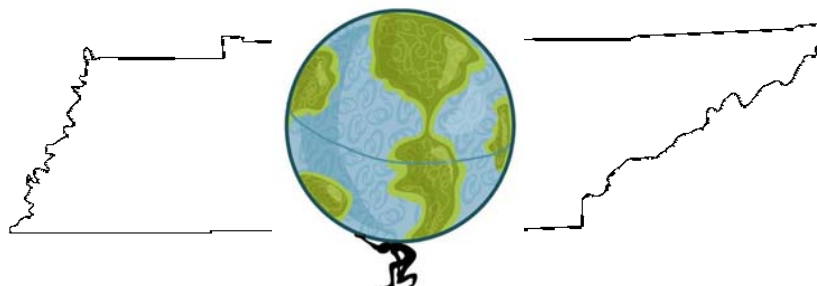
Attachment



TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Office of School Safety and Learning Support
6th Floor, Andrew Johnson Tower
710 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, TN 37243

ATLAS PILOT PROJECT: (Alternative Teaching and Learning Achievement Services)



A Feasibility Study Relating to the Establishment of Pilot Alternative Education Programs in Tennessee

Joris M. Ray, Chair
Joetta Yarbrow, Vice-Chair
Joyce Hale, Secretary
James V. Witty, Executive Secretary

Rita Herndon, Council Member
Gary Houck, Council Member
Trent McVay, Council Member
James Murphy, Council Member
Larry Saunders, Council Member
Marcia Thornton, Council Member

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	2
Purpose and Scope.....	4
Advisory Council Recommendations.....	5
Funding and Cost Benefit Analysis.....	9
State to State Comparison.....	10
Conclusion.....	12
Acknowledgements.....	13
Alternative Education Program Model (State Standards).....	Appendix A
First Year Funding Projections	Appendix B

Executive Summary

Last year in Tennessee, 21,721 students attended school in an alternative setting. This figure is up approximately **20 percent from the previous school year**. With 75,263 students suspended and 3,728 students expelled during the 2006-2007 school year, the demand for alternative education services is overwhelming. With ever-growing numbers, most alternative programs do not have adequate funding to provide the needed staffing, curriculum and support services necessary for this most challenging population of at-risk students. Currently, there is no dedicated funding stream for alternative education. Yet, alternative programs have the potential to bundle intervention services and the ability to improve academic performance which helps recover dropouts.

Alternative education is a cost effective way to create **tax contributors** as opposed to **tax consumers**. Consider that dropouts earn less than their peers that graduate high school and are more likely to participate in government provided social services and enter into the prison system. The American Youth Policy Forum reports that “Three-quarters of state prison inmates are dropouts, as are 59% of federal inmates.” Benefits of funding alternative education include the following: improved educational outcomes such as graduation rates, grade retention and test scores, a reduction in juvenile crime, and increased earnings (as well as tax contributions) over the life of the recovered dropout. In fact, the Alliance for Excellent Education estimates that for every one dropout that can be recovered, the Tennessee taxpayer will save approximately \$259,090 in lost wages, taxes, and productivity over the lifetime of the potential dropout.

In response to *Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-3404*, the following feasibility study was conducted. Upon review of data provided by other states funding alternative education and drawing on the experience of seasoned professionals in the field, the Governor’s Advisory Council for Alternative Education recommends the establishment of a grant based pilot project. The following should be considered if the General Assembly wishes to move forward with the initiative:

- As a condition of funding, all grantees should participate in a rigorous annual evaluation.
- All recipients should be held accountable to the recently adopted state standards for alternative education (refer to Appendix A).
- Grant activities and funding should directly relate to the implementation of the state standards and allow for pay incentives to teachers working in the alternative program.
- Initial funding should be limited to six pilot projects (two in each grand division).
- Grant funds should be given on a per pupil basis and ADM money should follow the student to the alternative setting.
- Start-up monies should be allocated during the first year of funding.

- Funding should be guaranteed to grant recipients for a minimum of 3 years with the flexibility to extend the project if additional monies become available. Grantees should also submit a sustainability plan as a part of the application process integrating juvenile justice, mental health, and child welfare into the strategic planning process.
- An in-kind match of 40 percent should be required for those participating in the pilot initiative.
- Grant recipients should not be limited to local boards of education and participants should be allowed to serve students from age 5 to 19. Districts should also be able to form a consortium to provide services (with one single fiscal agent) if designated in the grant application.
- Grantees should be required to serve students a minimum of (30) school days to receive funding for that participant.
- Administration of the pilot project should be coordinated by the Tennessee Department of Education. Approximately 1.5 million dollars would be necessary to fund the first year of the project and serve several thousand of Tennessee's at-risk students. Logistically, a total of 750 at-risk students would be served on any given day. For an in-depth cost analysis for the project visit Appendix B.
- The Governor's Advisory Council for Alternative Education should provide leadership and oversight on the project.

Based on these suggestions, the Council proposes the establishment of the **Alternative Teaching and Learning Achievement Services (ATLAS) Project**.

