

Perceived Effectiveness of Alternative Programming: A Case Study

Kate Nickerson, B. A., B. Ed.

Department of Graduate and Undergraduate
Studies in Education

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Faculty of Education, Brock University
St. Catharines, Ontario

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Abstract

The topic of this research was alternative programming in secondary public education. The purpose of this research was to explore the perceived effectiveness of two public secondary programs that are alternative to mainstream or “regular” education. Two case study sites were used to research diverse ends of the alternative programming continuum. The first case study demonstrated a gifted program and the second demonstrated a behavioral program. Student needs were examined in terms of academic needs, emotional needs, career needs, and social needs. Research conducted in these sites examined how the students, teachers, on-site staff, and program administrators perceived that individual needs were met and unmet in these two programs. The study was qualitative and exploratory, using deductive and inductive research techniques. Similar themes of best practice that were identified in the case study sites aided in the development of a teaching and learning model. Four themes were identified as important within the case study sites. These themes included the commitment and motivation of teachers and the support of administration in the gifted program, and the importance of location and the flow of information and communication in the behavior program. Six themes emerged that were similar across the case study sites. These themes included the individual nature of programming, recognition of student achievement, the alternative program as a place of safety and community, importance of interpersonal capacity, priority of basic needs, and, finally, matching student capacity with program expectations. The model incorporates

these themes and is designed as a resource for teachers, program administrators, parents, and policy makers of alternative educational programs.

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CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM

Introduction

The topic of this research was alternative programming in secondary schools in a public board of education. The purpose of this research was to explore the perceived effectiveness of two public secondary programs that are alternative to mainstream or “regular” education. Perceptions of interest were those of students, teachers, on-site staff, and program administrators in alternative programming.

Two case studies were explored in depth. The first case study explored was a program developed to meet the needs of gifted students. The second case study was a program created for secondary students who could not function in the regular secondary school environment as a result of social, emotional, and behavioral issues. The programs were chosen as case studies for data collection because they provided alternatives to the regular school program and were based on meeting diverse and individual needs. The two case studies displayed two distinct entities along the continuum of public, secondary education that were diverse in structure, location, and philosophy. The two case study sites were used to develop elements of best practice in alternative programming for students who had needs that were not being met by regular secondary school programs.

Background to the Problem

Research for this study and the beginning of the data collection were initiated by the author’s desire to research alternative education. My interest in this topic concerns the problem presented to teachers with the task of meeting

individual needs in one classroom. My initial research question when I entered the Master of Education program was, how can individual needs be met in the regular classroom? After I spent time reading about this question, I turned to alternative education as an avenue to investigate the meeting of individual needs. The particular area of specialty that the alternative programs were addressing was not of essential importance. The importance was that the programs were alternative to the mainstream education and that they employed alternative teaching and learning strategies.

When I began to seek out examples of alternative education in the regional school district, several problems became evident. First was the discrepancy in the terminology surrounding alternative education. Second was the distinct lack of information around the area of alternative education and little current research on the topic. Third was an uncertain environment due to changing education policies concerning alternative programming. These problems have caused the current climate of specialized education to become clouded.

The sites I have identified demonstrated the criteria of alternative education I was interested in researching. In both sites, the programs were based on choice, employed alternative teaching and learning strategies, were run as a classroom and not as a specific class in the day, and were constructed to meet many different needs. In this research study I have referred to the case study sites as specialized education that employs alternative programming.

In speaking with teachers involved with the programs, it became evident that the individual students participating in each program had various needs. The

programs were designed to meet a general need, that is, being either gifted in program one or socially and behaviorally troubled in program two. However, under this general area of need, both programs addressed individual needs as well.

The next issue dealt with the background for why “alternative” education is a little-used term in this region of Ontario. My initial visits to various programs in the region had suggested that alternative education was a disappearing entity and a clouded area in Ontario education. My conversations with authorities of special education in the southern Ontario region demonstrated that dramatic changes are taking place in specialized education. These authorities alluded to the complexity and looming problems of curriculum changes and funding cuts. New curricula for elementary and secondary school students (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1999 a), the amalgamation of school boards, and the Education Quality Improvement Act are only some of the changes taking place in Ontario creating a chaotic school environment. These changes, coupled with funding reductions (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1999 a), create a clouded area for alternative programming. In this time of major transition, existing programs need to be studied in order to inform future educational decisions regarding alternative programming.

Purpose and Problem Statement

The purpose of this research study was to explore the effectiveness of alternative programming. The purpose is examined through the two case study sites designated as meeting needs at two diverse ends of the alternative education continuum. This purpose was addressed through the following questions.

1. What needs do the programs purport to meet?
2. What needs do teachers, students, and administrators perceive to be met by the program?
3. What experiences do students receive in their alternative program?
4. What needs do students perceive as not being met? To what reasons do students attribute the lack of need satisfaction?
5. How do stakeholders (students, teachers, and program administrators) rate the success of the program?

Specific data were collected through the targeting of groups within the case study sites, including students, teachers, and program administrators. The perceived effectiveness of these programs to meet student needs was examined in relation to need identification, need intervention, and need attainment. Student needs were explored in relation to academic, emotional, career, and social needs.

Rationale/ Importance of Study

Alternative education is an important topic of study as it provides education in which individual needs can be addressed. Alternative programs were chosen as case study sites as examples of addressing individual and diverse needs. Alternative programs are specifically set up to meet needs that are not met in the mainstream, regular classroom. They must, therefore, be subjected to scrutiny to determine their perceived value and effectiveness.

The importance of this research is found in its potential to develop concepts, theories, and generalizations to be shared with educators in the southern Ontario region. Through the examination of the needs that the case study

alternative programs are meeting, the perceived effectiveness of the programs can be described.

Alternative programming is a deserving and important area of study for six reasons:

1. There is currently a distinct lack of information in Ontario and the region regarding alternative education. "Alternative" is a little-used term in this southern Ontario public school board. Under the term "alternative education," there is a lack of documented information, both by school boards and by schools themselves. The programs identified for case studies in this study are not formally referred to as alternative education programs by the school board. However, the teachers, program administrators, and the special education coordinator for the region agreed that these programs are alternatives to the regular public secondary classroom and therefore meet the criteria of alternative forms of education, more accurately defined as alternative programming.

2. There is little current research on alternative education to be found in Canadian, and specifically Ontario, educational journals and documents. In previous decades, there was more research and written material on the subject of alternative education. For example, the theses and projects available in the regional university's Instructional Resource Center were written in the early to mid 1980s and were based on programs in an adjacent school district. No theses could be found that had been written during the 1990s.

3. There is a lack of documentation of government legislation on alternative programming after the early 1980s. There have been no regulation

amendments or creation of new policies regarding alternative programming during the 1990s, in spite of major upheavals in many other areas of Ontario education. This has created a need in the area of alternative programming for research attention.

4. As the social climate of Canada changes, more students with a greater level of diversity in one classroom have become a reality.

5. The concept of meeting individual needs in one setting is a difficult objective. The importance of this study is the end product, which will be the theories and relationships generated through the understanding of how student needs are met or not met.

6. Government reform and change have created an unstable climate for education. Elements such as funding and curriculum reform can be expected to have an impact on school programs that fall outside of regular mainstream programming.

This list represents a number of reasons for carrying out the study. Further importance is found in the possible implications of this study. This research is meant to lay the foundations of a model to be developed through the exploration of the case studies. A future goal of this research will be to create a model of teaching and learning that incorporates the strengths of the alternative programs researched in the case studies. This model can be used by teachers in regular classroom settings and in alternative programs to identify and meet the inevitably diverse needs of their students.

Definition of Terms

Certain terms are used to explore the topic of alternative programming for the purpose of this study. The terms are defined as follows:

-*Alternative programming* refers to alternative teaching and learning strategies that may be employed in regular as well as alternative education programs for non-identified and identified students. Identified students are those who are exceptional and have an Individual Education Plan that outlines how school will address a student's needs.

-*Alternative education* refers to complete educational programs that are created for students who have educational needs that cannot be met in an appropriate way in their existing secondary programs.

- *Needs* will refer to the concept that the satisfaction of fundamental human requisites are critical to a student's overall development and growth. These will include academic, social, emotional, career, and survival necessities. These requisites are to be viewed as possibilities rather than deficits.

- *Affective needs* refers to the social and emotional requirements that contribute to students' social and emotional well-being.

- *Need identification* is the identification of social, emotional, intellectual, and career and survival necessities. This includes the process by which educators identify those requiring specialized programming. The processes may include monitoring, interviewing, and testing, as well as background research.

- *Need intervention* is the process educators undertake to meet the identified requirements of individuals. Intervention examines methods employed to aid in the development of a student through specialized programming.

- *Need attainment* refers to the results achieved by the student through the intervention process.

- *Special education* refers to the programs and services that schools are required to provide for students who are identified as exceptional and who require special education programs.

- *Specialized education* is education that provides students with a unique curriculum for meeting the diploma requirements. These may include special interest courses, modified programs, special accommodations, and specialized services. Specialized education may also include interdisciplinary study programs, apprenticeship programs, or advanced standing courses. Specialized education is offered to both identified and non-identified students.

Conceptual Assumptions

Entering this study, the researcher had certain assumptions surrounding the topic of alternative education and alternative programming in public secondary schools. The following is a list of assumptions with which the researcher entered the research study.

1. Students come to alternative programs with certain unmet needs.
2. Alternative programs are structured to meet individual student needs.
3. Alternative programs are necessary in public secondary education.
4. Alternative programs are a collaborative effort.

Methodological Assumptions

The methodology of this research study was subject to the dynamic and inconsistent nature of education, which may have a potential or actual bearing on the outcomes of the study. Personal beliefs and values had the potential to be reflected in many formal and informal interviews as well as questionnaires, influencing the researcher's interpretation of data. To validate the findings, the triangulation of data was used to substantiate the findings from any one source. Interviews and the researcher's personal interpretations were returned to the participants to validate perceptions of what the participants had shared during the research period.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The study was delimited to two alternative programs under the public school system at the secondary level. These programs were located in southern Ontario within one school board. Student participation in these programs was based on recommendation from principals, teachers, and parents. The participants of the research study were the students, teachers, on-site staff, and program administrators of each program. Parents were not included in spite of their importance to school success, because the study was concerned with the perceptions of the people who were involved with the programs on a day-to-day basis.

By delimiting the study to the use of qualitative data, it was possible to explore the phenomenon in depth but not to generalize to other contexts and

situations. Delimiting the study to one month created a manageable time frame but allowed only a “snapshot” view of the program.

Outline of the Remainder of the Document

The remainder of this document is comprised of Chapters Two to Five. Chapter Two presents a review of the literature essential for providing a foundation of knowledge in the area of alternative programming and the exceptional student. Chapter Three outlines the methodology used in this qualitative inquiry. Research methodology, selection of participants, data collection, and data analysis are detailed in this chapter. Results of the research study are included in Chapter Four. This includes the interpretation of program documents, interviews both formal and informal, observations, and field notes. A synthesis model for the practice of alternative programming is presented based on the findings of the research. Summary, conclusions, recommendations, and implications for theory, practice, and research are included in Chapter Five. Analysis and synthesis study findings are also presented in the final chapter.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conceptual Framework

The literature reviewed for research was on the topic of alternative programming for students at the secondary school level. There appears in the literature several terms that refer to students who do not experience success in regular education programs. These terms include students at-risk and exceptional students. In the board of education in which this study was conducted exceptional students were those who had been formally identified and therefore were entitled by law to alternative education. This study deals with programs created for students who were both identified and non-identified. For the purpose of this study, students requiring alternative programming are simply termed "students." The term of interest in this study is "alternative programming." The Ontario Secondary School Reform (Ministry of Education and Training, 1999 a) document uses the term alternative programming to refer to alternative teaching and learning strategies that may be employed in regular as well as alternative education programs.

To aid in the organization of the literature, three categories were used to order the subject of alternative programming. These categories included need identification, need intervention, and need attainment.

The first step in the literature review was to find a model of alternative programming as a basis for research. The Ontario Alternative Education Association (1999) web site provided the defining characteristics of alternative programming:

1. Alternative programs and schools are bottom up creations driven by needs expressed by students, parents, teachers, or other community members.
2. Alternative programming demonstrates an emphasis on personalization, caring, co-operation, and acceptance.
3. There is an emphasis on a holistic approach to education with a high degree of individualised instruction.
4. The programs are democratically administered with effective parent, teacher, and student involvement in all decision making. Primarily teachers and students develop rules and regulations. Administrative staff are heavily involved in teaching while administrative tasks are usually jointly shared amongst the entire staff.
5. There are flexible time tabling and alternative attendance policies.
6. There is increased emphasis on affective needs.
7. Alternative programs are based fully on choice. Students and parents choose to be involved in the program. Teachers choose to teach in the programs and administrators choose to manage the programs.
8. Alternative programs are student-need centred rather than curricula driven. (Ontario Alternative Education Association, 1999)

This definition aided in the understanding of alternative programming as it relates to this study and the strategies which will be outlined in the review of the literature.

The concept of needs must be clearly defined to understand the framework by which the literature is organized. O'Sullivan (1999) explains the connection of the necessities of human life to educational development. He states, "an education attuned to quality of life must be based on the foundation of authentic human needs" (p. 8). O'Sullivan refers to authentic needs as those that transcend cultures. Authentic needs are consistent for all human beings across all cultures. He makes a distinction between authentic needs and needs that are politically or socially motivated. These inconsistent needs can be viewed as inauthentic needs.

O'Sullivan goes on to explain the necessity of expanding our understanding of human development in a manner which examines a much wider spectrum of needs. To monitor understanding, it is necessary to assess our knowledge of needs.

This study uses many different needs as indicators of development and success. It is possible to attribute these needs across the alternative education continuum, as certain needs are necessary to human development. O'Sullivan (1999) explains that there are two postulates offered in the classification of needs.

The first is that fundamental human needs are finite, few and classifiable.

The second is that fundamental human needs are the same in all cultures and in all historic periods. We are a species. The changes that do take place, both over time and through cultures, are the ways and means by which needs are satisfied. (p. 241)

With the common understanding that needs represent the basis of individual learning and are an important element of consideration in alternative

programming, the literature will be organized under the following headings: need identification, need intervention, and need attainment.

Need Identification

Identifying why students are having difficulties is the first step to intervention and attainment of needs (British Columbia Ministry of Education and Training, 1996). There are many different ways of identifying specific needs of students detailed in the literature. Salvia and Ysseldyke (1985, p.11) indicate that needs can be classified into three categories. These include academic functioning, behavioral and social adaptation, and physical development.

In DeBettencourt, Garris, and Vallecorsa's (1992, p.77) special education guide, specific skill sets are indicated as a form of identifying skills that students are missing. Five categories have been designated as critical to the development of an individual. These include the following categories: social skills and affective development, academic support skills, vocational skill development, career awareness, and independent living / self-management skills. The following list will demonstrate the organization of the skill sets:

- Social Skills and Affective Development:

1. Social skills
2. School-related social skills
3. Employment related social skills

- Academic Support Skills

4. Study skills
5. Learning strategies

- Vocational Skill Development
- 6. General vocational skills
- 7. Specific vocational preparation
- Career Awareness
- 8. Understanding occupational roles and alternatives
- Independent Living / Self-Management Skills
- 9. Leisure Skills
- 10. Home and family skills
- 11. Understanding health concerns
- 12. Community living skills

These categories and skill sets effectively reflect the elements integral to the development of the whole student (Bowyer, Nasion, Tapping, & Taylor, 1993, p.2). The social development of the individual student is particularly important to an individual's self-concept. The early identification of social development difficulties is central to meeting many of the identified skill sets.

Winzer (1999) discusses the social development of students and clarifies the meaning of socialization: "It is the means by which an individual becomes a reasonable and acceptable member of the society, participating in family life, school and the community" (p. 23). Winzer also defines social skills as effective responses to given situations that produce positive interaction and growth (p. 23).

Student behavior is an indication of student needs and the skills that must be developed. Salvia and Ysseldyke (1985) give a dated but accurate account of behavior as an identification tool. They state that "acculturation" is the most

important element in the identification of behavior (p. 147). This is the notion that a student's background experiences and opportunities to learn in both the formal and informal settings affect and shape the behavior as well as the development of intelligence in a student. Salvia and Ysseldyke propose intelligence testing can be used as an indication of future behavior (p. 145). They postulate that behavior is an indication of intelligence and that intelligence testing may be a tool for identifying what a student may be lacking in cultural and social development. The culture in which the child lives has a great effect on the outcome of intelligence testing (p.145). This individual experience of culture has caused controversy around intelligence testing as an indicator of student needs. Salvia and Ysseldyke (p.146) contend that if intelligence tests were thought of as simply samples of behavior, they could be useful devices in the identification of student needs.

Salvia and Ysseldyke (1995) explain in their book on assessment that the specific needs of individuals are often identified through tests, systematic observations, and interviews. The purpose of identifying what needs a student has is to clarify and specify the extent to which students meet eligibility requirements for special education services (Salvia & Ysseldyke, 1985, p. 8). Identification is often on the basis of subjective impressions of teachers and educational specialists and is not always entirely accurate. Formal identification is meant for the purposes of determining the following five criteria: referral, screening, classification, instructional planning, and evaluation (p. 11). This is the formal process of identification that occurs in most North American schools.

Some interesting contemporary issues and provisions have arisen in Canadian education for alternative programming. For example, Levin and Young (1998) explain that there has been rapid growth in the area of special education in Canada (p. 273), but that discrepancies have occurred among parents, students, and schools. Many of these discrepancies focus on the identification and classification of exceptional students (p. 272). There are systems in place for students that are identified through testing to be either gifted or in need of special education. There are not clear systems in place for students that are simply not succeeding and are not identified. In the past, the legislation concerning exceptional students has been unclear. In April of 1998 the Ontario government made a move towards settling the discrepancies of the identification of exceptional students through a special education act in Ontario, referred to as Bill 181/98 (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1998 a).

The new Ontario curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1999 a) has also attempted to settle discrepancies. The curriculum for the 1999 academic year indicated that there would be a number of provisions for the identification of students who have needs that are not being met by regular programs. A literacy test will be in place in 2000-2001 to test student proficiency in language and to identify areas in need of remediation (Ministry of Education and Training, 1999 b). This stresses the importance of early identification of students who are at risk of not completing secondary school requirements.

The document states that one of the first steps in identifying an elementary or secondary student as exceptional is the creation of an identification record of

student counselling, more specifically referred to as the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC). Another source of information for identifying students is through teacher observation. Teachers are expected to observe students' work habits, students' responses to the classroom setting, and the students' ways of relating to teachers and other students. Teachers are to monitor the first few assessments that they assign a student as well as research a student's prior achievements. These can be accessed through a student's Ontario Student Record (OSR) and prior Individual Education Plans (IEP). This background knowledge is then to be used to identify the level of the student. Teachers should discuss a student's strengths and needs as well as prior academic performance with principals and teachers and other appropriate staff from the student's elementary school. The purpose of this process is to aid in the identification of students requiring alternative programming (District School Board of Niagara, 1998-1999).

For identification to occur, The Ontario Curriculum (Ministry of Education and Training, 1999 a) specifies that the area of need must be specified and an effective plan must be put into place. For this to occur, the student, a guidance counsellor, and the teacher advisor must communicate. This team should work together to allow the student to consider a wide range of career and education possibilities. The identification process requires a letter of request from the parent or principal. The committee decides whether the student should be identified as exceptional and what the placement should be.

An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is then developed for the identified student if he or she does not already have one on record. This identifies the student's specific learning exceptions and the methods by which progress will be reviewed. The IEP process as specified by the District of Niagara IEP Resource Guide (Ministry of Education and Training 1998 a) is a five-step process:

1. Gather information
2. Set the direction
3. Develop the IEP
4. Implement the IEP
5. Review and update the IEP.

This identification procedure encourages open communication between home and school (District School Board of Niagara 1998-1999). Ontario Regulation 181/98 made under the Ontario Education Act in 1998 outlines the procedures for identifying students clearly. The protocol for the identification of exceptional students of begins with the board promptly notifying the principal of the school at which there is a need for a special education program for a specific student. An Individual Education Plan is then developed for the student by the teachers and specialists involved with the program in consultation with the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the identified student.

In Section One of the Ontario Education Act 181/98 (1998), special education program is defined as

An educational program that is based on and modified by the results of continuous assessment and evaluation that includes a plan containing

specific objectives and outline of special education services that meets the needs of the exceptional pupil.

This statement reflects the important element of the constant identification of needs.

The literature demonstrates that identification of needs is an ongoing process that begins with careful observation by teachers. Specific methods of identifying students in need of alternative programming are through the assessment of behavior. The assessment of behavior makes it possible to identify which skill sets a student needs to develop. It is documented that a careful procedure must be followed once a student has been identified. This procedure must occur in consultation with the student, the teacher, specialists, the principal, and the education board.

Need Intervention

Intervention is based upon the identification of the needs of students as outlined in the previous section. Larson and Maag (1998), in an article on assessment, devote a section to identifying behavioral difficulties. They suggest three instruments for defining behavior. These include interviews, direct observation, and developing a hypothesis (p. 342). Larson and Maag contend that interviews can be formal with trained analysts, and informal with the classroom teacher. Direct observation is the recording of occurrences and nonoccurrences. The final stage is the development of a hypothesis, which is most often created by the teacher. Larson and Maag explain that this requires collating the data from the previous two instruments. It is possible for classroom teachers to do so,

particularly with the help of checklists of elements and skill sets (p. 342).

Developing hypotheses requires the testing of strategies to find what methods aid students in moving to the next stage in their development. This hypothesis testing is the intervention stage in meeting the needs of students.

The literature reviewed indicates that many methods follow similar protocols. The first stage of intervention is identification by the teacher, and intervention begins when the teacher adapts the student's program. British Columbia's Ministry of Education and Training (1996) cites that in-class intervention can involve collecting information about the student's history, talking to the student informally, and involving the student and parents (p.13). If this is unsuccessful, there should be attempts to gain assistance from area specialists.

According to The Ontario Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1999 a), effective teachers select strategies based on their judgements about the nature of the student. This includes the student's knowledge, skills, and attitude and the teacher's belief about what is important for the student to learn next.

The Ontario Curriculum supports the importance of what it terms "pro-social skills" (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1999 b). These include classroom survival skills, interpersonal skills, emotional management skills, coping or anger management skills, and stress management skills. The document offers strategies for social skills training. The following is an intervention strategy for developing social skills in students:

1. Communicate reasons for developing skills

2. Provide good and poor examples
3. Define the skill and consider the steps
4. Model the skill
5. Students create role-play situation
6. Provide feedback
7. Provide opportunities for further practice (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1999 b)

Another skill that is central to student development and outlined in the identification section of the literature review is the social skill of self-management. Westwood (1997, p. 29) uses the term self-management to refer to a student's ability to function independently in any given learning environment. It is knowing how to respond to the demands and constraints of different lessons or settings. Connected to this concept is Westwood's idea of "locus of control" (p. 33). This is the concept that students see by which they can influence their own destiny and understand their effect on the environment of which they are a part (p. 33). Westwood offers strategies a teacher may use to increase students' self-management and locus of control (p. 35). His suggestions include individual contracts between teacher and the student, the use of self-instructing material, and corrective feedback in daily activities. Westwood goes on to explain that cognitive behavior modification involves the application of a set of procedures that are designed to teach students to gain a better personal control over a learning situation. Westwood calls this the use of "self-talk" (p. 45). This is the inner dialogue that the student must engage in, which encourages the student to manage

his or her own actions. This requires an action plan in which students monitor their results. This is similar to Stanley's (1992) concept of positive internal dialogue that can be used to alter one's emotional state or behaviour (cited in Novak, 1992, p.228). Stanley states that this internal dialogue represents the core assumptions one has that individuals use to understand and interpret experiences. Purkey and Novak (1996) similarly describe self-concept as "a complex, continuously active system of subjective beliefs and about personal existence" (p.31). Purkey and Novak's ideas concerning self-concept and behaviour are similar to Westwood's (1997) and Stanley's (1992). Purkey and Novak indicated that self-concept is what guides behaviour, which supports the assumption that a student must have a positive self-image to manage personal actions and create successful situations.

Winzer (1999) supports self-management as an intervention strategy. Winzer's theories of teaching are composed of mental processes and models to help identify student needs and focus on intervention strategies which involve personal management with teacher guidance, rather than pure intervention (p. 23). Winzer refers to Ivan Pavlov and John B. Watson as the individuals who laid the foundations of modern behavioral psychology with their research into human behaviors. According to Winzer, their research formed the basis of the behaviorist theory, which contends that behavior is acquired and regulated by certain identifiable principles of learning. Winzer depicts behaviorists as believing that behavior is learned and that behavioral disorders represent inappropriate

learning. Winzer states the following in regard to behaviorist model and the classification of behavioral disorders:

They try to understand the origins by observing, describing, and measuring deviant behaviour, by noting the conditions under which it occurs, and by detailing relationship among the complex environmental factors that elicit and support deviant behaviour. By changing these conditions, behaviourists attempt to distinguish the undesirable behaviours and shape appropriate responses. (Winzer, 1999, p 277)

Winzer (1999) also offers a holistic model that approaches behavioral disorders as indivisible phenomena in which disorders are the sum of many parts (p. 279). Although these two theories are in relation to behavioral disorders, they represent a plan of action for intervention that requires looking at the student's learned behaviors, background, and other variables that may affect development and learning.

Chamberlain (1994) presents another set of alternative learning strategies in his examination of alternative classrooms in Canada and abroad. A cooperative learning strategy is demonstrated in his account of Freinet Pedagogy (p. 91). This is a method of alternative education in France that uses a cooperative model and child-centered approach. The focus is on the role of the teacher as facilitator. The following daily patterns indicate how cooperative learning is carried out as an intervention strategy:

1. Education begins with everyday events of the lives of the students.
2. Students make meaningful decisions about their learning.

3. The teacher guides, not dominates, the instructional process.
4. There are a variety of classroom activities.
5. Most activities are collaborative not competitive (1994, p. 91).

In this model, teachers work collaboratively on strategies with the aid of monthly meetings and the use of sister classrooms. In these sister classrooms, teachers act as “correspondents,” communicating regularly. This communication may include exchanging work and exchanges of students between sister sites. This model is similar to Winzer’s (1999) ideas in that the focus is self-management and teacher guidance.

Harper (1997) writes on the topic of difference and diversity in Ontario’s education. She makes the following statement regarding individual difference: “Difference is natural, predetermined, and unassailable. As such it requires accommodation rather than elimination” (p. 194). This should be based on the premise that strategies are devised to accept and meet individual needs. Harper advocates the importance of efforts to value difference in schools and to see the necessity of diversity for learning and for the study of difference (p. 203). This constitutes a careful reminder that not all needs can be met by one strategy.

The Ontario Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1999 b) supports the benefit of varying instruction. It describes the three learning modes of visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic. Depending upon which mode a student predominantly uses, this can affect how a student processes and applies knowledge and information. In choosing strategies to intervene, teachers are expected to “keep in mind that each student is an individual and, as such, will

respond to instruction in a unique manner” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1996, p.7).

Gardner (1991) promotes the idea that each individual processes information in a different way; therefore, the modes in which teachers teach and the strategies teachers use should be individualised. Gardner is leery of uniform schools, which do not look at the whole individual. Gardner’s theory rests heavily upon the idea that people learn, process, attain, and achieve in different ways. This is based on his theory of multiple intelligences. According to his most recent analysis, all human beings possess at least eight quite different forms of intelligence. Gardner (1999, p. 72) proposes the following intelligences: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinaesthetic, naturalistic, intrapersonal (intelligence about ourselves), and interpersonal (intelligence about other persons). Gardner also proposes the possibility of a ninth intelligence, an existential intelligence (the proclivity to pose and ponder questions about life, death, and ultimate realities). Gardner argues that it is these forms of intelligence and the relationships among them that shape individuals’ experiences as well as their successes and failures. As a result of these individual differences, school must be individualized and personalized. Gardner (1999, p. 73) states that when educators intervene in the development of the students, educators must present students with materials in ways that the students can access the material successfully. Gardner proposes that education should be constructed based on two foundations.

On the one hand, educators need to recognize the difficulties that students face in attaining genuine understanding of important topics and concepts.

On the other hand, educators need to take into account the differences among minds and, as far as possible, fashion an education that can reach the infinite variety of students. (p. 186)

Suggestions Gardner provides for educators to create this kind of education include offering “apt analogies and providing multiple representation or core ideas of the topic” (p. 187).

Chapman (1995) embraces the concept that all individuals learn in different manners and that intelligence is not one distinct, fixed entity. According to her, intelligence can be developed and modified. She believes it is the responsibility of educators to find each student’s individual ways of learning. She expects that teachers create conditions that mediate individual learning through the elements of trust, belonging, meaningful content, enriched environment, choices, and adequate time. She identifies the labeling of children as a phenomenon that leads students to perform to the label they are given.

To challenge the idea of the importance of individualizing intervention strategies for a specific student’s needs is the idea that similar strategies may be used for different need groups. The Ontario Curriculum supports that strategies are not generally tied to specific student differences. A strategy that works well with a gifted and talented student may also be effective with a student who has a learning disability or a behavior disorder. (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1999 a)

Teachers have many choices in strategies for meeting the needs of students. The Ontario Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1999 a) supports the use of many varied strategies for improving social skills and self-concept. This supports the notion that two strategies can be integrated in the teaching of any subject or skill within any domain. This supports the argument that strategies can be effectively employed in daily programming and that several needs can be met through a single strategy.

The use of appropriate strategies has the ability to develop a student's self-concept, creativity, cooperation, community, individuality, independence, self-management, positive locus of control, and emotional growth. It becomes the teacher's choice to critically reflect and evaluate educational philosophies (Chamberlain, 1994, pp. 10,11). Teachers should probe both curricular implications and hidden curriculum of traditional and alternative interventions, and then decide what will aid individual students in the development of their social skills and social awareness, academic support skills, vocational skill development, career awareness, independent living and self-management skills (DeBettencourt et al., 1992).

The literature on intervention for specific needs indicates that a combination of individuality and openmindedness is effective when teachers are choosing strategies to aid in the learning of students. There is also an implication that teachers use their own reflective practices to aid in the constant reevaluation of programs.

Need Attainment

Attainment is inextricably linked to identification and intervention.

Attainment is an indication of how a student is progressing and how well the chosen strategy meets the needs of the student. A major purpose of this kind of assessment is to generate feedback that will provide information for the development of instructional planning. Salvia and Ysseldyke (1985, p.497) support that assessment in school serves as an evaluation of instruction to decide the method and strategy to take in particular cases.

A student's progress or attainment is used to decide focus, objectives, and methods. Salvia and Ysseldyke (1985, pp.8, 9) support assessment as the process of collecting data for specifying problems and making decisions about a student's program. Assessment data are used to determine what progress a student has made and if objectives have been attained.

Gardner (1991, p.12) supports that students must be assessed through a wide variety of means, just as educators are to present material in many different ways. Traditionally schools have focussed on a combination of linguistical and logical intelligences, but must now work to assess many different capacities of the students to promote success (p. 81).

According to Marchesi (1998), there is internal and external assessment of programs for students. Evaluation of the program is external and evaluation of the student is internal, and Marchesi advocated a holistic approach to the evaluation of programs for students. From an external perspective, Marchesi writes about the need to evaluate educational services, as individual judgement

cannot lead to an overall assessment of the quality of the program. Marchesi uses a contextualized definition of educational service quality which includes the ability to respond to the educational needs of the students; participation, coherence, and consistency of school projects; educational results of the students; professional satisfaction of teachers; and parent and student opinion (p. 24). This external assessment is a program-centered approach to attainment of needs.

Program achievement is an important external element, but it must not overshadow internal assessment, which evaluates attainment through the student. The literature suggests that a student-centered account of attainment is needed to make improvements in the identification and intervention for students with exceptionalities. An example can be found in Randall's self-evaluating classroom (as cited in Chamberlain, 1994, p. 171). This philosophy emphasizes the involvement of teachers, students, and parents in evaluation of student work as well as the assessment of goals, these being indicators for assessment. The purpose is to empower students as a result of shared responsibility. This requires the shift from teacher and program assessment towards a student's assessment of his or her own growth. This allows students to develop confident decisions about their futures, which in turn leads to students setting out projects for themselves and seeking resources from the community. This self-assessment helps the student toward the goal of becoming self-directed and lifelong learners.

The Ontario Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1999 a) views effective assessment as evaluation and reporting of student achievement and program effectiveness. These elements are expected to provide

information about student achievement and to create a basis for improving instructional program through an evaluation of program effectiveness and individual student achievement. This has effectively combined internal and external assessment, with the focus being on the student. To aid in evaluation, it is helpful to derive information from a variety of sources.