While the initial investment seems costly, it is minimal in comparison to the long term savings. **If pilot sites recover 50 dropouts a year, a savings of approximately 12.9 million dollars would be realized (minus the yearly investment of 1.5 million dollars). If 750 students were prevented from dropping out, the state would realize a savings of 194 million dollars (minus the cost of providing services).** In the short term, funding pilot projects would help districts reduce the dropout rate and meet performance standards. The Council believes this to be well worth the investment in alternative education.

Also presented herewith, the reader will find a state to state comparison of those funding alternative education. Most surveyed started as grant based initiatives that eventually expanded to every district wishing to participate. While the Council believes this to be the logical progression, this body recommends limiting the number of pilot sites in the beginning. This will allow Department officials and district coordinators the opportunity to polish the activities of pilot sites and create "model" alternative education programs for others to replicate.

For additional questions regarding the feasibility study or alternative education in Tennessee, contact James Vince Witty (Executive Secretary of the Governor's Advisory Council for Alternative Education) at (615) 532-4768.

ATLAS PILOT PROJECT:

Alternative Teaching and Learning Achievement Services



A FEASIBILITY STUDY RELATING TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PILOT ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN TENNESSEE

Purpose and Scope

Much like the Titan “Atlas,” many students entering into an alternative education setting carry the weight of the world on their backs. Last year in Tennessee, 21,721 students attended an alternative education program which is up 4,060 students (approximately 20 percent) from the previous school year. The demand for alternative education is overwhelming with 75,263 students suspended and 3,728 students expelled during the 2006-2007 school year. Yet traditionally, most alternative education programs in the state do not have adequate staffing, curriculum and support services. Furthermore, there is no guaranteed federal or state funding stream designated specifically to provide these services.

Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-3404 requires that the Advisory Council for Alternative Education study issues relating to establishing pilot alternative education programs. Presented herewith are the findings associated with that charge. To better understand the issues related to establishing pilot projects, the Council used qualitative means to capture data for this report. Council members and Department staff surveyed five other states that have direct funding streams for alternative education and discussed current allocations, program activities, lessons learned, and potential benefits. The following states participated in the study: Arkansas, Texas, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Virginia. Likewise, professionals in the field of alternative education were consulted. Finally, the National Alternative Education Association (NAEA) and the Tennessee Alternative Educator’s Association (TAEA) were consulted. Based on the examination of the above states and the recommendations of seasoned experts, you will find a proposal for the establishment of the pilot grant project called **ATLAS (Alternative Teaching and Learning Achievement Services)**. If the General Assembly chooses to fund such a project, the Council recommends that the Department of Education release an RFP or request for proposals.

The reader will also find a state to state comparison of those that currently have revenue streams for alternative education. The current cost allocation in each state has also been included. The newly developed standards adopted by the State Board of Education have also been enclosed as a basis for grant funding/allowable activities (Appendix A). Furthermore, the Council investigated the cost savings of providing effective alternative education services to students at risk of dropping out of school and included the findings as a part of this study. Finally, acknowledgements for those that participated in this project have been included.

For additional questions regarding the feasibility study or alternative education in Tennessee, contact James Vince Witty (Executive Secretary of the Governor's Advisory Council for Alternative Education) at (615) 532-4768.

Advisory Council Recommendations

After surveying and researching other states that administer funds to alternative education programs, the Advisory Council recommends a competitive grant program be used to disseminate funds to applicants that choose to apply. The Advisory Council proposes the establishment of the **ATLAS (Alternative Teaching and Learning Achievement Services)** competitive grant program. In Tennessee, there seems to be a certain familiarity with competitive grant projects with the existence of other state funded grant programs such as LEAPs (Lottery for Education: Afterschool Programs) and Pre-Kindergarten grants. A competitive grant would be the logical route in which to begin the pilot project, as many other states began in a similar manner. The Council recommends that the following items be considered in the event that the General Assembly chooses to establish pilot ATLAS sites:

Accountability (Data Triangulation as a Method to Program Evaluation)

- Most states have rigorous accountability measures in place to judge the success of their alternative education programs. The Advisory Council would expect nothing less from pilot projects. The Council recommends that data triangulation measures be used that mirror the accountability procedures put into place by the Oklahoma Technical Assistance Center (OTAC). The program evaluation process involves analysis of three different sources of data. First, administrators conduct program implementation ratings (based on observation data). The program ratings would be given based on alignment with the recently adopted state standards for alternative education. Secondly, student outcome data would be used to determine the success of the program. This would include grades, absences, disciplinary referrals, credits earned, dropout and graduation rates (quasi-experimental design). Finally, student and parent surveys would be administered by pilot sites. All three sources of data would be used to evaluate the overall program effectiveness of each ATLAS site.