The Durham Board of Education (Bowyer et al., 1993) has created a document on assessment and evaluation in the transition years. This document addresses attainment from a more student-centered approach. The document supports the collaboration of teachers and students to design curriculum in which instruction, strategies, and assessment are conducive to a student's specific needs. Assessment structures are selected to meet the individual needs of the students. In the Durham Board of Education, the following assessment structures are used to meet individual needs:

1. Teachers employ a wide variety of assessment instruments.
2. Teachers and students negotiate assignment and evaluation.
3. Teachers investigate former performance to ensure the continuum of learning.
4. Teachers access support from internal or external sources to meet the needs of the student.
5. Outcomes and criteria for success are determined jointly; students have the opportunity to redo work and to be reassessed until they are satisfied with their achievement. (Bowyer, 1993)

The reading undertaken in the area of assessment indicates that the careful and reflective use of assessment as an indicator of attainment requires that the teacher make use of a variety of assessment tools while using a constant cycle of identification, intervention, and attainment for each student. Putting into place a program where students can assess their own progress has also been stated as an effective process.

Summary

After reviewing the literature in the area of alternative programming and exceptional students, it is apparent that a collaboration of theories is required to best meet the needs of students. Using the three categories of the literature review--identification, intervention, and attainment--several points have arisen and presented themselves as integral to the success of the student.

In the category of need identification, The Ontario Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1999 b) states the need for careful observation by the teachers. This observation should include examining cultural influences on behaviour (Winzer, 1999). Observation under five areas identified as essential student needs include social, academic, vocational, career, and self-management (DeBettencourt et al., 1992). Identification under these categories should be a continual process (British Columbia Ministry of Education and Training, 1996).

It is essential that the school board support each individual student. This should be initiated through the principal who can then help put plans into action to give aid to specialized programming and the involved teachers (Ministry of

Education and Training, 1999 a). Open communication between home and school is also an important element of identification of students in need of alternative teaching and learning strategies. This is now mandated by Regulation 181/189 (1998). The use of IEPs and IPRCs is a necessary part of recording, tracking, and meeting the needs of the student.

In the category of need intervention, the importance of observing student behavior to develop a plan to aid in the development of the student is an essential tool (Larson & Maag, 1998). Teachers should select appropriate strategies based on a student's skills, attitudes, and knowledge. It is essential that the teacher make adaptations while realizing that the consideration of many strategies will be necessary, as individuals perceive and learn differently; for this reason, strategies must be individualized (Gardner, 1999). Intervention strategies should focus on the idea of self-management, which places much of the responsibility of achieving on the student (Westwood, 1997).

In the category of need attainment, it is apparent from the literature that it is necessary to gauge the success of strategies undertaken to develop effective practices (Salvia & Ysseldyke, 1985). Both internal and external assessment, the assessment of the student and of the program, are required for the success of the program and the student (Marchesi, 1998). Randall (as cited in Chamberlain, 1994) makes clear the necessity of self-assessment and a self-monitoring that involves parents, teachers, and students.

The most profound finding has been that the three categories are interdependent and are effective in conjunction with one another. The theories

that most comprehensively combine these findings in the most efficient practices include Winzer's (1999) holistic approach and Chapman's (1995) advocacy for a multiple intelligences curriculum. Winzer's approach uses all plans of action that examine behaviour and take into consideration the student's social and cultural background. Teachers should be expected to work independently and together to resolve issues and to create identification, intervention, and attainment tools and strategies. The ideas of Chapman (1995) support that intelligence can be developed and modified through appropriate and thoughtful programming. Winzer (1999) makes the important point that many different strategies must be applied to create optimal conditions for learning.

A positive indicator in the development of the identification, intervention, and attainment of students in alternative programming is that The Ontario Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1999 a) is indicating an increased awareness of students and their individual needs. These indicators include the development of social skills and self-concept, combined with the understanding and flagging in the document that all needs cannot be met through one strategy.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

A case study approach was used, as it allows an in-depth understanding of persons and phenomena (Merriam, 1988, p.32). This case study followed the design of Guba and Lincoln's (1981) qualitative methodology (as cited in Merriam, p. 12). One characteristic of this design, "thick" description, offered the ability to interpret observations and phenomena. Another characteristic, inductive data analysis, allowed for the generation of concepts, theories, and relationships from the data collected (Merriam, p. 13). This case study approach also makes use of deductive data analysis, which is the application of concepts and theories to the data collected (Neuman, 1997). Finally, the direct experience studied in this case allowed for deeper knowledge of alternative programming. This knowledge can be used to inform practice and to help structure further research.

Site and Participant Selection

The study took place in secondary schools in a public board of education in the southern Ontario region. Two sites were chosen for the case study. To select the two alternative programming sites, several programs were visited to assess the degree to which they met my criteria. The criteria for alternative programming included secondary, public education programs that were constructed to meet many different needs and that were attended voluntarily by students. These alternative programs were to be based on choice, employ alternative teaching and learning strategies, and finally they were to be run as a classroom and not as a specific class in the day. I viewed several programs and spoke with teachers, youth workers, attendance counsellors, program

administrators, vice principals, and involved students. These programs consisted of vocational and modified programs, programs for socially and behaviorally challenged students, home schooling, a fine and dramatic arts program, and a Nova Net Remedial computer program. These programs were not labeled or formally termed as alternative education. I did not select these programs as research sites because they were viewed as specialized programming for special needs students, as opposed to alternative education. I was interested in exploring how diverse needs were met in one classroom, and these programs streamed individuals in terms of academic and social levels. Furthermore, I wanted to examine programs where more complete forms of alternative education were taking place. Finally, I was looking for programs that would involve more choice by the students in activities, decision making, and cooperative learning and that would give students an active role in their education.

As another form of preliminary research, I spoke with special education authorities in the southern Ontario region regarding available programs. These individuals included the past superintendent of schools in the region, the special education coordinator for the region, and several professors of education from the local university. Again, I found limited or no use of the term “alternative education.” Similar to the information I received in schools, specialized programming surfaced as the more commonly used term. These experts from the board of education and the local university suggested that I consider specialized programming that employed alternative methods.

Based on this feedback, I decided to change my focus from alternative education to alternative programming. The term “alternative programming” described more accurately what is currently offered in southern Ontario. Teachers and program administrators involved with special education appeared more comfortable using the term alternative programming to describe their programs. The term also described what I was interested in looking at, that is, programs that were different from regular mainstream classrooms, that employed teaching and learning strategies that were not common in regular programming, and that served a diverse student group.

The sites I identified met the criteria of alternative education in which I was interested. In both sites, the programs were based on choice, employed alternative teaching and learning strategies, were run as a classroom and not as a specific class in the day, and were constructed to meet many different needs. I refer to these as specialized education that employs alternative programming. In speaking with teachers and other staff involved with the programs during preliminary visits, it became evident that the individual students participating in each program had various needs. The programs were designed to meet a general need, being either gifted in Site One or socially and behaviorally troubled in Site Two. However, under this general area of need, both programs addressed individual needs as well.

The chosen programs were alternative programs located in the same school board. Site One was a gifted program for identified and non-identified high achievers. The identified students had an Individual Education Plan that

described strategies and accommodations to which the identified student was entitled. By contrast, the non-identified student had no Individual Education Plan and no legal entitlement but still received alternative programming. For the remainder of this document, Site One will be referred to as the gifted program. When the words of the participants are being used, the gifted program will be referred to as the gifted package. This program was run as a separate program in a regular, public, suburban secondary school.

Site Two was a program for students with behavioral, attendance, and motivational difficulties. All the students involved in this program were identified as requiring an Individual Education Plan. Site Two was designed to meet the needs of students who could not function in a regular school setting due to social, academic, and behavioral problems. For the remainder of the study, Site Two will be referred to as the behavioral program. The program was run outside the regular school setting, in a self-contained environment. The behavioral program was situated in one small building that was not physically attached to a regular school.

The selection of the study participants was nonprobabilistic and purposive. This means that the participants were chosen by the researcher because of their ability to describe and discuss the perceived effectiveness of alternative programming. The general procedure for both sites was to interview three groups of participants. In each site the sampling was criteria based (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, as cited in Merriam 1988, p.48), relative to the specific roles that the participants had, that is, student, teacher, and program administrator. The first

group included the students of each alternative program. A sample of students was selected to participate in an interview, dependent upon the willingness of the schools, parents, and students. The second set of research participants consisted of the teachers of the classes under observation. Finally, program administrators took part in the study. These were individuals directly responsible for the organization and overseeing of the alternative program.

The specific procedure in the gifted program was to interview 6 students from the program. The students were chosen by the program administrators based upon a request for 3 students who were having a positive experience in the program and 3 students who were struggling. In total, 6 students, 2 teachers, and 2 program administrators were formally interviewed. The teachers were chosen based upon their willingness to be a part of the study. The program administrators were chosen on the basis that they were the two organizing figures of the program and they both consented to being interviewed.

Four methods of interviewing were employed in this study. These included formal interviews, informal interviews, informal conversation, and finally a questionnaire. The formal interviews were tape-recorded; the informal interviews were not tape recorded, but notes were taken from the information derived in the informal interview. Informal conversations were not tape-recorded and notes were not taken. Finally, questionnaires were used in place of formal interviews in the behavior program, as it was decided by the teachers, on-site staff, and program administrators that interviews were not an appropriate data collection method for their program.

The specific procedure for the behavioral program had to be restructured to meet the needs of the program. I interviewed all 5 on-site staff informally during daily and after-school conversations, during which I took notes and recorded and summarized as soon as possible. I had many informal conversations with students and one informal interview with a student. All attending students completed a questionnaire. In total, I interviewed one student informally, administered 10 questionnaires, and interviewed the 5 on-site staff informally. I conducted one formal interview with a program administrator and one telephone interview with a program administrator. The term "on-site staff" was substituted for "teacher participant" group to include the youth worker and attendance counselors who were present daily in the behavior program.

In essence, all members of the alternative program being studied were participants during the observation period. Two weeks were spent in each program. I returned to both programs after the official data collection period. In the gifted program, I attended an awards ceremony and in both sites I returned for follow-up visits, which included the collecting of the notes that I had made from the interviews. I gave these printed notes to the participants for review to check for validity and to be sure they agreed with my final perceptions of their interviews. One week of observation and one week of interviews in each program was the projected time allotted. This occurred in the gifted program, although observation continued into the second week. In the behavior program, my role became more involved, as opposed to purely observational. Although the students knew I was conducting a research project, I was an integral part of their small

environment. The students referred to me as Ms. N., and I was treated by students and other staff as a visiting staff member. I was able to take field notes at times, but my first obligation was to the people at the program. The program administrators and the on-site staff agreed that this would be the best way to interact with the program members and to gather information. This was considered more helpful and conducive to the environment.

Data Collection

Data were collected through three methods. The first form of data was the literature and documentation concerning the program. The second form of data was participant observation in the schools. The final form of data was formal and informal interviews with students, teachers / on-site staff, and program administrators, and questionnaires.

The first of the three forms of data collection included the examination of the program documents (see Appendix A). In the gifted program, these were the materials written by the school regarding the purpose, goals, and objectives of the program. This included information packages for parents and students, newsletters, and codes of conduct. In the behaviour program, documents included materials written by the school or governing body of the alternative program regarding the purpose, goals, and objectives of the program; information packages for parents and students; newsletters; code of conduct; and a former research report written by organizing figures and alternative education administrators.

The second form of data collection was participant observation (see Appendix B). During the observation process, it was important for the researcher

to record data as comprehensively as possible. An observation checklist was used to categorize data from the two sites. This checklist was developed as a result of the preliminary visits, which included observation and formal and informal interviews. These trial observations yielded elements that arose as being data in the programs. Eight categories were used to record the important issues: setting, participants, events, class activities, gestures, communication, dialogue, and interaction. In conjunction with the descriptive observation, analytical and interpretative information were recorded relative to what was seen, heard, and felt about the observations being recorded. The observation checklist was used daily, and summary notes were made every other day. Summary notes used the checklist, but also searched for emerging themes and patterns.

Individual interviews were conducted with the three categories of participants: students, teachers/on-site staff, and program administrators from each site (see Appendixes C, D, and E). An interview guide was created to direct questions to each participant group. The interview questions had been piloted with the aid of two secondary school students to determine how appropriate the interview questions were for students of similar ages. The pilot yielded a few minor changes to the wording of some questions. The interviews were tape-recorded with the participants' consent in the gifted program. Interviews took place in a quiet area within the building.

The final form of data collection was the student questionnaire used in the behavior program (see Appendix F). The questionnaire replaced the formal interviews that were completed in the gifted program. In the gifted program,

interpretations were compiled from the interviews and were sent back to the participants to read. If they had comments or disagreements, they were asked to indicate this on the copy. In the behavior program, this process was repeated from the notes taken during formal and informal conversations, observations, and interviews with the student, the on-site staff, and the program administrators.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed in relation to the overall purpose of the research, which was to determine the effectiveness of the alternative programming in meeting the needs of individual students. The initial data analysis was deductive, but moved later to inductive analysis, making use of the grounded model of research in which theories, patterns, and themes emerged through the process of data analysis. Deductive analysis began with a first coding that entailed answering the questions posed in the early stages of this research study. The questions posed were as follows:

1. What needs do the programs purport to meet?
2. What needs do teachers, students, and program administrators perceive to be met by the program?
3. What experiences do students undergo in their alternative program?
4. What needs do students, teachers, and program administrators perceive as not being met? What reasons do students, teachers / on-site staff, and program administrators attribute to the lack of need satisfaction?
5. How do stakeholders (students, teachers, and program administrators) rate the success of the program?

For four of the five questions, a data display was created (see Appendix G). It was evident in the data derived from the analysis that question 5 was answered by question 2 and did not require a data display table. The data were divided by site, requiring a separate display for each. In each site under each question, the collected data were divided into the four needs identified in the literature, which included social, emotional, career, and academic needs. Subsequent inspection of the data indicated that future needs should be included to encompass the future interests of students, including university, employment, reintegration, and more immediate academic and whole school goals. It also became evident that social needs should encompass further categories. These included behaviors, survival needs, and basic needs. The data display also separated the data derived from the three participant groups because every question had been answered in this format.

After this first coding was completed, a second coding was undertaken in the form of a cross-case analysis. This procedure entailed an inductive inspection of the data in the display table. The data were grouped under headings to create thematic categories of information concerned with best practices in alternative programming. Themes that were derived from inductive analysis included the following:

1. Priority of basic needs
2. Match between student capacity and program expectations
3. Safety and community
4. Individuality of programming
5. Development of interpersonal skills

6. Recognition of student achievement.

Ethical Implications

Access to the sites and permission to conduct the research were granted by the administrator of special education for the area, by the school board, and by the University Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix H). A letter was sent to the two identified programs requesting permission from the program administrators and providing information concerning the research. Participants were fully informed as to the purpose of the study and assured that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw at any time. Only the students who participated in formal interviews would be expected to return the signed consent forms (see Appendix H).

Gaining access to the behavior program was considerably more difficult than gaining entrance into the gifted program. This is attributable to the sensitive nature of the issues that students are dealing with while in the behavioral program. After gaining permission from the special education administrator for the area, entrance into the site was conditional upon the approval of the two off-site vice principals of the program. I contacted these individuals by telephone. They requested copies of my proposal and the documentation which I had sent to teachers and on-site staff and that I intended to send to students. The first vice principal granted approval on the condition that I did not conduct formal interviews with students. The second vice principal reluctantly granted admittance under the condition that I understood the stress that the staff had to deal with and that I would not conduct any formal interviews with students.

Consequently, the specific procedure for the behavioral program had to be restructured to meet the needs of the program. A condition of my entrance into the site was that formal interviews would not be conducted with students due to confidentiality and comfort issues. I complied with these wishes and performed informal interviews and observation. Once the data collection was under way, I approached the on-site staff with a questionnaire for the students. This was perceived as a positive form of data collection by the on-site staff. I conducted one informal interview with a student, but that interview was not taped. In the behavior program, although the staff did not explicitly ask me to refrain from taping the interviews, informal interviews proved to be more suitable for the environment.

When formal on-site data collection was completed, I created interpretations from the gifted program based on interviews and observations. The interpretations included transcribed records of formal interviews and my interpretations of what the participants were saying. These were sent to each participant and were accompanied by a letter asking the participant to correct any mistakes or misrepresentative information and to sign that the information was valid and that they concurred with all that was written. In the behavioral program, interpretations were created for all 5 of the on-site staff based on informal interviews, and the one student whom I had informally interviewed.