Alignment with State Standards, Allowable Activities and Incentive Pay

- The majority of states have standards for alternative education programs to align with as a condition of funding. As a condition of ATLAS funding, the Council recommends that all grantees align program activities with the new state standards (Program Model for Alternative Education) that were adopted by the State Board of Education. A copy of the standards may be found in Appendix A. Appropriate grant activities might include the following: academic skills development and enhancement activities, behavioral skills development and enhancement activities, credit recovery, e-learning and distance education, mentoring and tutorial assistance, nutrition and health services, transitional planning services, support services (such as individual and group counseling, school counseling, special education services, etc.), research based dropout prevent strategies, character building and conflict resolution programs, computer literacy, life skills development (including career exploration), and service learning. Funds could also be used to meet the recommended 12:1 student to teacher ratio set forth under the state standards. Furthermore, funds might also provide “incentives” to innovative, effective educators that choose to teach at the alternative program. Often, alternative education students can be challenging, so the best and brightest teachers are needed in these settings. Grant funds should only be used for new activities and not for supplanting current activities.

Limiting the Number of Pilot Sites

- Many states had “growing pains” when they chose to fund a multitude of projects in the first year. The Advisory Council recommends that the pilot project be limited to six grant recipients (fiscal agents) in the first year with no more than one program being funded by any one grantee. This will allow the Department of Education and the Governor’s Advisory Council for Alternative Education to work closely with the projects and refine program activities to ensure high quality programming. In the event that the General Assembly chooses to expand the pilot project after the first year, Department staff will be seasoned and better equipped to move forward with the project. This will also allow Department staff to collect data on the effectiveness of the new pilot sites.

Per Pupil Basis for Funding and ADM Money

- States vary on the way in which funds are administered. Most states that fund alternative education do so on a per pupil basis. The Council also recommends that grant funds be administered on a per pupil basis. When requesting grant funding, recipients should estimate (during the first year) the number of students they propose to serve and the number of days in which they propose to operate the program. Each year after, the Department of Education should have the flexibility to increase or decrease funding based on the number of students served during the

previous school year and the number of days the program actually operated. Funding projections for the pilot project (based on a per day, per pupil model) have been included as Appendix B. Furthermore, the Council recommends that as a condition of receiving grant funds, that all ADM money follows the student while he or she is attending the alternative education program. State funding should not be used as the sole source of revenue for the program, nor would this be enough to operate an exemplary program. Both revenue streams will be necessary to provide the full scope of “bundled” intervention services required to effectively meet the needs of this population of students.

Start-Up Funds

- Many state coordinators cite the magnitude of costs associated with starting a program, especially for rural and suburban communities. Therefore, the Advisory Council recommends that “start-up” funds be allocated in addition to annual allotments for pilot sites during the first year. The Advisory Council would recommend that a one time start up allocation equal to $\frac{1}{4}$ of the pilot project’s first annual budget be given to the project. This will ensure that the program has the monies necessary to start a rigorous and standard driven program. Funding projections have been included as Appendix B.

Length of Funding and Sustainability

- Most states providing grant funding initially did so via a competitive grant competition and then chose to fund their original pilot sites after the initial grant expired. In fact, the majority of states starting with grant funding ended up providing reoccurring funds to all districts/programs wishing to participate. While the Advisory Council would recommend a direct and constant funding stream for alternative education, the Council does understand that this is not always possible. The Council feels strongly that a steady funding stream is needed for the pilot sites, especially in the infancy of the program. Therefore, the Advisory Council recommends that grant funds be guaranteed for a minimum of 3 years with built in flexibility to extend funding if the monies become available. This is necessary as many programs would not be able to afford the major expenses associated with starting and maintaining an exemplary program. The Council would also recommend that all recipients be required to submit a sustainability plan, as a part of their grant application, should grant funds ever be eliminated. Furthermore, grantees should engage juvenile justice, mental health, and child welfare into the strategic planning process for the project.

Matching Funds

- Some states call for matching funds. For example, the Ohio State Department of Education administers the Challenge Grant which requires grantees to match 40 percent of the project funds. The Advisory Council

believes that recipients should also be invested in the project. With ADM money following the student, it should not be difficult for the program to match at minimum 40 percent of the funding. Therefore, the Advisory Council recommends that an in-kind match of 40 percent be required for grantees wishing to participate in the ATLAS project.

Eligible Agencies and Participants

- Grantees should not be limited to local boards of education. Furthermore, districts may choose to form a consortium to provide the services (with one fiscal agent) if designated in the initial grant application. Participants should also be allowed to serve students from the age of 5-19 under the ATLAS grant. This allows for the establishment of elementary and secondary alternative education programs. By allowing the flexibility to serve elementary students, this will enable programs the opportunity to provide appropriate interventions at a much earlier age thus increasing the likelihood of reaching these at-risk students earlier in life.

Minimum Length of Stay for Participants

- Some states require that alternative education programs serve students for a minimum number of days for optimal impact. Research indicates the length of stay in an alternative program is critical to the program's overall impact. Therefore, the Advisory Council recommends that pilot projects serve every student for a minimum of 30 days as a condition of receiving funding for that individual participant. For the best possible results with students, a minimum number of days are necessary to make the appropriate interventions.

Administration of the Grant and First Year Funding

- The Department of Education will be the critical link to ensuring that the pilot projects are successful. Therefore, it is recommended that the Department of Education take the lead in administering the ATLAS grant and provide the needed infrastructure for the program. All states with revenue streams for alternative education have a designated state director with 100% of his or her time dedicated solely to alternative education. Furthermore, most states have a team of education consultants that support the project. Program staff provide technical assistance, coordinate state training, conduct program evaluations, collect student level data on participants, and report annually to the legislature. Therefore, administrative funds should be allocated to the Department of Education to administer the ATLAS pilot grant program. Funds should provide for a director, and at minimum one educational consultant to help carry out the project. Furthermore, as a part of the pilot, the Council proposes the establishment of a Technical Assistance Center (much like Oklahoma). Tennessee's Technical Assistance Center should be established and provide much needed technical assistance while also

offering evaluative services to ATLAS sites. Furthermore, the center should be accessible to all alternative education programs across the state regardless of the status of being designated an ATLAS site. Approximately 1.5 million dollars would be necessary to fund the first year of the project and serve several thousand students with a total of 750 students being served on any given day. A review of the funding projections may be found in Appendix B.

Leadership and Oversight

- While the Department of Education should be the sole entity that makes grant award decisions, the Governor's Advisory Council for Alternative Education should provide leadership and oversight to the Department of Education, the Governor and the General Assembly on the ATLAS project. The Advisory Council should serve as an Advisory Board who provides support in developing and communicating the mission of the ATLAS program, continually communicating standards for excellence in the field, and helping to facilitate continuous program improvement.

Like ATLAS, the Advisory Council believes that the at-risk students entering into the alternative education setting carry the weight of the world on their backs. The goal of alternative education is to lift students up so that they can realize their own true potential and deal with the weight and pressures of the everyday world. Based on the recommends set forth in the feasibility study, the Advisory Council strongly recommends the establishment of the **ATLAS (Alternative Teaching and Learning Achievement Services)** pilot project.

Funding and Cost Benefit Analysis

In 2008, the Alliance for Excellent Education reported that each year approximately "22,000 students in Tennessee do not graduate with their peers." The Alliance also reports that dropouts from the class of 2007 will cost the state more than \$5.7 billion in lost wages, taxes, and productivity over the course of their lives. According to the U.S. Bureau of Census, Tennessee dropouts earn an annual approximate average of \$9,600 less than a high school graduate, \$9,700 less than someone with an associate's degree and \$16,026 less than a college graduate. Furthermore, the Alliance for Excellent Education reports that "If Tennessee's likely dropouts from the class of 2007 graduated instead, the state could have saved more than \$350 million in Medicaid and expenditures for uninsured care over the course of those young people's lifetimes." Recovering dropouts also reduces crime-related costs. The Alliance reports that "Increasing the graduation rate and college matriculation of male students in Tennessee by only 5 percent could lead to combined savings and revenue of almost \$183 million each year by reducing crime-related costs." Also consider that the American Youth Policy Forum reports that "Three-quarters of state prison inmates are dropouts, as are 59% of federal inmates. In fact, dropouts are 3.5 times more likely than high school graduates to be incarcerated in their lifetime."

The benefit is clear. For every one dropout that an alternative education program can recover in Tennessee, this will have saved the state approximately \$259,090 in lost wages, taxes, and productivity over the lifetime of the potential dropout. While the initial costs of funding pilot alternative programs might seem high, the overall cost effectiveness is undeniable.

Knowing that a cost savings of \$259,090 would be realized for every one student an ATLAS grantee saves, the primary goal of the project should be to prevent students from dropping out of school. Participants should also address any negative behavior patterns of the student while working to increase academic achievement. While funding alternative education on the front end might seem costly to some, it is the unanimous opinion of this council that the overall cost savings for the state is well worth the initial investment. Furthermore, with the development of the Alternative Education Program Model and state standards (refer to Appendix A), the Council believes it has a good grasp on how funds should be spent to develop exemplary programs across the state. **If state pilot projects recover 50 dropouts a year, a cost savings of approximately 12.9 million dollars would be realized by the state of Tennessee minus the small (in comparison) yearly investment of 1.5 million dollars (during the first year). If 750 students were prevented from dropping out of school, the state would realize a cost savings of 194 million dollars minus the cost of providing services.** In the short term, allocating funds for pilot projects would help districts reduce the dropout rate and meet performance measures. For these reasons alone, the Advisory Council recommends the establishment of the ATLAS pilot project based on the recommendations set forth in this document.

State to State Comparisons

Below you will find information about the five states that were surveyed and participated in the study. Furthermore, you will also find the current approximate state funding for alternative education in Table 1.