Summary of the Chapter

The preceding methodology provided me with access to the research sites that I chose as being the most fitting to support the study I wished to conduct. These sites provided the data that were presented in the next chapters. The themes and patterns that developed from the data will be used to generate a conceptual teaching model based upon the best practices of alternative programming derived from this study. The model can be used as a framework of teaching and learning in regular secondary programs as well as in alternative programs.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This chapter presents the results of the qualitative study undertaken to explore the best practices and most effective methods of teaching and learning in alternative programming. To gain an understanding of alternative programming, a case study was used including two study sites: Site One, the gifted, and Site Two, the behavioral program. Two sites were used to synthesize the results to explore commonalties across alternative programs. Data were gathered from three sources in each site. These included, in the gifted program, program documents, interviews, and observation. In the behavioral program, these included program documents, informal interviews, a questionnaire, and observation. Data were collected from three participant groups. In the gifted program these were students, teachers, and program administrators. In the behavioral program these were students, on-site staff (teachers, attendance counselors, and a youth worker), and program administrators.

The Gifted Program

The gifted program for identified and non-identified high achievers was alternative as it was run as a separate set of classes. The purpose of the program was to enrich students' learning experience by compacting the curriculum to create extra time for enriching activities. For the following in-depth description, the gifted program will be referred to as the gifted package when the words of the participants are used.

At the initial visit, I was met enthusiastically by Karen (a pseudonym, as are all names used in this chapter), the program administrator, in the lobby of an

urban secondary school. She led me down the hall to the special education resource room, which was bustling with students. There were students at both tables in the room, a few computers, and two desks that belonged to the program administrators, Karen and Doug. Several students were crowded around one of the tables, immersed in a board game. Karen informed me that, although the gifted package was for students in grades 9 and 10, students from the senior grades still came to visit frequently. "It is a safe place for them," Karen explained. It was an area where many of the gifted program students came to socialize, to work, and to talk to the teachers.

The program did not take place in designated rooms in the school. It ran from many different classrooms located all over the school. Some older teachers had their own established rooms, while younger, newer teachers did not.

The auditorium was often used for gifted activities such as theatre-sports and problem-solving activities. The use of the auditorium had increased, Karen explained, as a result of the teachers' strike, which had made booking trips outside of the school difficult. The strike in the previous year had been a work-to-rule strike, which inhibited the involvement of teachers in extracurricular activities. Karen explained that this made a program such as the gifted package difficult, as it was largely extracurricular based. The program regularly included excursions to such places as the theatre, water sewage treatment plant, and the regional university.

Karen and Doug explained that the package was offered to gifted students who were identified as gifted. These students had automatic entrance, while

students who were not identified through testing could be placed on a waiting list. Karen described that it was difficult to offer the kind of comprehensive education they offered in the gifted package through the regular program. It is important to note that the administrators preferred to refer to their program as a package. Karen explained that it was difficult because of government regulation and funding to have a program put in place for identified students. By designating their program as a package, this alleviated the need for it to be seen as a separate program that required government funding and viewed rather as extracurricular activities taken on by teachers and students. The term package also allowed the program to include students who were not identified as gifted but who demonstrated a desire to be a part of the program.

Participants

All three categories of participants were observed daily for two weeks. The participants in the program included students, teachers, and program administrators. The student participants included Jay, Andrea, Valerie, Katherine, Alexandra, and Peter. Two teachers took part, Mike and Susan, as did Karen and Doug, the program administrators.

There were 75 students in grades 9 and 10 who attended the gifted program. Of the students I interviewed, approximately half were identified; the others explained that they had siblings who were a part of the program or that their teachers and principals from elementary school had given recommendations for them to be in the program. Karen and Doug explained that the entrance

requirements would need to change because the demand for the package had increased.

Jay, Alexandra, and Peter were involved in many of the extracurricular aspects of the gifted program, such as the Gifted Advisory Committee. Jay indicated that he liked the familiar environment created by having the same people in his gifted classes. He explained that it made a “well-oiled machine.” Alexandra expressed an appreciation for the group work that the program incorporated. She felt that it was a better way to learn and that she put a great deal of effort into her group projects.

There were 11 teachers in total in the program. Two teachers, Mike and Susan, were often in and out of the resource room distributing and picking up information from the program administrators. Mike was also the school’s English department head and was to have a central organizing role in the program in the following year, as Karen and Doug would not be there. Mike had been teaching at the school for 30 years and had been involved in the gifted program since its beginnings. He found that English was a flexible subject that could be connected to the themes and units that the gifted program incorporated. Mike felt strongly that education should be a holistic experience for students.

Susan was one of the younger teachers on staff and taught gifted math. She appeared to have an interest in the gifted program and welcomed me into her classroom. Susan was newly appointed, within the last few weeks. This was due to the contract change and the teachers’ strike. She had not requested to be in the gifted program but was pleased to be there, welcoming the challenge and diversity

of teaching gifted students. She viewed the special trips and extra activities as opportunities to give students positive learning experiences that would aid them in the future. She had expected much different behavior of the students. Susan found that the students were noisy and questioning rather, than quiet and contemplative.

Karen, the program administrator, explained that the teachers involved in the program were normally teachers who expressed an interest in being a part of the package, with the exception of this year. Due to a teachers' strike and contract changes, there were some teachers involved who had not expected to be a part of the package. Three teachers opted not to be a part of the study and four were observed in their classes and two were interviewed.

The final group of participants was comprised of the two program administrators, Karen and Doug. Karen was the full-time special education coordinator for the school. She had been at the school for 5 years; prior to that she had been involved in remedial education and guidance. She was friendly and full of energy. Karen was well acquainted with all students in the program, demonstrated by her friendly and purposeful conversations with students. Often I would find Karen in the library helping out or in the office acting as secretary as well as accomplishing the special education duties and organizing the gifted package. She acknowledged the stigma attached to gifted education as elitist, but observed that gifted students are different and require a learning environment in which success is encouraged. She felt that the running of the program required two people to be effective. She explained the importance of gifted education

teachers to be motivated to take on responsibility and the organization of extra activities. Her desk and Doug's desk were beside one another. Karen explained that anything she found on her desk, which was overflowing with papers, she shuffled over to Doug's desk, which was oppositely very tidy. Karen noted that whoever replaced Doug needed to understand the large amount of responsibilities that went with the position. Karen would be on a maternity leave the next fall, meaning that both program administrators would not be present in the following year.

Doug was a math teacher in the gifted program as well as part-time special education. He shared the administrative responsibilities with Karen but preferred to refer to himself as a teacher. Doug had taught in this school for 30 years. He was good natured and appeared to have good relationships with many of the students. He had been involved in special education for 15 years. Doug taught half the day in both the regular and gifted program and spent the afternoons in the special education resource room aiding special needs students and other students requiring extra help. Doug took on the Creative Problem Solving aspect of the package, organizing activities and field trips. He believed that these activities helped gifted students to become leaders. He also ran the School Reach Program, an academic team sport. This program, although not a gifted activity, was approximately two thirds gifted students. He indicated that being a part of the gifted package required more work from teachers. He expressed in his retirement speech at the gifted awards ceremony that he stayed as long as he did because of

the quality of the students. He indicated that he would miss a few of the teachers but that he would not miss the administration.

Daily Activities

I observed a combination of grade 9 and 10 gifted classes over 2 weeks across the five subject areas. These subjects included math, English, science, history, and geography. The remainder of the subjects took place in the afternoon in the regular advanced program.

During my observation of the gifted program, my days began with a 40-minute period of math. For the first few days, I observed two different math classes, both taught by Doug. These classes were taught in a relaxed manner that invited participation and group work. Students worked together and individually to come up with answers; students could talk out, get up without asking, and work in groups, all at their own discretion. I viewed two classes that were structured, in which the teachers preferred that the students were quiet unless called upon, taking an independent and lecture approach to the running of their classroom. After 2 weeks, I found that each teacher taught the gifted classes in their own style and that there was not a designated method of teaching. Students demonstrated a tendency to want to be verbal and to work in groups.

On the Friday morning of my first week of observation, two students approached me during a math class and asked if I would like to come to their Gifted Advisory meeting at lunch that would be held in the resource room. This was a student committee, and Peter, also a member of the Gifted Advisory, explained that the purpose of the committee was to create activities for the

program, “to keep people busy.” He also explained that the purpose of the committee was to seek out the opinions and voices of the individuals in the program.

Special Events

Enriching and special activities included field trips, guest speakers, thematic units and related activities, presentations, mentoring opportunities, and independent study. This had been a different year due to teaching changes and appointment of teachers and replacement of teachers in the program. The teachers prior to this year had a mutual preparation period in which they could plan special events. Now meetings between the gifted program teachers occurred whenever possible. Mike explained that this was not enough. Field trips were compromised this year as a result of the teachers’ strike. Many of the students mentioned the loss of the camping initiation trip. The grade 10s who were involved last year spoke fondly of this event, explaining that it was a great way to get to know people. The members of the Gifted Advisory Committee explained that they tried to create an orientation activity on school grounds this year for the grade 9s.

On the third day of my observation, I witnessed a guidance presentation. This presentation was given to all grades 9 and 10 students in the school. The topic of the presentation was the Record of Achievement. These achievements encompassed many areas of volunteer and community work, extracurricular, sports teams, and other school teams. The purpose of the record was to help students build a resumé to display to future employers and as well to aid in entrance to programs.

On my last day of field research in the gifted program there was a trip to the regional university for a seminar organized by an education professor and Karen. The seminar was a full-day event comprised of guest speakers and small group seminars. These speakers included a critical thinking expert, the university president, and influential leaders from the surrounding area. The purpose of the event included educating students to be part of a democratic society, and focusing on learning to evaluate critical decisions, to aid in life decisions, and to understand bias and media representations. Each group was meant to creatively present what they had learned at the end of the day. Many of the groups presented entertaining and well-thought-out presentations.

When I left the site, Karen asked if I would like to return for the gifted awards ceremony. This ceremony was held at the end of every school year for the gifted package students. The awards ranged from community service awards to financial studies unit certificates of recognition, to theatre-sports competition awards, to grade 9 science fair awards. The awards included both group and individual awards. Every student in grade 10 that had successfully completed the package was awarded a certificate of completion. "Achievement is central to the package," Karen explained. The ceremony began with a piano solo. There was a row of chairs in which the teachers of the gifted program sat along with other distinguished individuals in the school. I watched as Doug, the principal, and vice principal made well-organized speeches about the accomplishments of the gifted students. Students were excited when they were called upon, and the importance of the ceremony was evident in the preparation and reaction of the students.

Communication

I was interested in observing communication in the gifted program as an indication of effective alternative programming. In many classes, student interaction was central to their learning. Group discussion occurred freely. Students helped one another; often moving about the classroom to check answers with classmates.

Students generally felt they could talk to the teacher; if they approached the teachers, they felt they would listen. Jay named a specific teacher whom he had talked to about personal issues, while Alexandra said that the teachers did not pry but were supportive.

Students' communication with the administrators of the package was open and accessible. The administrators' names were mentioned many times in conjunction with finding information and helping to organize events. Students were frequently in the resource room to find Karen, both to visit and to ask questions. Karen was often in and out of the classes that I observed, alerting students and teachers to activities that were going on within the program.

Teachers in the gifted program interacted often out of necessity. They strove to coordinate academic units and trips that related to the gifted program's units of study. The need to communicate was mentioned by all teaching and administrative staff interviewed. Before the new administration was in place and the teachers' strike began, involved individuals commented on the regular meeting times and mutual preparation periods where they could discuss specific student issues and program activities. Communication between the two program

administrators was ongoing throughout the day, with frequent conversations both formal and informal.

The Behavior Program

The behavior program took place in an alternative school setting for students with attendance, motivational, and behavioral difficulties. This program operated within the same region and public board as the gifted program. I was interested in this site as it represented a contrast to the gifted program on the alternative programming continuum.

Description

The location of the program was away from a designated school site. It took place in the city center, in a higher crime zone. The program was run out of the bottom floor of a dilapidated and dark house. There was a front room where there were two large groups of desks at which students could work. There were two teacher desks. The walls were lined with resource books, games, and textbooks. The back room was a small office, an area often used as a private place for staff to talk, as well as for staff and students. The blinds were always kept closed to keep potential troublemakers out. The pipes from the upstairs apartment leaked and the floors were in poor condition, along with much of the building and contents. There had been talk that the donated building had been sold, which would mean that the program would have to find residence elsewhere. This house had been home to the program for 2 years.

The on-site staff were comprised of two attendance counsellors, one youth worker, and two teachers. To integrate a student into the program, a student's

teachers and youth worker would identify a student as experiencing considerable difficulties in the regular school program. An in-school team would review the student's case. If the team decided that the student was a candidate for the program, then one of the attendance counselors would be contacted for a meeting. The attendance counselor then contacted the special education consultant for the area to receive the student's Identification Placement and Review Committee (IRPC). The student then was asked to attend an intake meeting at the program. One of the attendance counselors, the on-site staff, and the vice principal of the program attended with the student and the student's parents. The terms of the stay would be presented to the student and the parents at this time.

Participants

There were three sets of participants: the students, the on-site staff, comprised of 2 teachers, 1 youth worker, and 2 attendance counselors, and the program administrators, which included the elementary principal for the program and the special education consultant for the program.

The students were between the ages of 13 and 16 and attended as a result of the serious difficulties they experienced in regular classrooms with attendance, motivation, and behavior. The students were placed in this program if their needs were not being met in regular programming. This was indicated through a student's inability to attend school or through behavioral and motivational issues that could not be managed in a regular program. The students attended based upon referrals by their principals, teachers, and school youth workers. The program accepted up to 24 students at one time. While the program was being observed, 24

students were enrolled, but only 8 to 10 students were present each day. During this time, 3 students were permanently suspended, 2 were suspended temporarily, and the rest were nonattendenders. Nonattendenders were students enrolled in the program who attended extremely infrequently or not at all.

Julie, a 15-year, old, explained in an informal interview that her principal had told her and her mother about the program due to her difficulties with consistent attendance. She had not wanted to go at first. Julie explained that the program was not what she had expected. She explained she didn't like school. She found it boring and difficult to go. Sometimes she did not want to be anywhere, particularly school. She had heard that other programs for older students were not the same as this one, which she found met her needs. She liked it "because it's not like school." She described it as being like home, and the teachers were friendly. She wanted to return in the fall and attend until her age did not permit her to. She did not experience problems with the schoolwork and was earning credits while in the program. Julie felt that her attendance was still a problem. "It was good when I first came. Then it got worse and now it's getting better again." She found there were still days when she did not want to go to school.

The on-site staff members were made up of 2 teachers, Scott and Ellen, 1 youth worker, Cynthia, and 2 attendance counselors, Tom and George, who alternated mornings and afternoons. Scott was an experienced teacher who had worked in many different educational settings including adult education and special education, and he had coached and worked in regular schools as well. Scott had been with the behavior program for 3 years. He explained that it had not

been a voluntary decision to become a part of the program. In the beginning he had found it difficult because he took the problems of his students home with him. He learned how to cope with this aspect of teaching in the behavioral program and was now happy and planned to stay. In this environment, he appreciated the freedom to make appropriate decisions about specific aspects of the program “without administrative hold-ups.”

Ellen was hired as the English teacher. This was her first teaching post. She had special education qualifications and had found she was interested in working with behavioral students during her teaching practices. She enjoyed her position but found that it was isolating, particularly in her first year. She explained that she had not been invited to first-year teacher workshops and it was easy for others in the school district to forget about the behavioral program because of its isolated location. She informed me that academics were important but that “realistically some of the students have plateaus in their learning capabilities and must concentrate on developing their social skills.” She felt that each student had an individual program and that the program itself changed with the students who were involved. For the following year she would be taking a contract in a regular school setting with a general learning difficulties (GLD) class.

The youth worker, Cynthia, had worked in schools for 12 years. This was her third year at the program. She was an outspoken individual with a good sense of humor. She explained that the staff at the behavioral program used humor to deal with difficult issues, both between the staff and with the students. She was

usually telling humorous stories and talking with the students. When students were upset or needed to talk, she would take them to talk privately in the back office. She often gave parenting advice to parents and guardians of attending students and made phone calls to parents as well as encouraged them to come in. She felt it was difficult to measure success in a program like this: "Everyone's abilities and needs are individual, making success an individual goal."

The attendance counselors shared their time at the program. One counselor was there for the morning and the other was there for the afternoon. These individuals had been involved with the program and were the central organizing figures since the beginning of the program in the 1980s.

Tom, an attendance counselor was referred to as "the guru." He spent half of his day in the program and half acting as the regional attendance counselor. His relationship with many of the students was caring and friendly. He was a founding member of the program. Tom would not be involved in the following year as the board was moving to full-time attendance counselors and he would be a regional full-time attendance counselor.

The second counselor, George, was a member of the Ontario Association of Attendance Counselors. He took an authoritarian role within the program. This individual decided upon many suspensions of attending students. He noted that it did not work to be the authority figure, and that he needed to be a support and a friend as well. He was often the disciplining figure in the program, and students sometimes took offence to his authority position.

Three administrative people were involved with the behavioral program at the time of the research study. There was a Special Education Consultant, an elementary school principal, and a secondary school principal. These principals were from schools in the area that had a high proportion of students requiring alternative programming. For this study, 2 of these individuals were interviewed: Lorena, a special education consultant, and Don, an elementary school principal.

Lorena was responsible for 32 schools in the area and 33 special needs programs. Lorena was one of four educational consultants in the board. Each was responsible for a designated area. Her involvement with the program was voluntary and not part of her job description. She formerly had been a coordinator for special needs programs and had fewer programs, as there were seven coordinators. At that time there had been more opportunity for contact with the students for which she was responsible. Now her role entailed accessing IRPCs and OSRs (Ontario School Record) for candidate students of the program. Lorena also attended intake meetings and meetings with attendance counselors of the program. In the future, Lorena wanted to aid in the improvement of communication between the schools that sent students and the program. She also wanted to aid in the development of the intake procedure for new students. Lorena indicated the importance of the program being seen as addressing all three needs, attendance, behavior, and social, because it was not purely a behavior program.

The second program administrator, Don, was the principal representing the elementary students of the program. He took on the program when the former

principal of the school asked if he would do this. His responsibilities were to be present at intake meetings and to perform periodic checks on the elementary students at the program. He acknowledged that it was difficult, as the demands of his own school were high. He indicated that it would be positive if he could spend more time at the program.

Daily Activities

Students usually filtered in the back door until 9:00 a.m. every school day. Tracy, a 14-year-old student, entered at 9:30 on the days that she was not truant. She had made an agreement with the on-site staff that allowed her to come late if she finished her journal writing at home. Some students talked and others wrote in their journals. Often the students encouraged one another to finish. The teacher, Ellen, explained that the students could not watch news until everyone had completed their journal writing. Watching the taped morning news was a daily event. The content of the students' journals was often reflected the students' uncensored thoughts as they were told that it was confidential. The on-site staff took turns reading and writing comments in the students' journals. Some students used it as an opportunity to express difficulties and concerns. I was able to respond in the journals during the time I was there. Cynthia explained that it was beneficial to reply back and forth to the same student for the purpose of building trust and a relationship as well as offering the student an outlet of expression.

During breaks, which occurred about every hour, many of the students smoked cigarettes on the back porch. In 10 minutes they returned, without the staff asking them to. The students monitored their own breaks. During the

academic periods of the day, each student worked individually. Chalkboards on two walls kept a running tally of the attending students and the categories they were in. The students chose the names of the categories, Floaters and Achievers. This determined where they could work. The Achievers could work in the kitchen upstairs, and the Floaters needed to be in the front room downstairs, the less desirable of the locations. The second, upstairs room was a kitchen area.

The program focused on English and math. There was a designated place where the students' folders were kept. There were two folders for each student, one that contained current work and one that contained new work. It was the student's responsibility to move on to the new work and to ask for more work.

During most mornings, Scott would fill in the behavior sheet located in the center of the room. This was accessible to all staff and students. The sheet kept track of behavior and a record of points for behavior. Points were tallied weekly, and students were awarded the points in the form of monopoly money. If they had negative points they then owed monopoly money that they may have gained in the previous week. Monopoly money was awarded as success points and taken away from the students for negative attendance, work habits, behavior, courtesy, and personal goals. With this money the students could buy food and time off school.

Special Events

Every Tuesday and Thursday the students went to the YMCA. They had the option of swimming or basketball. Some expressed interest in weights, and at different times they had tried organized activities. The students could earn a

physical education credit through this activity. During some afternoons taped news programs were viewed. The students were given the option of viewing this or staying with the regular program. Once a week there was a speaker for the students. These talks were most often on educational issues. These occurred on Wednesday afternoons. The staff often took the students on unplanned trips to areas that did not require booking or a fee.

Communication

Communication and interaction were central to the running of the program. Most commonly it was communication that the students had difficulties with, in all aspects of their lives. The program worked to help strengthen the students' social skills and improve communication. I was interested in observing all forms of communication in the program.

Students talked to one another freely throughout the day. Their discussions were about topics of interest to them. Scott took me aside after a student had freely expressed his frustration with his mother. The student had depicted his mother's lifestyle in a vulgar manner. Scott explained that a student could not get away with that at a normal school, but in a behavioral program the staff had to be more lenient and understanding.

Some students had friends within the program and socialized outside of the program. There were also students who had differences and disagreements within the program. Often a student reprimanded another for being disrespectful or lazy, thereby enforcing their own rules that were agreed upon commonly at the beginning of each session, in conjunction with the on-site staff.

The communication between students and staff was frequent. There was constant interaction that ranged from discussing issues in their home lives to tackling issues and differences with other students. The staff intervened through talking one on one with the students to help them develop coping strategies and social skills, to reintegrate them into the classroom, and to help them deal with day-to-day issues including communication skills and dealing with issues outside of school. These issues included discussing the students' relationships with parents, partners, siblings, and friends.

Communication among staff and parents was a central aspect of the program. All members agreed that when positive communication with parents was established their success with a student was far greater. The staff attempted to establish good communication early with parents. This was in the form of telephone calls and meetings with the parents. Cynthia explained that she liked to contact parents when good things happened.

Communication among staff was essential in deciding what strategies to use with individual students. The staff met throughout the day concerning many issues. These decisions were often regarding suspensions and other difficult situations. Staff made independent decisions about the tracking of success points, but when large decisions needed to be made there was usually a group conference among the on-site staff.

Communication between staff and administrators occurred a few times a month or when any administrative issues arose. The staff and administration communicated at least once a month for the intake of new students. Follow-up

visits were meant to happen but, due to time constraints, administrative intervention beyond the entrance and dismissal of students did not occur frequently.

Need Attainment

Program effectiveness is examined through need attainment and barriers to need attainment. The data for these categories were generated in the gifted program by examining program documents and by interviewing (formally and informally) the students, teachers, on-site staff, and program administrators about their perceptions of the needs being met in their programs and those not being met. In the behavioral program, data were generated through examining program documents; and informally interviewing program administrators, on-site staff, and one student, and completing a student questionnaire. In the following section, the nature of need attainment will be presented site by site.

Need Attainment in the Gifted Program

In the gifted program, the cognitive needs of students were purported to be met through access to a resource room at all times during the day. This area provided the students with computers, access to a teacher, and a work area. The program document stated that the package provided mentor groups as well as mentoring opportunities. The academic program was designed in thematic units to support the needs of the students through program continuity. There was to be a financial unit, creative arts unit, and creative problem solving and critical thinking units. Independent study and investigation were also a part of the academic curriculum. The gifted program required supplementary reports from teachers in

the package. These components were created to meet the specific academic and enrichment needs of the students in the program. The program was also to include guest speakers and field trips.

The program purported to meet the affective needs of students through the following elements of the program. There was a mandatory community service component to the program as well as an environmental awareness component. There was a leadership camp and an advisory committee. These components were created to meet the social and emotional needs of the involved students.

Students' preparation for the future was purported to be met through the portfolio component of the course, which documented their achievements for future reference. The investigative study component allowed students to pursue career interests with the aid of the mentorship program in which teachers would aid students in researching their interests. The advisory committee and leadership camps also were documented as giving students leadership opportunities.

All three participant groups in the gifted program felt that support from peers was an important part of the program. Students reported it to be helpful that their classmates were at similar academic levels. One student, Jay, noted, "There is none of the browner rhetoric that you may get in the regular program." Students took pride in their work and extra work. They reported the positive aspect of friendly competition and the support of friends in the program, and they attributed this to the small and contained nature of the program. Students reported benefiting from the group work that was a large part of the program. Mike also noted the importance of working with other people as an integral skill in today's

world. Mike upheld the social need of acceptance that was fostered by the contained environment of the gifted package. Karen, the program administrator, explained, "The social need of acceptance is fostered by the congregated environment in the gifted package. It's cool to be smart."

The program made it "okay to be academically able," Karen clarified. All three groups felt that acceptance from peers was a positive aspect of the package. Teachers and program administrators cited the importance of the safe environment that was created in the package. Mike observed that students who would have been seen as "geeky" in regular classes feel safe. "I think the biggest thing the program does is create an environment in which they can learn in their own style of learning in a safe environment." Mike supported the notion that "school is not just academic."

Karen reported, "The package helps students gain community and expand social skills. For whatever reason, kids are drastically lacking in social skills when they come to us." The program helped gifted students find a community that supported and accepted them.

Students cited the importance of the support they received from teachers in the gifted package as important. Alexandra and Jay reported feeling supported by their teachers. Jay explained that there was a specific teacher he could talk to. Peter expanded in an interview that "all the teachers are good at helping you find the information you need." Students reported that they had access to academic information through teachers and through the program administrators. The program administrators spoke of the importance of the diversity of interests that

the different teachers brought to the package as a way of helping students access different knowledge and experience.

An element that arose from all participant groups was concern with the students' ability to follow their interests and to help prepare them for future endeavors. Students reported that they felt they could follow and explore their personal interests. Jay reported that he felt he could do this through his position on the Gifted Advisory Committee.

Katherine, Alexandra, and Jay reported that they liked the group work component, as it aided them to learn from others. Another aspect that the students documented as being positive for their future academic and career interests was the positive addition the gifted program would be to their resumés. Students also mentioned the access they had to individuals in work areas through the co-op component of the program. Along these same lines, Mike observed that something the package did well was help students to balance a variety of things, and "the faster a kid learns to balance a variety of things, the more ready that person is for real life." Mike also cited the importance of the diversity in experience that the students received in the gifted package to augment learning.

Karen and Doug noted that the package was meeting leadership needs as well. Doug reported that these needs were being met through the gifted package's creative problem solving and leadership activities.

All three participant groups cited the positive aspect of the challenge that was provided in the program and that met the needs of gifted and enriched students. Valerie, Katherine, Alexandra, Jay, and Peter reported that they liked

the fast pace as it kept them interested, and they liked the extra questions as this made them think in different and challenging ways.

Jay reported that by compacting their curriculum they were able to take part take in extra learning experiences.

The time we save we go out and do fun things to enrich the learning experience and sometimes even adds to what we are learning in a certain class. So it gives us a greater understanding of things that we are learning in class. By going to places and learning, it adds to things we are doing here in school, more information, a different side of it, a different way to look at it.

Susan and Mike agreed that the fast learning pace was good for the students as it maintained interest and stimulation. Mike reported that the program provided a creative forum for learning, which “meets students’ higher level of thinking, where they are applying rather than regurgitating.” Karen supported this idea. She explained, “It’s an opportunity and a right to have learning needs met.” Mike indicated that the package was capable of providing the structure that gifted students often need. “Gifted students are often disorganized. The students often skip basic skills and have not learned them properly.” Program administrators also reported that the package could monitor progress closely, which benefited the student academically and socially.

Karen and Doug explained that the program provided challenges that went beyond academic achievement: “You aren’t treated special because you are

smart.” Students were encouraged and motivated to excel in other areas such as community service, sports, and leadership activities.

With the exception of one student interviewed, all the students agreed that one of the best things about the program was the strong relationships they felt they built with their classmates. Many of the students also mentioned in a positive light the extracurricular activities, such as trips.

Many of the students in the gifted program reported that they liked the challenge that is given by the program, referring to the academic challenge and to the work involved in the classes. Achieving high marks was a priority and an indicator for success. When I asked the students in interviews what they wanted to accomplish, all of the students spoke of attaining high marks as demonstrated by the following example: “My academic goals first of all for this year are to get on the honour role once again, which should not be a problem, and as well through my high school career.”

Students reported that being accepted into a good university was a goal. “I think I would like to graduate with really, really good marks so I can get into a good university.” Three students reported that they would like to be on the student council for the school when they arrived in the senior grades. Katherine spoke of how the program had helped her to set more realistic goals:

I think my goals have become a lot more realistic, you know then when you go, I want to be an astronaut and a doctor and once you get older, especially in the gifted package, you say, well I’m doing really well in this

class but not in this class. Then you just have to even things out a little bit. Everyone has some little things they can't do.

Teachers shared their ideas of success. In an interview, Mike spoke in depth on the idea of educating the whole student. "Hopefully they will do extracurriculars. To me, all these things go together and show you how to cope and balance your life. School is not just academic."

Mike also spoke about the importance and ability to work with others on which the program did a good job of focussing. "A lot of what we are teaching you will never typically see used again, but the whole idea of being able to work with other people and be creative and think of things in terms of new ways, not just in lock and step."

The teachers reported that an element that the gifted program could be good at developing was the basic steps over which gifted students often have skipped. The gifted program was also successful at helping students follow through with their plans and ideas. Creative thinking was also developed further in the program.

Mike spoke of how the program could be successful if giving students something relevant and interesting was a priority. He gave as an example a unit they did on the Titanic the previous year where someone who had worked on the set of the Titanic came in to speak. "This was something the students really enjoyed," he said.

Karen and Doug, the program administrators, expressed the importance and success the program had in meeting the affective needs of its students. The

positive effects of the program included helping students to gain a community and expand their social skills, as well as to exposing them to a community in which they must work to achieve and seek out other attributes in themselves apart from academics.

Karen spoke of the social development that the program helped to generate in its participant students: "There is no question when I see the growth of some of these kids and the difference that the package has made for them and the opportunities they experience." Doug also spoke of how the gifted activities helped to develop career interests.

Barriers to Need Attainment in the Gifted Program

Data were also collected by researching what needs students, teachers, and program administrators perceived as not being met. Through the use of interviews and observations, several reasons were attributed to the lack of need satisfaction.

In the gifted program, all three participant groups spoke of the teachers' strike as a result of Bill 160, which proposed increased teaching time. All groups identified the reaction to this bill as a compromise to the program and the ability of the program to meet the needs of the students. Katherine explained her feelings towards the strike: "Because of the strike, we haven't really gone anywhere or done anything like field trips."

Karen explained how Bill 160 and the teachers' strike had compromised the program in terms of its effect on teacher motivation.

You see the problem is this year we really had to compound things and we ended up with teachers that didn't have input into their involvement when

the contract changed. Suddenly there were teachers put in who didn't expect to be teaching in the package and we couldn't have our normal expectations of what is required of the teachers. It's important that the teachers make the decision that they are willing to take on those expectations. So when teachers came to the package and had no ideas what the expectations were, there was not much point in expecting things of them when they did not know it in the first place. It just seems unfair.

Mike spoke in an interview about the importance of administrative support and the implications of not having support. "The lip service and sort of emotional and bolstering support is there, yeah, go do it, go do it, but the critical thing would be time if you want this program to really work."

Karen explained the problem of lack of school support. "Not everybody understands why the program is here. We've run through this every year. Why are you taking the gifted kids, the brightest kids, who are already advantaged and giving them more advantages?"

In interviews, students cited such things as boredom as a drawback of the program. Valerie suggested that more games and fewer activities would meet her learning needs more appropriately. Katherine explained that often she had difficulties with the structure of the program and more specifically the teachers. "Some teachers are very strict. It doesn't really matter what you are doing at home as long as your work is done."

Alexandra reported that the class sizes were too large and that this was a drawback to the program: "A few people that are not understanding will sit there

all class long with their hands up in the air and the teachers are helping people that don't need it as much."

Peter explained that he felt that there was an overemphasis on group work. "Group work is not a realistic portrayal of the real working world and is unfair."

Peter suggested that there should to be an interview process to ensure that the program was suitable for the individual and that the candidate was prepared to make a commitment to working hard in the program. He felt that some participants did not work to their potential. Peter viewed it a privilege to be a part of the program. "There are people on waiting lists!"

All three participant groups agreed that the students did not benefit when the academic work was too difficult. Karen explained that the students must be at a certain academic level to succeed in the program. "It isn't good if the kid doesn't have the ability. It's a put-down to their intelligence."

Mike explained that he felt students' needs were not being met by expecting them to know what they wanted to do for their lives.

Expectations of teachers and students are too great. Most kids don't know what they want to do; most kids at OAC level don't know what they want to do. Most kids don't understand; I don't think most of us understand the needs of other professions. Having speakers in is fine, but you really don't understand exactly what another profession does, its not that I'm against career education. It doesn't understand in my estimation what teachers do; neither do most of us understand what lawyers, doctors,

accountants do. That's a really hard thing for a kid to choose a profession based on what they think a career is.

Susan felt that the students missed out on one of the important experiences of school in the program, "Drawbacks of the program are to a certain level the students don't really get the whole classroom environment."