Table 1

State	Approximate State Funding for Alternative Education	Type of Funding
Arkansas	19 Million Dollars	Direct Funding to LEAs ^{***}
Texas	18 Million Dollars	Direct Funding to LEAs ^{***}
Ohio	12 Million Dollars	Competitive Grant Program ^{***}
Oklahoma	20 Million Dollars	Direct Funding to LEAs ^{***}
Virginia	6.2 Million Dollars	Direct Funding to LEAs

^{***} Initially started as a competitive grant program

Arkansas

Originally funding to Alternative Learning Environments (ALEs) in Arkansas began during the 2004-2005 school year as a grant funded pilot program. Currently, “additional categorical restricted funds” are appropriated to school districts. They are “additional” in that they are above and beyond the ADM monies that school districts receive, and “categorical restricted” in that they are strictly to be spent on alternative education. Funding is administered by the State Department of Education by the Director of Alternative Education. Two other program consultants help administer the funding, conduct program evaluations and collect data, as well as provide on-going technical assistance. Last year, the state legislature spent roughly 19 million dollars to provide alternative education services to this at-risk population.

Texas

The Texas Education Agency administers direct funding to LEAs for alternative education purposes. Last year, the state spent roughly 18 million dollars on alternative education. All schools districts in the state receive direct funding for alternative education. Each district is required to have 2 separate programs. One program is for elementary students and the other is for secondary students. All students are required to attend the alternative school if they are expelled from a traditional school. The Education Agency not only administers the funding but also conducts the evaluation component of the project.

Ohio

The Alternative Education Challenge Grant Program was first authorized by the Ohio state legislature in 1999 to address the needs of youth who are habitually truant and/or those who attempt to disrupt a school’s learning environment, or those who have otherwise been academically and socially unsuccessful in a school setting. The program is a state funded grant based program with a minimum match of 40 percent on the part of the school district. During the first four years of operation, the Challenge Grant Program served more than 140,000 students. This past school year, 122 programs were funded with over 500 (115 Fiscal Agents) school districts involved for a total approximate allocation of 12 million dollars by the legislature. The state department manages the grant funds and also the evaluation component.

Oklahoma

The Oklahoma State Department of Education administered roughly 20 million dollars last school year to alternative education programs. Originally, the program started as a grant based project. In Oklahoma, every school district receives \$1,000.00 per student they serve. All school districts receive a minimum of \$9,000.00 to provide services. This money is above the ADM money so that state funding is not the sole source of revenue for the program. The state also has contracted with OTAC (Oklahoma Technical Assistance Center) for roughly

one million dollars. OTAC provides technical assistance to projects across the state while also evaluating the program's effectiveness on behalf of the state department of education. All districts have or had the opportunity to receive funds for alternative education if they chose to participate. All alternative education programs must also use the state standards that were developed for alternative education programs as a basis for program activities.

Virginia

In 1993, the Virginia state legislature directed the State Board of Education to establish and implement four regional pilot projects to provide educational alternatives for students who violated a school board policy. During the first funding year, the state put forth approximately 1.2 million dollars toward the project. The major goal of the pilot programs included reducing the dropout rate, building self-esteem and responsibility, correcting dysfunctional and/or dangerous behaviors, returning students to the sending school to graduate and identifying career interests. Over the years, the number of programs has grown from four in 1993 to 29 in 2007 with approximately 6.2 million appropriated by the state legislature for these programs. Unlike the other states, their program did not start out as a competitive grant project.

Conclusion

The Governor's Advisory Council views the funding of pilot sites across the state as a positive step in providing effective interventions and the right "alternatives" to suspension, expulsion and dropping out of school for the most at-risk of students. It is the view of this Council that alternative education is "not just an alternative, but an opportunity" --an opportunity for the state of Tennessee, the school district, the alternative education program and the student.

With a cost savings of \$259,090 for every one dropout an ATLAS grantee recovers, the investment would be well worth the pay off. In the short term, schools would immediately realize the benefit of reduced dropouts and be better equipped to meet performance standards. The Council also believes that the recently developed Program Model for Alternative Education will provide a standard driven, model for pilot sites to operate under. Alternative education provides a unique opportunity to create **tax contributors** as opposed to **tax consumers**. Based on the information presented and the recommendations set forth, the Advisory Council whole heartedly proposes the establishment of the **ATLAS (Alternative Teaching and Learning Achievement Services)** pilot project.

For additional questions regarding the feasibility study or alternative education in Tennessee, contact James Vince Witty (Executive Secretary of the Governor's Advisory Council for Alternative Education) at (615) 532-4768.

Acknowledgements

Numerous agencies, resources, field experts and practitioners were consulted and/or participated in developing the above recommendations. Acknowledgements are appropriate for the following entities that provided leadership with this project:

Arkansas Department of Education

Division of Special Education
(Tennessee Department of Education)

National Alternative Education Association

Office of School Safety and Learning Support
(Tennessee Department of Education)

Ohio Department of Education

Oklahoma Technical Assistance Center

Tennessee Alternative Education Association

Tennessee State Board of Education

Texas Education Agency

Virginia Department of Education

With Very Special Thanks To:

Lori Lamb, Director of Alternative Education for the Arkansas Department of Education

Denise Parish Riley, OTAC Assistant Director

James Vince Witty, Alternative Education Coordinator for the Tennessee Department of Education

Appendix A

TENNESSEE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Alternative Education Program Model/Standards

2.302

Alternative Education Program Model/Standards

Standard 1.0: Mission

An exemplary alternative education program operates with a clearly stated mission, a formal set of standards, and a plan for program improvement.