Summary

Through the examination of the need attainment and the barriers to need attainment in the gifted program, the following recurrent themes arose from the data. First, the commitment of the teachers to extra responsibilities was of central importance to the running of the program. The program administrators expressed the extreme importance of independent and motivated teachers who were deeply committed to the program. Second, the support of administration was necessary to the running of the program. The program administrators felt the program ran best 2 years ago when they had administration that understood the importance of the program and supported scheduling that allowed teachers to work together on activities and projects for the gifted package.

This year was a different year as there was a teacher strike and work-to-rule, which affected both administrative and teacher support. Administrators could not be helpful in terms of scheduling due to the extenuating circumstances of the political situation. Teachers' motivation and support of the program were also affected as teachers were taken from and placed into the program in a nonvoluntary fashion. The students, teachers, and program administrators all

made reference to how this had affected and compromised this school year for teachers and students of the program.

Need Attainment in the Behavior Program

The program documents for this program purported to provide academic support in language and math. The program literature indicated that the aim of the program was to provide fresh incentive by offering students an opportunity to work on secondary school programs. A key objective was to upgrade and reinforce basic academic skills and to optimize a student's chances at successful reintegration into the regular school system. The program had a wide variety of instructional materials at different grade levels and levels of difficulty to meet individual students' academic needs at both secondary and elementary grade levels. The program provided individual and small-group instruction in core subjects. Instruction and programs were individualized to accommodate students' work habits, learning styles, and needs.

The program supported what it termed "Cardinal Rules" to meet the safety needs of its students. Students must continue to respect themselves, others, and property, be on time, and attend regularly. The program was carried out through a system of "Success Points," which were awarded to students for good attendance, work habits, behavior, courtesy, and individual goals. The program was meant to aid students in developing these social skills. The program documents indicated that it aimed to help students learn new behaviors to reintegrate them into regular school programs. The program purported to provide regular involvement with the community and to provide community awareness and information. The students

were to be provided with access to the YMCA during and after school hours as an alternative to high-risk activities. The program offered games that aided in building cooperative skills and meeting communication needs. By showing the human face of education, the program aided the students to take responsibility for their actions and to understand consequences, rather than rebelling and misplacing responsibility. The program also offered social events at Easter and Christmas and open houses with parents, with the purpose of recognizing student achievement and developing social graces.

The program also purported to meet students' emotional needs. Initially the program was presented to the students as an extension of their school program in response to their newly identified needs. Once the students had experienced some success, limited and controlled reintegration of students into regular school was attempted. This provided the students with opportunity to practise social skills and test readiness. The program sought to involve students' homes and parents with the hopes that the social needs the program was meeting would carry over to the students' homes and in the community. The program met emotional needs by building more positive relationships between parents and their children. At the program, the students' emotional needs were met through warm acceptance, ongoing support, nonjudgmental feedback, and a high degree of tolerance and forgiveness. The program addressed the students' needs for a sense of belonging in a community. Another need that the program purported to meet was aiding the students' self-esteem. This need was met through providing success experiences for the students. Discussion groups were provided to meet

emotional needs by discussing personal concerns in regard to home, community, and school.

The program provided regular individual counseling discussion sessions between students and staff to provide personal support and encouragement, to review progress, and to develop strategies for attaining personal goals and for dealing with problem behavior and community concerns.

The program met the student needs for survival by educating them in basic survival skills and home economics activities. These included shopping trips, budgeting skills, consumer awareness, ecological considerations, proper nutrition, planning and preparing meals, good housekeeping, stress management, and hygiene.

The program provided opportunities for work experience and co-op study placements to learn about the expectations of the work world. This met the student needs of gaining experience in community-based work sites. This gave them practice in their interpersonal skills and exploration of vocational interests critical to helping students become productive members of society. For students who were 16 years of age and intended to drop out of school, the program provided a school-to-work transition by communicating with the co-op work-study and community-based programs. Vocational assessments of the students' abilities provided an in-depth assessment of students' abilities, aptitudes, and interests in terms of vocational goals and possibilities. Students were informed about and introduced to other alternative education programs for future reference for school-to-work transition needs.

The students cited acceptance and community as positive aspects of the program, similar to the gifted program. Some students noted in the questionnaire that they liked the teachers and students in the program. They also reported feeling comfortable in the environment. A few students reported in the questionnaires that a future goal for them was to get a job; others cited that they would like to reintegrate back into regular programming.

The on-site staff explained the importance of individualized programming. One teacher, Ellen, explained that each student's academic program was individualized to his/her needs and goals. She explained that success was different for each student. The youth worker, Cynthia, explained the diversity of success for the students. This was similar to the gifted program in that all kinds of achievement were recognized and that the notion of achievement was central to both case studies. Cynthia continued, "The program meets all kinds of needs; these range from cooking and food preparation to budgeting." One of the program administrators, Lorena, explained that the flexibility of the program accommodated the individual needs of each student. "It is the relaxed atmosphere that creates this flexibility." She reported that the program offers a second chance for many students by giving them a fresh start. Students reported liking the flexibility, freedom, and second chances that were provided by the program.

Cynthia explained that the program helped the students with appropriate communication skills that many were lacking. Communication was also encouraged in all aspects of the students' lives. This included communication between the students and their parents and the program, as well as with the

sending school. The on-site staff noted that the program helped students with strategies to remediate behaviour. Lorena explained that the ratio of staff to students gave students the opportunity to receive the attention that was much needed and for which they were often looking.

Students reported liking other students in the program and teachers. It was also apparent that many of the students felt comfortable in the environment, indicating that the program offered community. Students reported learning such things as being able to control anger.

Indicators of academic success included attending school regularly and returning to regular school programs. Many of the students reported leaving the program as their goal. Being able to earn credits while in the program was also reported by several students in the questionnaire as being successful.

Cynthia explained how the program met many basic needs. These included hygiene, nutrition, personal safety, and being off the streets. Cynthia used an example to show how the program measured success. "Lisa, for example, we didn't know where she was for a year. She had no connections to anything. Now she has a roof and is okay."

Both program administrators spoke of the alternative to structure that the program offered and had experienced success with. The program was successful for many students because it offered an alternative to the structure that was likely at the root of their difficulties. The program provided structure in the attending students' lives, when they had little structure in their home lives. The low ratio of

staff to students allowed for more one-on-one instruction and attention for the students.

Barriers to Need Attainment in the Behavior Program

Students in the behavior program named the location as a major drawback to the program. One student, Lyne, summed up her feelings toward the situation of the program in a questionnaire. "I don't like the pee dripping from the ceiling. My suggestion is for this program to move from this crack-head neighborhood."

Don, an administrator, expressed concern regarding the location of the program. He noted that the staff at the program worked hard and well despite their location. The space the program was occupying at the time of the study was crowded and in a less-than-desirable location. He explained that this was due to funding cuts in education.

Many of the students who filled in the questionnaire indicated boredom with the program. One student wrote, "I'm not doing enough work." Another wrote, "You don't learn anything."

The on-site staff named several negative aspects that compromised the meeting of student needs. One common concern was that the program was only effective during school hours. A second concern was the constantly changing staff positions, most pressing of which was the leaving of the two attendance counselors in the next school year. These changes were made by government legislature and decreased the number of attendance counselor positions available in the board.

Another negative point that compromised the meeting of student needs was the lack of communication and information regarding new students and the intake procedure. Ellen explained: "Students come and we don't know what levels, what grades, what they have done, their family and behavior background." Lorena also cited the lack of communication and information. The on-site staff and program administrators felt that often the program was used as a behavior disorder dumping ground. In the future Lorena would like to continue improving communication between the program and sending schools. She would also like to improve the intervention procedure to ensure that the program was not used as a drop-off for behavioral cases. "Sending schools must take responsibility for behavioral issues," she noted.

Cynthia and George felt that ineffective legal intervention was a problem. "Laws are good but we can't do anything to help a child now if the child does not want help."

Summary

Several recurrent themes arose from the data in the behavior program. First, all three participant groups stated their concern with the location of the program and its effect on student need attainment. Other comments and concerns relative to the importance of location included the importance of the program being held away from school grounds and away from the environment where the students had not experienced previous success. Other comments specifically from students and program administrators indicated that the location and condition of the building were not acceptable. On-site staff mentioned that the location was

isolating and that the flow of information among the program, the board, and other schools was often disrupted and ineffective. There was also an observation from the staff that the self-contained nature of the program, due to its independent location, was a positive characteristic of the program.

Second, a resounding theme was that the students came with little and no information from their sending schools. The flow of information and communication was essential so that the program was not treated as a “behavioral dumping ground” by schools that did not want to deal with difficult students.

Summary of Deductive Results

The deductive analysis of the two case study sites, the gifted program and the behavior program, created four themes that arose as essential for effective alternative programming. These included two themes in the gifted program and two themes in the behavior program, first, the commitment and motivation of teachers, and second, the support of administration in the gifted program; third, the importance of location, and fourth, the flow of information and communication in the behavior program. These four themes represent elements that this study found as pertinent to students’ success in their individual alternative programs. This was not the only information that presented itself in the data analysis. Information was presented that did not fall into the categories that were initially chosen, and, more important, information arose as important to both programs. These unanticipated findings indicated a need for further research and coding. As a result of the similarities that were arising, the need for inductive analysis was evident. This analysis was carried out in the form of a cross case

analysis to investigate detailed information that would uncover the important themes that were similar across the two case study sites. These are examined in the following section.

Features of Effective Alternative Programming

The data and themes presented in the previous section of this chapter were derived from a deductive within-case analysis. To move the results to a deeper level of interpretation and insight, a cross-case inductive analysis of the data was conducted. This next section combines the results of the data from both the gifted program and the behavioral program to shed light on the recurring issues and themes found in the research data. These themes include the individual nature of programming, the recognition of student achievement, the alternative program as a place of safety and community, the importance of interpersonal capacity, the priority of basic needs, and finally, the matching of student capacity with program expectation. Data to explain and support these themes are included in the following section.

The Individual Nature of Programming

Students were more different than they were alike in both sites. The needs of the students within each program were diverse. For each student, success and achievement were individual. Mike, a teacher in the gifted program, described the importance of addressing the diversity of students. "I think what we are doing is giving kids an avenue in which they can learn in their own style and their style of learning, because they have entirely different interests and directions."

Ellen, a teacher in the behavior program, expressed the need for programs and goals to be individualized. She and the two other on-site staff, Scott and Cynthia, supported that achievements and successes were individual for each student. They explained that success for students in the behavior program could range from returning to school to staying in school to getting a job. For some students, it was learning problem-solving skills or learning how to communicate, to cook, and to wash. They also observed that success and achievement were difficult to measure because they were dependent upon the abilities of the student. A student who was attending at the time of the study had been on the streets and without a permanent home. "She had no connection to anything. She now has a roof over her head." The youth worker explained that this was success for that student.

Recognition of Student Achievement

An important theme that was generated by the inductive analysis was the recognition of student success and achievement of students in each site, through the use of both formal and informal recognition. In the gifted program, the administrators, Karen and Doug, explained how individual achievement was recognized and supported. Karen explained the previous year's gifted package awards.

The things we recognize like the gifted package graduation certificates. It's a big deal. It is all in how you present things. Mr. T. was our principal, he would shake their hands, we had a pianist to serenade them,

and there were flowers on the stage. For every activity there is supposed to be an award.

The behavior program recognized the different achievements of its students as well. During the research study, the youth worker, Cynthia, introduced a graduation ceremony for those students who were graduating from grade 8. She felt it was important and probably a more appropriate way to recognize the graduating students. She explained that most students would be more comfortable with this than with their regular school graduation.

There was potential for all students to achieve in the behavioral program. For example, showing up was an achievement for some students. The success points system was an award process that recognized improved attendance and behavior. Achievement was recognized with rewards of food, time off, and the ability to work in different locations in the building. Students' names were displayed on the chalkboard under "Floaters" and "Achievers" as a form of recognition. The students referred constantly to the chalkboard and success points binder as an indication of their achievements.

The Alternative Program as a Place of Safety and Community

The gifted program and the behavior program also focused upon meeting the affective needs of involved students. Most important, these programs created a community where students could have experiences and gain experiences in a variety of areas to aid them in the development of their social and academic skills.

Jay, a student interviewed, explained that he liked the close and familiar environment of the program created by going to the same classes with the same

people. Being all one class with one schedule addressed his need for acceptance and development of a community.

In the gifted program, students reported several reasons for feeling they were part of a community that aided them academically and socially. Alexandra explained that she felt comfortable and accepted in the program. "There are other students that are on the same level as you and kind of help you in class. Everybody is very, very helpful. It's a two-way street. When you need help, you get it, and when someone needs help, you help them."

Valerie spoke of how she felt accepted and comfortable in the gifted program. "Well, I was pretty excited because my entire life, because I was in a gifted program, everyone was always making fun of everything, so this way I would be surrounded by people who were at the same level as me."

Students expressed the acceptance that they experienced in the program as central to their feelings of success. Jay explained, "There is none of the browner rhetoric that they had in 'pre-gifted' times. If you get a 96% it's good."

Alexandra expressed what she thought was one of the most positive aspects of the program. "The relationships that you build with classmates because you are with them four classes a day for two years." Peter explained that he was often talking to classmates about schoolwork, indicating the camaraderie and community he felt in the program.

Mike, a teacher in the gifted program, explained the element of community and safety the package offered. "The biggest thing that the package does is create an environment in which they can learn in their own style, in a safe

environment.” The program administrators, Karen and Doug, observed that meeting the affective needs of students was of central importance. They spoke of the positive effects the program had in helping students to expand their social skills with the support of a community.

In the behavior program, specific students expressed similar feelings of acceptance, reporting in a questionnaire that they liked the teachers and students in the program. One student, Julie, noted that the program was “like home, not school.”

The students received repetitive and positive reinforcement for coming every day, for communicating in positive ways, and for being productive. These were considered achievements and were recognized consistently by the on-site staff. This reinforced that the on-site staff wanted the students there and that it was their community. Students were not treated as outcasts even in the event of temporary suspensions. When students returned from being truant or suspended, they were always welcomed back by the staff with, “We’re so glad you are back. We missed you.”

There was also community among the students, who were often undergoing similar difficulties in school and at home. Sharing stories during work times and on breaks occurred regularly. In reading their journals, students would often write about other students in the program: “A. is so cool”, or that they had done something with a classmate the night before: “C. cut my hair.” or “D. and I are going shopping.”

One student had a classmate from the program accompany her to a meeting at the school that she was to start attending. This served as a form of moral support, and these relationships helped to create a community.

The Importance of Interpersonal Capacity

In the gifted program and the behavioral program, social skills that aided in the development of communication and behavior were emphasized. In the gifted program, a teacher explained that the program was aimed at giving students experiences achieved through activities such as trips and group work. "Often gifted students have little life experience and their social skills are lacking. The gifted package in its diversity of experience will help give students the experience they need to make good choices." Karen, the program administrator, shared similar sentiments when she referred to the extent to which students were lacking in social skills when they entered the program. She reflected on a past student.

I am thinking of B. Picture B. when she came here in grade 9. In any social context she wouldn't fit in. Even when we went to camp no one wanted her in his or her group or in their tents. But they are allowed to be in the resource room during lunch. That's where she ate, remember that little group of them. They would come in every day. And now she is doing great, she is wonderful, she feels good about herself, she doesn't feel odd anymore, and she started to behave in a more appropriate manner.

This example demonstrates that, by offering a place of community where social and interpersonal skills can be developed, the program helped individuals to grow in an affective capacity.

Mike, a teacher in the gifted program, supported that communication and the ability to work with others was a positive aspect of the program. Through giving experiences, individuals could learn communication and social skills that would aid them in their future endeavors.

I am a whole-student person and we are educating the whole person. They need to have as many and as varied experiences in high school. They need to meet teachers of all different kinds, teachers who are really prescriptive, people who are really vague, allowing them to run. They need to have good teachers and bad teachers. They need to meet some bad people because that's the way they are going to understand what is bad and what is good. Hopefully they will do extracurriculars, and to me all these things go together and show you how to balance your life and show you how to cope.

Mike felt strongly about the importance of the interpersonal component of education and believed that the gifted package strove to give students experiences that were concerned with developing interpersonal skills.

In the behavior program, the basis of the program was to aid the students with communication and social skills. One student documented in the questionnaire that the program had helped her to control most of her anger. This individual had recognized her difficulties with communication and emotional control and had undertaken strategies provided by the program to aid her in dealing with expressing her frustration. The on-site staff reported that most of

what they did was with social skills as opposed to academic skills.

Communication and interpersonal skills were addressed continuously.

The development of communication was demonstrated by S., who when he came did not want to speak with students or staff. After positive reinforcement and the teaching of interpersonal skills from the staff he was communicating with more than guttural grunts. The staff gave incentives for S. to sit down and speak with them. In return for communicating, S's achievement was recognized with time off.

Communication between the students and their sending schools and the school into which they would like to reintegrate was developed by the staff in the behavior program. This was accomplished through the program staff speaking positively for the students as well as the on-site staff guiding the students as to what they needed to accomplish to be reintegrated. Of central importance to the program was the development of the relationship between students and their parents through positive communication.

Priority of Basic Needs

Basic needs of the students, however different in each case study, were met first. Once these were addressed, other issues and needs could be dealt with. Basic needs were the academic and social skill sets students needed to experience achievement and success.

A teacher in the gifted program reported basic academic skill sets that were being met in the program.

Often times they are really disorganized people so one of the biggest things is trying to get them organized and get some of the basics down.

You find in grade 9 and 10 they are missing skills. They are really good at ideas and creating hypothesis and they are really good at starting projects and generally really bad at finishing them. It is frequent that students have not learned or do not see the need for basic steps. In order to understand concepts and skills fully they need to do and understand these steps, and the program aids them with this.

This addressed the basic academic needs of students so that learning could occur.

The same teacher explained:

They are so concerned with being about 14 miles ahead but in fact they are 14 miles behind because they don't have basic skills. So one of the biggest challenges in 9 and 10 is to change the approach for them and the method that you go about making sure to catch basic things.

In the gifted program, some students reported that they were bored in the program. This indicated a need for stimulation. Valerie, a grade 9 student, explained she liked the program but that she was, "getting into a rut" and she found it dull because "I find I'm doing the same things every day and I'm bored with the monotony." This same student expressed that she learned best through the use of games and fun things to help her remember. Valerie linked this to being interested in her learning. She noted that the program could be improved if the teachers could find more interesting ways to teach their subjects. This student was identifying her need for stimulation when learning. Other interviewed students

echoed this sentiment with comments pertaining to the Creative Problem Solving (CPS) unit. Katherine said, "I guess they are a bit challenging, but sometimes they can get boring when you are just sitting around for periods and periods." Other students talked about the difference trips could make. "More trips would make it more fun and I know they try to make it more fun with the theatre sports and creative problem solving but if they could switch it up."

In the behavior program, basic needs ranged from food, shelter, and hygiene to community and acceptance. Cynthia, an on-site staff member, explained a situation in which the program helped to meet a basic need. She recounted a time when a father called to say that his son wouldn't be coming in that week, as they did not have any food at home. The staff's response to this was to have the parent send the student to the program where they could feed and help him. They indicated that this was a fundamental need that the program could be meeting.

Cynthia reported that little of what they did was academic. "It's socializing" they explain, "C. couldn't cook, D. didn't wash, K. had the worst mouth you have ever heard. These individuals have all progressed. The program has helped them understand and cope with these basic needs," including hygiene, cooking, and communication needs. Ellen, a teacher, explained that she saw many students' needs being met in the program. These included survival needs, learning how to cook, personal hygiene, and learning how to be safe. For some students it was learning how to organize themselves in the classroom. Tom, an attendance counselor at the behavior program, explained that students could learn

self-management strategies for the classroom. Students had to learn how to ask for work they had missed and how to organize themselves. Some students made academic gains while in the program. The possibility for academic skill building was available to all students in the program.

In the behavior program students also expressed boredom. They cited reasons from not liking the teachers to not liking anything except leaving every day. These students did not elaborate, as it was a questionnaire in which they were asked to respond to this question. They were less likely in casual conversations to state that they did not like the program.

Matching Student Capacity with Program Expectation

Students needed to have a certain level of cognitive ability to benefit from the programs. In the gifted program, a few of the students interviewed noted that they felt they would have done better if they had not been placed in gifted classes for particular subjects. The program administrators supported that the program was a positive experience only if the students were academically prepared. "It isn't good if the kid doesn't have the ability; it's a put-down to their intelligence." This alludes to the concept that if a child is not prepared, an alternative program can be a negative experience.

The behavioral program was similar in that the students must have the cognitive ability to put the social strategies to use. Don, a program administrator, explained that the on-site staff could help the students with skills to stay in school, but these students must be capable cognitively of learning the social skills and coping strategies the program offered. In order to make use of the skills taught,

students needed to have average to high intelligence. Lorena, another program administrator, supported that the program was not for developmentally delayed students. She explained that the program would not be appropriate for this kind of need as the program's aim was for students to learn strategies to remediate behavior and social skills. Students who were candidates were from lower middle to high intelligence.

Integration of Results

The aim of the research was to uncover elements of effective alternative programming from a case study perspective. The results of the study indicate there are certain similarities between the two alternative programming sites. A model was created that demonstrated the integrated results of the study and proposes a strategy for the practice of alternative programming (See Figure 1). The model was created with the intention of serving a wide variety of alternative programming, potentially serving as an aid for teachers and administrators of alternative programs. A concentric ring model was the most effective method of demonstrating the influences that each element has within the program. Concentric rings in the diagram represent three elements: the student, the program, and the context. It is important to note that an element of alternative programming as uncovered by the research is flexibility and the unique nature of each individual student and their needs must be considered in relation to this model.



Figure 1. The concentric planning model of alternative programming.

The Concentric Planning Model of Alternative Programming

The concentric planning model is meant to encompass the broad spectrum of alternative programming. The concentric rings interact with one another, working from the centre outward. The first ring is dependent upon the second ring, and the second dependent upon the first. That is, the rings share a symbiotic relationship. The three rings move in both directions, meaning that each element depends upon the others. An example would be that recognition creates a feeling of success and achievement, while achievement leads to recognition. The elements that appear to depend on one another share a concentric ring.

The Student

The student is the focal point of the diagram and is therefore located in the central zone of the concentric ring. Unique student needs are the central focus of alternative programming. Imperative individual needs are basic needs that are central to a student's functioning. These imperative needs are comprised of the social and academic skill sets. The academic skill set of a student, regardless of the program, is the basic understanding of fundamental steps to the learning process, the development of ideas and follow-through of processes, the earning of credits, and the stimulation that keeps students interested in learning. The social skill set is comprised of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, including self-management and communication skills.

Alternative programs must meet a student's basic needs before progression and success can be experienced. The heading of basic needs shares a concentric ring with the heading of capacity for learning. In order to experience

the benefits of the program and for the student to grow and develop academically and socially, students must possess the cognitive ability to make use of the social and academic strategies that are taught in alternative programming. The student's capacity for learning must match the requirements of the program. The suitability of the program for a particular student must be assessed and identified by those who know the students best (teachers, parents or guardians, and involved specialists).

The Program

This heading is comprised of elements that the program must provide for an alternative program to be effective. Providing an environment that is safe and in which strong and trusting relationships can be built between students and staff is essential. The safety created by an accepting and trusting environment helps to develop community, and conversely this sense of community cultivates safety. Both community and safety are created through communication and interaction, producing in the students a comfort level with themselves, their environment, and their achievements.

The second section of the ring is comprised of the element recognition and success. Recognition of student achievement is essential to a student's feelings of success. The encouragement and support created through recognizing achievement in many different areas within the programs allows students to develop strengths and interests.

The Context

The last concentric ring represents the context. The elements included in this ring are the flow of information, location, and administrative and teacher support. Location refers to the physical location of the alternative program. The environment must support the kind of alternative program that is being offered. An example of this is that a program for students who have difficulty with the structure of school may best be run in a setting that is isolated from the school site. Location requires the careful consideration of the student needs for which a program is created.

Teacher support refers to the motivation of the teachers involved in alternative programming to exert effort into the running of the program. This requires the continual cycle of identification, intervention, and assessment of individual students as an indication of a student's success in the program.

Support of administration refers to the backing that alternative programs receive from program coordinators and administrators. This is demonstrated through the administration understanding the philosophy and supporting the goals of the program, both financially and philosophically, in terms of scheduling, prioritizing, and communicating.

Flow of information refers to the communication of information that occurs among students, teachers, parents and guardians, and administrators. This is the transfer of resources as well as communication in the team problem-solving aspect of meeting student needs.

Summary of Results of Inductive Analysis

The Concentric Planning Model is an integration of the inductive and deductive analysis and is used to show elements of effective alternative planning. This model highlights the interrelatedness of the individual student, the alternative program, and the larger context of which the program is a part. These elements are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five. The discussion and implication sections highlight background to the Concentric Planning Model, as well as examine how elements of the model contribute to the knowledge base of alternative programming. The effects of the elements incorporated in the model have a much broader social and educational effect and are examined in Chapter Five. Finally, the effect of the Concentric Planning Model on the larger context of regular secondary school programming is examined, as well as the model's effect on society and the individuals that function within it.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Students come to school with different needs, and the needs of some students are exceptional. In mainstream secondary education, the process of how exceptional needs are met has always been a dilemma. The practices uncovered in this chapter provide a summary of the study, a discussion, interpretations of the research, as well as implications for theory, practice, and future research.

Summary

The study began with the exploration of alternative programming in secondary schools in a public board of education in the southern Ontario region. The purpose of the study was to examine best practices in sites that employed alternative programs. Two sites were chosen that represented diverse ends of the alternative programming continuum for the purpose of drawing similarities of best practice in both sites.

This study was thought to be important for two reasons. First, the literature indicated a discrepancy in the evaluation of the effectiveness of the program. This was found in the debate over evaluation of the program or of the individual. Second, alternative programming in this province has been, and still is, an ambiguous term, in spite of a recent move to dissipate the discrepancies in the identification and entitlement of specialized programming for students who have needs that are not being met by a regular program. The Education Act 181/91 attempts to clearly state the processes of identification and intervention for students in need of alternative programming, yet it often remains a grey area.

Alternative programming in general is underresearched, as demonstrated by the lack of literature resources in the area of alternative education.

The purpose of this study was to understand best practices within alternative programming. The specific elements of effective alternative programming were researched and incorporated in a functioning model designed to indicate the effective organisation of these elements to meet the needs of students.

To research best practice and effective elements of alternative programming, a qualitative case study approach was used. Two sites were selected for the following reasons: The programs were based on choice, employed alternative teaching and learning strategies, were run as a classroom and not as a specific class in the day, and were constructed to meet many different needs. The two chosen sites included a gifted program and a behavior program

The participants were selected based on their desire and ability to describe and discuss perceived effectiveness of alternative programming. The participants were divided into three groups: students, teachers / on-site staff, and program administrators.

Data were generated through the use of three methods to create triangulation of the data. These included the literature and documentation concerning the program, participant observation, and formal and informal interviews and / or questionnaires with students, teachers / on-site staff, and program administrators.

The data analysis began deductively, which included the answering of five questions using the information generated from the data collection methods. The questions posed were as follows:

1. What needs do the programs purport to meet?
2. What needs do teachers, students, and administrators perceive to be met by the program?
3. What experiences do students receive in their alternative program?
4. What needs do students perceive as not being met? What reasons do students attribute to the lack of need satisfaction?
5. How do stakeholders (students, teachers/ on-site staff, and program administrators) rate the success of the program?

For each question, a data display was created (see Appendix G). The data were divided using the four needs identified in the literature. These included social, emotional, career, and academic needs. Further categories were identified as important once coding was under way. These added categories included future needs, survival needs, and basic needs. The data were drawn from all methods of data collection. The purpose of the coding was to draw out themes in each case study site that demonstrated effective alternative programming. In the gifted program the themes included (a) the commitment and motivation of teachers, and (b) the support of administration. In the behavior program the themes included (c) the importance of location, and (d) the flow of information and communication.

In the gifted program, it was clear that the teachers were involved in activities that involved added responsibilities and extra paper work. This was evident through observation of everyday events, particularly special events, such as trips and awards ceremonies. The program literature supported that the teachers would produce individual assessments and provide many mentoring opportunities for students, indicating the extra workload that the gifted program teachers took on. The students and program administrators also mentioned several interviews the extra effort and motivation of the teachers involved.

The students, teachers, and the program administrators cited the support of administration as being important and central to the functioning of the gifted program. The teachers and program administrators voiced their opinion of the importance of the administrators in elements such as making allowances for the program in terms of timetables and scheduling. They explained in interviews that this support helped accommodate the special needs of the program, such as the extra planning time and paper work. Students and teachers noted the support of administration in their recognition of the loss of activities due to a teachers' strike, which had compromised the running of the program. Due to the many changes caused by the political strike administration could no longer make these special allowances for the gifted program. Teachers explained that without the support of the administration it was difficult to effectively run the gifted program.

In the behavior program, all three participant groups voiced the importance of location. It was evident through observation, informal interviews, and questionnaires that the location from which the program was run was a

concern for all participants. The students and program administrators voiced concerns about the poor condition of the building and the volatile location in the downtown where the program was situated. Program administrators and teachers noted this as a potential danger and discomfort to the involved students and parents. The teachers and administrators noted the importance of being at a separate location away from the school. They explained that this was often a benefit as the actual physical school was a source of anxiety for many of the participating students. Several of the participants also indicated that the separate environment could be isolating and that it had an effect on communication with other schools, agencies, and parents.

The flow of information and communication in the behavior program was central to the success of students. All participant groups spoke about the importance of effective communication. The program documents and observations uncovered this as essential to the success of the program. The communication among the staff and between the staff and students was the central issue. The teachers, on-site staff, and program administrators also noted communication between the students and their parents and between the parents and the program staff as important. Several on-site staff noted this as being important for progress to occur in the behavior of the student. Program administrators and on-site staff and teachers explained the importance of communication and the flow of information with the community. Specifically this referred to the communication concerning students with other involved agencies, administrators, and the schools that the students were being sent from or

going to. This communication referred to the importance of understanding a student's background through the transfer of information from the behavior program to other agencies, individuals, and institutions involved with the student.

Once this deductive analysis was completed, it became evident that a second inductive coding was necessary. This was evident in the similar themes that were arising out of both sites. This second coding was a cross-case, inductive analysis designed to draw out further themes of effective alternative programming that were similar across the two sites. The data were grouped under thematic categories through the use of triangulation of the information collected. These themes included

1. Programming based on the individual
2. Recognition of student achievement
3. The importance of safety and community in the program
4. The importance of interpersonal capacity
5. Basic needs must be met first
6. The importance of matching student capacity and program expectation.

Across both sites, programming based on the individual was cited as important to the success of the student. In the sites, all three participant groups indicated that the flexibility of the program and the ability of teachers and on-site staff to individualize programs that allowed for differences were of central importance. Students appreciated the flexibility, while teachers and on-site staff recognized the importance of varying programs to meet individual needs.

Recognition of student achievement was another theme that arose as important. Recognition in both programs occurred in many forms, both informal and formal. Informal support was often in the form of positive encouragement and support, and formal recognition was given to students through ceremonies and awards. Teachers and program administrators spoke unanimously about the importance of setting goals in ways that students could be successful and then reward the students consistently for good results. In both sites, students reacted positively to the rewards systems set in place, indicating that recognition of achievement was central to the success of the students and program.

The importance of safety and community in each program presented itself as a key theme. In both programs, the students noted that they enjoyed the atmosphere created in the programs and had met and enjoyed being with the other students and staff involved in the program. Program administrators, teachers, and on-site staff noted the importance of the students feeling safe and comfortable in their environment and that the students involved in these programs were often students who had difficulties socializing, particularly when they first entered the programs. Once they found an environment where they were comfortable and safe, the students were able to develop their social skills and build a network of friends.

The importance of the interpersonal capacity of the student was a recurrent theme in both programs. Interpersonal capacity referred to the development of communication and behavior skills in an individual. Program administrators, teachers, and on-site staff in both programs cited that the students involved in the

programs were often lacking in social skills and had little experience working in groups and participating in positive forms of communication. These groups agreed that the development of the whole student was essential to the student's and the program's success. They emphasized the social development that encouraged the students to understand themselves. These skills were fostered in both environments with the program's emphasis on group work, cooperative learning, and decision making and giving the students the life experiences they required to become rounded individuals. These experiences were often in the form of trips, guest speakers, and special activities.

The importance of basic needs being met first in both programs also arose as an important theme. Although these basic needs may be different in each program, it was essential that these were addressed first. These basic needs could be the need for food and shelter and basic survival skills such as cooking, or they could also be academic and social skill sets. Regardless of what they were, basic needs were needs that the students required to experience achievement and success. In both programs, the need for stimulation, academically and socially, was presented as being a basic and important need by all participant groups.

The final theme was the importance of matching student capacity with program expectation. This was essential to the achievement of the student in both the gifted and behavior programs. Both programs required a certain level of academic and social intelligence. Program administrators from both sites agreed that if a student could not function at a certain level they would be unable to learn the coping strategies that the programs were aiming to develop. It would be

counterproductive if a student did not have the capacity to learn the skills being taught in both programs.