1.1	The mission describes the reason for the program and the students to be served.
1.2	The mission has a unifying theme that invokes high levels of staff support.
1.3	Student success is central to the mission.
1.4	The program's goals and objectives provide a focus for program improvement.
1.5	The mission, goals, and expected outcomes are documented, published, and clearly visible to staff, students, and parents.
1.6	The program operates under a policies and procedures manual that is approved by the local board of education.

Standard 2.0: Program Environment

An exemplary alternative education program provides a safe, positive, and nurturing environment which is conducive to learning.

2.1	The program provides a written code of conduct which is clearly understood, accepted, and consistently applied to all students (e.g. level system or similar behavior support mechanisms).
2.2	The program is housed in a safe, well-maintained, and accessible physical environment that supports optimal student learning.
2.3	The program has a detailed safety plan that has been distributed and practiced to ensure the security and good health of students and staff.
2.4	The program demonstrates an understanding and sensitivity to academic, cultural, social, behavioral, and developmental needs of students, parents, and the community.
2.5	There is an atmosphere of mutual respect among program staff, students, parents, and the community.
2.6	Staff communicates high expectations for students' academic performance and overall behavior.
2.7	Students have a role in shaping the learning environment.
2.8	There is a low student to teacher ratio (1:12) with a teaching assistant for each certified staff person and classes not exceeding 12 students.

Standard 3.0: Governance

An exemplary alternative education program operates under an Advisory Board comprised of staff, parents, students and community representatives who provide leadership and support in developing and communicating the program's mission, standards, and planning for continuous improvement.

TENNESSEE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Alternative Education Program Model/Standards

2.302

3.1	The program has an Advisory Board consisting of faculty members, parents, students, community representatives, and other district personnel who meet on a regular basis during the school year.
3.2	The Advisory Board makes recommendations to the program administrator on its mission, written policies, and procedures to ensure continuous improvement.
3.3	The program administrator empowers the Advisory Board to help accomplish the shared vision and goals of the program.
3.4	The Advisory Board is directly involved in program activities and rallies community support.
3.5	Board members have ownership in the overall success of the program.

Standard 4.0: Transitional Planning

An exemplary alternative education program implements a transitional plan for students entering and exiting the program which ensures the likelihood of student success.

4.1	The program has a Screening Committee to ensure that the alternative placement is most appropriate for the student's specific educational, behavioral, and social needs (individual student, individual placement decision).
4.2	The program provides a written transitional plan from pre-entry through post-exit for every student in attendance which includes the following: an orientation which consists of rapport building, assessment of the student, IEP review, short and long-term goal setting, development of an individualized learner plan, and other mechanisms designed to orient the student to the alternative education setting.
4.3	Transitional plans afford students the opportunity to maintain and accelerate their current progress toward graduation.
4.4	A Student Support Team is established that consists of educators from the school of origin, educators from the alternative education program, the student, and parent(s) who are directly involved in all aspects of the transitional process including drafting, implementing, monitoring, and periodically modifying the transitional plan.
4.5	The Student Support Team assesses and matches needs to services to ensure the following: early interventions are developed to minimize the number and length of alternative education placements, social readiness is assessed before returning to the school of origin, continuance of required services are provided to meet the educational needs of students with disabilities, and limited English proficiency and/or significant skill deficiencies are addressed.
4.6	Information sharing (<i>availability of pertinent records*</i>) takes place between the home school, and/or Department of Children Services, and/or juvenile correctional center, and/or local juvenile treatment centers.
4.7	When appropriate, students in alternative education programs are

TENNESSEE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Alternative Education Program Model/Standards

2.302

	provided with various opportunities to develop and maintain supportive links to the school of origin.
4.8	Prior to a student's entrance and exit from an alternative education program, transitional services are coordinated with the home school, alternative education program, the student, and parents to ensure a successful return.
4.9	Transition services are routinely evaluated to determine the program's effectiveness in promoting the return and continued success of students in the traditional school program (including follow-up visits with past participants).

**Copies of the school enrollment letter, birth certificate, social security card, immunization records, report cards, transcripts, TCAP/ Gateway scores, attendance records, discipline records, special education file and IEP (if applicable), current health treatments and medications needed during school hours are given to the alternative education program*

Standard 5.0: Support Services

An exemplary alternative education program embodies a sound set of support mechanisms that contribute to optimal student development.

5.1	The program provides a comprehensive student assistance program that includes referrals to community agencies as needed.
5.2	Relationships are established to support the physical and mental health needs of the students enrolled.
5.3	The program provides guidance, tutoring, and counseling to promote student performance.
5.4	The program offers a broad range of weekly individual and/or group counseling sessions.
5.5	The program utilizes researched based dropout prevention strategies and character building programs (e.g. conflict resolution, mentoring programs, etc.).
5.6	The program provides the appropriate services to meet the educational needs of students with disabilities, limited English proficiency, and/or significant skill deficiencies.

Standard 6.0: Parent/ Community Engagement

An exemplary alternative education program strives to establish collaborative partnerships with the community and parents to nourish a system of shared responsibility for enrolled students.

6.1	Administration ensures that effective communication and interaction take place between parents and school personnel including being continually notified of their child's progress.
6.2	The program affords opportunities for parents to be included and

TENNESSEE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Alternative Education Program Model/Standards

2.302

	supported in the development of their children.
6.3	Parents are involved in drafting, developing and implementing the student's individualized learner plan.
6.4	Parents receive personal contacts and/or training regarding techniques and strategies that help their child achieve maximum learning and personal success.
6.5	Parents help evaluate the effectiveness of the program and provide feedback and suggestions to improve the quality of services.
6.6	School leadership involves the community through partnerships.
6.7	Partnerships are designed to support and enrich the school's learning environment by including the community as an educational resource (e.g. providing a community sponsored mentor program and/or service learning program).
6.8	Partnerships exist with community service organizations, public agencies, cultural groups, industry, and business.
6.9	There is a strong collaboration with law enforcement, the juvenile justice system, juvenile treatment centers and other youth oriented organizations.
6.10	There is a collaborative process based on open communication and shared responsibility which links the home, school, and community.

Standard 7.0: Staffing and Professional Development

An exemplary alternative education program is staffed with effective, innovative, and qualified staff. Furthermore, the program has ongoing, relevant professional development to ensure both teacher and student success.

7.1	The program employs enthusiastic, energetic, and innovative teachers who demonstrate multiple teaching styles.
7.2	Teachers are highly qualified.
7.3	The staff understands and practices the concept of facilitative learning.
7.4	The diversity of the staff mirrors the diversity of the student body.
7.5	The school district provides a sufficient number of trained teaching assistants, guidance counselors, and other appropriate support individuals.
7.6	The experience of the faculty mirrors the experience of the school district.
7.7	Surveys of program content and staff development needs are distributed to establish both short and long-term professional development plans.
7.8	Staff members participate in professional development opportunities that facilitate personal and professional growth.
7.9	Sufficient resources, such as time and substitutes, allow staff to participate in workshops, conferences, and seminars.
7.10	Administration ensures that ongoing professional development helps build staff's capacity through the use of research based strategies and ensures that learned techniques are implemented.

TENNESSEE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Alternative Education Program Model/Standards

2.302

Standard 8.0: Individualized Learner Plans

An exemplary alternative education program individualizes the student's curriculum and instruction using a learner plan to engage and challenge the student.

8.1	The program uses available resources to develop a learner plan based on the student's differentiated (remedial or accelerated) needs.
8.2	The Student Support Team is actively involved in forming and monitoring the student's progress on the learner plan and provides the support necessary for achievement.
8.3	The learner plan reviews current credit attainment and ensures that the student is making adequate progress toward graduation.
8.4	Teachers use individual student data in making instructional decisions and developing the learner plan.
8.5	Plans incorporate goals for changing negative behavior patterns which may have impeded the student's success (e.g. absences, suspension, tardiness, etc.).
8.6	The learner plan should address required services to meet the educational needs of students with disabilities.
8.7	Plans should integrate the student's 4-year graduation plan.

Standard 9.0: Life Skills

An exemplary alternative education program integrates life skills development into the curriculum and instruction.

9.1	The program utilizes available resources to address the specific life skill needs of participants (e.g. career exploration, citizenship, conflict resolution, decision making skills, job shadowing, problem solving skills, public speaking, social skills, teamwork, time management, work readiness, etc.).
9.2	Students have opportunities to put relevant life skills into action.
9.3	Instruction includes self assessment, paired with short and long term goal setting.
9.4	Curricula address constructive criticism and how to properly react.
9.5	Students have the opportunity to engage in service learning.

Standard 10.0: Curriculum and Instruction

An exemplary alternative education program utilizes Tennessee's state standards, incorporates innovative teaching strategies, delivers research-based instructional techniques, and provides the resources necessary to foster student learning and achievement.

10.1	All students have access to the academic core curriculum.
10.2	Teachers use Tennessee's standard core course of study to facilitate

TENNESSEE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Alternative Education Program Model/Standards

2.302

	instruction.
10.3	Formal and informal assessments document students' progress toward completion of the individualized learner plan.
10.4	Differentiated instruction is provided to accommodate students' various learning styles and recognizes multiple intelligences.
10.5	Assessment results are utilized to determine programming changes and allows the student to monitor his/her own learning and progress.
10.6	Instructors collaborate with other teachers and the home school to enhance teaching strategies and close learning gaps.
10.7	Group delivery systems are used to support collaboration and teamwork.
10.8	Instruction meets the learning style needs of each student and includes opportunities for hands-on, project oriented (experiential) activities.
10.9	Instructional strategies are aligned with the goals and expectations of the students' individualized learner plan(s).
10.10	Teaching across all curricula is employed by instructors.
10.11	Distance learning is utilized when appropriate (e.g. e4TN, GED +2, etc.).
10.12	Technology is embedded in the curricula delivery process.
10.13	The curriculum is supported by access to a balance of up-to-date and well-maintained collection of textbooks, library media, technology, software and other instructional supplies and materials.
10.14	The program has ensured that the curriculum is implemented, supported and accessible for all students.

Standard 11.0: Student Assessment

An exemplary alternative education program routinely assesses students' progress and adjusts instruction accordingly.

11.1	The purpose of assessments are clearly defined and communicated to students, staff, and parents.
11.2	Teachers use formative and summative assessment tools that are frequent, rigorous, and aligned with curriculum and instruction to track student performance and progress.
11.3	Teachers use assessments to analyze student work and identify achievement gaps.
11.4	Assessment, curriculum, and instruction are directly linked to planning for and accommodating a variety of learning styles and multiple intelligences.
11.5	Valid and reliable assessments are aligned with district-wide measures to identify student progress as prescribed by the State of Tennessee.
11.6	Results of assessments are used to inform the students and parent(s) of progress, guide the individualized learner plan, and modify the instructional delivery.

Standard 12.0: Monitoring and Program Assessment

TENNESSEE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Alternative Education Program Model/Standards

2.302

An exemplary alternative education program systematically conducts program evaluations while using that data for continuous improvement.

12.1	The school district routinely conducts evaluations to determine progress toward the program's mission, standards, and plan for improvement.
12.2	Program evaluations include a review of student achievement data (e.g. TCAP test scores, course grades, drop-out data, etc.).
12.3	Program evaluations include a review of student behavioral progress (e.g. discipline data, recidivism rates, etc.).
12.4	Program evaluations are used to develop or update the plan for program improvement.
12.5	The school district makes use of strategic long-range planning to continuously improve alternative education services.
12.6	The school system uses an external evaluator to examine attainment of exemplary practices in alternative education.

Appendix B

Funding Projections By Year (ATLAS)

Year One						Administration, Supervision, State-Wide Training, Evaluation at 20%
Site	Days in Operation	Total Number of Students (Per Day)	Cost Per Day (Above ADM)	Yearly Allocation	First Year Start Up	
Site A	180	125	\$7.50	\$168,750.00	\$42,187.50	
Site B	180	125	\$7.50	\$168,750.00	\$42,187.50	
Site C	180	125	\$7.50	\$168,750.00	\$42,187.50	
Site D	180	125	\$7.50	\$168,750.00	\$42,187.50	
Site E	180	125	\$7.50	\$168,750.00	\$42,187.50	
Site F	180	125	\$7.50	\$168,750.00	\$42,187.50	
Totals		750***		\$1,012,500.00	\$253,125.00	\$253,125.00
Sum Totals						\$1,518,750.00

*** 750 students would be served on any given day, but several thousand of Tennessee's at-risk students would participate.

Year Two						Administration, Supervision, State-Wide Training, Evaluation at 20%
Site	Days in Operation	Total Number of Students (Per Day)	Cost Per Day (Above ADM)	Yearly Allocation		
Site A	180	125	\$7.50	\$168,750.00		
Site B	180	125	\$7.50	\$168,750.00		
Site C	180	125	\$7.50	\$168,750.00		
Site D	180	125	\$7.50	\$168,750.00		
Site E	180	125	\$7.50	\$168,750.00		
Site F	180	125	\$7.50	\$168,750.00		
Totals		750***		\$1,012,500.00		\$253,125.00
Sum Totals						\$1,265,625.00

*** 750 students would be served on any given day, but several thousand of Tennessee's at-risk students would participate.

Year Three					Administration, Supervision, State- Wide Training, Evaluation at 20%
Site	Days in Operation	Average Total Number of Students (Per Day)	Cost Per Day (Above ADM)	Yearly Allocation	
Site A	180	125	\$7.50	\$168,750.00	
Site B	180	125	\$7.50	\$168,750.00	
Site C	180	125	\$7.50	\$168,750.00	
Site D	180	125	\$7.50	\$168,750.00	
Site E	180	125	\$7.50	\$168,750.00	
Site F	180	125	\$7.50	\$168,750.00	
Totals		750***		\$1,012,500.00	\$253,125.00
Sum Totals					\$1,265,625.00

*** 750 students would be served on any given day, but several thousand of Tennessee's at-risk students would participate.

Total Project Projections (ATLAS)

Year 1 Total	Year 2 Total	Year 3 Total	Sum Total
\$1,518,750.00	\$1,265,625.00	\$1,265,625.00	\$4,050,000.00