Based on both the deductive and inductive themes, the Concentric Planning Model of Alternative Programming was developed. This model represented the findings of the research completed for this study. The model was created to aid educators in meeting individual student needs in alternative programming.

The model integrated the deductive findings of the individual programs with the inductive themes that were present in both programs. These themes were organized with the three major categories in mind. These included the student, the program, and the context.

The student category refers to the students in need of alternative program as demonstrated through their inability to succeed in regular programming. The category included the basic needs of the student, and the social, emotional and academic needs that make up each student. This category also refers to the students' ability to learn from the program. This included their academic and social aptitude. The student category also referred to the special events and the qualities fostered by the program environment in the student.

The program category refers to the alternative program. This included all programs that employ alternative programming strategies, the criteria for which can be found in Chapter One. Program refers to the elements fostered by the program: success and recognition, safety, and a sense of community.

The context category refers to the organizing forces of the alternative program including the teachers, on-site staff, program administrators, other schools and agencies, students' homes and parents, the law, government legislation, and the internal and external forces that have an impact on the running of the program. The context also refers to the ongoing process of identification, intervention, and assessment of students in need of alternative programming.

The findings of the research indicated that these three categories functioned in relation to one another. In other words, one element, either student, program, or context, could not work independently. This is indicated in the rings shown in the Concentric Planning Model of Alternative Programming. The three large rings represent the three categories of the student, the program, and the context. Within each of the rings, the themes identified through the deductive and inductive research were imbedded. Where the theme was placed, within the student, program, or context ring, depended upon where the themes were most active. The model indicates the mutuality of the themes. Although each of the themes has found a place on a particular ring, they all rely on and interact with one another in a constant cycle. Teacher observation has an integral position in the model. This is due to the importance of identification in this interrelated ring of alternative programming. That is, for alternative programming to be effective, the student must first be identified as in need of an alternative program.

Discussion

The themes generated by the inductive analysis of the data indicated that similarities exist across the alternative programming continuum. However, there

are educational specialists who disagree with the idea that such similarities exist or that students of programs diverse in nature share similarities (e.g., Salvia & Yssledyke, 1985). Some individuals uphold a philosophy that views each element of alternative programming as diverse in nature. An example of this kind of individualistic philosophy can be seen in the work of Marchesi (1998), who advocated that each program should be evaluated through the examination of the program as opposed to the individual. Marchesi also proposed that when the individual is assessed, the program should not be assessed. Instead, the focus is to be on the student and in the form of an external assessment. This kind of theory represents an opposite to the ideas that the Concentric Planning Model introduces, which is an approach that is based on the communication of all elements including the student and the program and, most important an assessment that aids in the creation of effective alternative programming. In other words, the similarities from the data indicated the need for a concentric model to demonstrate guidelines for effective alternative programming. This model does not completely discount Marchesi's views. His premise that programming must be based on the individual is reflected in the idea that, regardless of the academic or social ability of the student, the program must be tailored by teachers to meet individual needs.

A similar individualistic approach focuses on the idea that only an alternative program can serve students with distinct needs. For example, Robinson (as cited in Roberts & Clifton, 1995) indicated the negative aspects of combining gifted students in mainstream programs. She explained that it was exploitation to deny gifted students separate and specialized programming (p. 192). Her position

is called into question by the Concentric Planning Model's indication of similar needs of students in gifted and behavioral alternative programs. Roberts and Clifton (1995), who agree with Robinson, argue that the school system or any general context could not support the differences between such groups of students. The following passages state clearly their position on difference and diversity in mainstream education:

Like all bureaucracies, schools function most efficiently when they are dealing in standard units. Schools are organized to deal with units called "students"; therefore, we should expect those schools would be best equipped to deal with "typical" students. It makes sense for schools to be organized this way because, as bureaucracies, their focus must be restricted and they maximize benefits when they focus on the largest groups (i.e., "typical" students) (p. 190).

Since most schools are organized on bureaucratic principles, we should expect students who are "exceptional" to create problems for school systems (p.191).

This kind of thinking represents an opposite to the conclusions of the Concentric Planning Model, which proposes the ability of all education and all environments to meet the needs of individuals, given appropriate programming.

There is an order inherent in the themes and categories represented by the concentric rings of the Concentric Planning Model. The order is indicated by how near the elements are placed to the student, who is the center and focus of the model. This concept of ordering needs is refuted by O'Sullivan (1999, p. 240),

whose account of human needs includes the idea that needs should not be hierarchically organized. The Concentric Planning Model supports his ideas of the interactivity and interrelatedness, of needs, but he holds that they cannot be ordered. By contrast, the Concentric Planning Model indicates that there are certain needs which must first be met before other needs can be satisfied. This indicates an inherent order. In the model, the first set of elements addresses the student, and basic social and academic needs must be met first in all alternative programming as a student cannot function until these are met. Next is a student's capacity for learning. If a student is not processing information at a capacity that allows the student to comprehend and apply the strategies being taught, the student cannot succeed using these strategies. The model demonstrates that in alternative programs, a student who does not possess the cognitive ability cannot produce successful experiences. Once these basic needs of the student element are addressed, student need for a social group and feeling a sense of community can be addressed, as indicated by the placement of the themes on the rings in the model. The order found in the model is consistent with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, a theory that has a long-standing history in psychology and educational circles. (as cited in Microsoft Encarta, 2000)

The Concentric Planning Model demonstrates that identification is an ongoing process in alternative programming that starts with the individuals and their basic needs. These basic needs consist of social skills and affective development, academic support skills, vocational skill development, career awareness, and independent living/self-management skills, and are condensed

under the two headings of academic and social needs in DeBettencourt, (1992) explanation. Identification of these elements is an ongoing process that infiltrates all aspects of the model. Literature largely supports this ongoing process as being most effective when needs are identified at the earliest point through teacher observation. This is supported in the new Ontario curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1999 a), and identification is most successfully carried out through the continual process of intervention and assessment (British Columbia Ministry of Education and Training, 1996). This begs the question of how to go about the process of identification. Larson and Maag (1998) support research for many kinds of testing, including the use of instruments such as interviews, direct observation, and developing a hypothesis. The hypothesis is integral in the planning of intervention strategies for students that allows the teacher to look at the program as an evolving process, aiding in the construction and continual reevaluation of a student's program. In the Concentric Planning Model the hypothesis is created once the student is identified as having areas that have potential for development and the subsequent action that is taken to develop skill sets. The action taken encompasses the three interrelated categories: the student, the program, and the context. This is accomplished in dialogue with the student, the teacher, the parents, and specialists. Each hypothesis must be individual and viewed in relation to a constant cycle of identification, intervention, and attainment.

There are fartherreaching implications of this model. The similarities shared by the two diverse programs and the communication of elements within

the model indicate that, although these programs were created for different types of students, the needs that they are meeting are similar. The model demonstrates that alternative programs serve students with more similarities than differences. The implications of this may be that alternative education could move to more diverse needs groups. It also has consequences for streaming and segregating. The model of concentric alternative planning could move specialized alternative education into purely alternative education to meet diverse needs. The research completed to create the model indicates that it is not how or where the program meets the specific needs of the students it was designed for, but rather how any program through a process of identification, intervention, and attainment meets the needs of any student. A further implication is that this model can represent every classroom. This kind of program could be in place for all students that are part of the education system. Gardner (1999) argues that individuals learn and process in different ways, and the Concentric Planning Model represents an approach to education that meets individual needs. It is possible that any program interested in meeting individual needs can realize student achievement and success, regardless of the “needs” that the students bring to the classroom.

An additional implication of the Concentric Planning Model is rethinking the notion of needs. O’Sullivan (1999) clearly states that individuals’ needs are changing as a reaction to a changing world. He believes that the reason for these changes is the necessity of changing to survive in a dynamic world. O’Sullivan views the attainment of needs in relation to the quality of life an individual is capable of achieving. He supported that needs must be viewed in relation to one

another and cannot be organized hierarchically. To fully examine the notion of needs Maslow's theories of need must be examined.

Maslow's theory is similar to O'Sullivan's in his explanation of needs as behaviors produced through individual's attempts to satisfy needs. Maslow supported the idea that the fulfilment of needs is the attempt to fulfil human potential. Maslow referred to this as "self-actualisation"(as cited in Microsoft Encarta, 2000). Contrary to O'Sullivan's theory, Maslow proposes a hierarchy of needs, supporting that primary and basic needs such as food, water, and oxygen must be met first and followed by secondary social needs. He proposes six levels of needs.

The Concentric Planning Model of Alternative Programming presents an alternative to Maslow's and O'Sullivan's notions of needs. Both theories speak in terms of deficits. Needs are viewed as unmet entities that humans strive to achieve to realize success. The Concentric Planning Model presents needs as areas in which there is capacity for development. The model proposes the reconstruction of the notion of need. Each concentric ring presents an area that has the capability of being developed in individuals if these areas are identified and strategies are discussed and applied. The Concentric Planning Model shares some similarities with the theories of Maslow and O'Sullivan. The meeting of needs is accomplished in an order similar to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Basic needs must be addressed first for the individual to be able to recognize social needs, such as community and safety. In the Concentric Planning Model, needs are examined in relation to one another, similar to O'Sullivan's ideas of the

importance of understanding the interdependence of needs. Where the theories diverge is in the notion that the Concentric Planning Model views needs as possibilities rather than areas of neglect. The Concentric Planning Model builds on O'Sullivan's ideas by viewing human needs as the authentic elements in life that promote growth and health and that are necessary for individuals to achieve and maintain quality of life. O'Sullivan also acknowledges those needs that have a political purpose and social agenda. I acknowledge in this study that these needs do exist, but have not incorporated these inauthentic needs into the Concentric Planning Model. The model deals with the authentic needs that present possibilities to individual, across many environments.

The results of this study and the creation of the Concentric Planning Model can also be taken out of the context of education. In every environment of which an individual is a part (the family, the work place, the community, being a citizen of a country), they have certain characteristics that enable them to function within these environments and experience achievement and success or to be less functional and to experience inadequacy and failure. The model suggests some ways in which the nonfunctioning people can attain sufficient need satisfaction to become more functional.

Basic needs must be met first for family members, employers, community members, and citizens. These may include food, water, clothing, shelter, and companionship. Second, all members of society need to feel a sense of community. O'Sullivan (1999) supports this idea: "The need for a sense of community and place are particularly wanting in our culture" (p. 244). This

indicates that there is a need at the societal level to feel that one has an affiliation to a group, but in many cases this need is left unmet. Next, interpersonal capacity must be addressed in all areas of an individual's life. Certain social skills are required to function in society: A businessperson does not wear cut-offs to work, and a political leader addresses citizens with respect. Finally, in whatever role people assume, social skills begin with the understanding of one's self.

Individuals need and want to be recognized; a parent wants to be rewarded by raising a healthy, balanced son or daughter; a writer wants to be acknowledged for an excellent piece of writing. Most important, people do not appreciate neutrality; they want to know that their role in the family is individual and special. No one desires to think of themselves as extinguishable or replaceable. This addresses the need for attention to the individual in all areas.

In short, the themes found in the study are not only applicable to students' alternative programming but can also be applied to teachers in schools, principals in boards, boards in provincial education, education in federal government, and individuals in families, jobs, and communities. O'Sullivan (1999) supports this idea that needs are similar across many groups: "Fundamental human needs are the same in all cultures and in all historic periods" (p. 241). The Concentric Planning Model requires the examination of the individual in their environment. It is necessary to see individuals as unique entities who have needs that, although they may be categorizable, they are not definitive, and they are always in flux. The constant identification, intervention, and assessment of needs and need attainment are necessary to members of society.

It is important to recognize the larger implications of programming for individual needs. For example, when the relationship is drawn between the elements of this model and need attainment in many aspects of society, it is evident that education has a large impact on the societal context. Gallagher (1995, p. 1), for example, makes the point that society and culture are changing; that Canada's economic, social, and cultural realities are new; and that education and training must be offered in new ways. Leach (cited in Gallagher, 1995) points out that the needs of children are changing, often for the worse: "Canadians are told that 4 out of 10 children now come to school damaged in some way as human beings" (p. 13). The Concentric Planning Model can be used as a diving board to look closely at individual needs. If education is meant to foster healthy, responsible community members, then educational programs based on the Concentric Planning Model of Alternative Programming could aid in the development of individuals whose needs were previously unmet. These individuals can experience success in many contexts if a process of meeting needs is followed. O'Sullivan (1999) supports this notion of education as central to the development and preparation of functioning individuals: "Educational institutions at all levels must play a pivotal role in fostering a community's sense of place" (p. 245). Gallagher (1995) also supports the relationship between school and the community: "New forms of collaboration between school and the community become absolutely essential in a society committed more to learning than to education" (p. 22). It is essential that practitioners of education recognize the influence that education has on the functioning of society. Education is

preparation for young people to be active and engaged members of society, but education must also foster a sense of well-being in individuals. A person cannot learn if basic fundamental needs are left unmet, and it is the responsibility of educators to identify these needs and to help individuals realize their potential.

Implications for Practice

Based on the research completed for this study and the Concentric Planning Model of alternative Programming, intervention, which is built upon the process of continual identification, is created largely through communication and research into the history of a student. The model demonstrates that teacher identification of students exhibiting the need for alternative programming is paramount in the process of meeting individual needs. This need is demonstrated through behavior. Winzer (1999) supports this notion of behavior as an indicator of skill sets in need of development. In Winzer's research, the following list was used to represent the behaviors that teachers should be aware of as indicators that a student may be in need of alternative programming:

1. Student demonstrates inappropriate behavior.
2. Student shows inability to socialize with other students, teachers, and staff.
3. Expresses frustration and anxiety.
4. Shows an inability to manage anger and aggression.
5. Demonstrates antisocial tendencies.
6. Demonstrates difficulty with academic requirements due to the proceeding distractions.

This list indicates that identification is based upon the student's knowledge, skill sets, and attitudes. The model created in this study supports the notion that teacher's practice must be in dialogue with the student. That is, teachers and education practitioners must become aware of these behavioral indicators.

Teachers choosing an intervention strategy must understand that the students need and want to feel responsible for their success and achievement (Westwood, 1997). This encourages them to manage their own actions and to take a role in their own success. It is important for teachers and specialists to choose an intervention strategy that takes into account the entire student. Winzer (1999) refers to this as a holistic model that looks at all elements of the student that combine to create the individual and the experience. This also implies that the inclusion of parents in the process of intervention is integral to the successful use of alternative programming strategies. This is part of the flow of information and communication that is essential to the success of the student. This communication creates interventions that support the student in many facets, through the home and through the repetition of reinforcement from and in many areas of the student's life.

The teacher remains a central intervention tool. Despite the many diagnostic testing instruments available, the model referred to in this study positions the teacher as observer and identifier. The teacher is responsible for the identification, intervention, and assessment and she or he must be proficient at creating strategies and devising a plan, in communication with the student. The strategies that the teacher uses must take into account student differences and

constant assessment of progress. The findings of this research study indicate that the process of meeting the student's needs are entirely dependent upon the observation of what and how a student is doing and upon the subsequent motivation of the teachers to intervene to meet the needs of the student. This may be in the form of personally beginning a process of intervention, referring the students to specialists to aid them, or placing the students in a specialized program.

This model supports the process that the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training (1999 a) proposes whereby teachers who identify an at-risk student must notify principals, who then contact the board. The students then should receive specialized programming within the classroom or through specialized alternative programming. It is important to note that the students need not be formally labeled as special needs, but that compensation must be made for students who require alternative learning strategies. The principal and specialists in the school must decide whether the student's program is to be modified within the classroom or in a separate program. This process is dependent upon the commitment of teachers to identifying students in need of alternative programming.

The practice of training teachers to be aware of the behaviors that indicate a student is in need of alternative programming is essential. This, however, is an area that is not mandatory in Ontario and is an area of underdevelopment. It is possible for this training to take place in teacher training or in credit courses that are required to entitle a teacher to full qualification. At the present time, it is

dependent upon the interests of mainstream regular education teachers to become versed in teaching and learning strategies to meet individual needs. The Concentric Planning Model implies that this is not sufficient; instead, administrators, school boards, and faculties of education should institute a comprehensive and ongoing program of professional development in this area for all teachers.

The assessment process is located on the periphery of the model, and internal assessment is proposed as a method of monitoring success. Students and parents need to be involved in the assessment process and to be a part of the decision as to how students are to be assessed. The research completed in this study indicated that the students in alternative programs often needed the reinforcement and encouragement from home to attend the program. This implies the need for parents to be deeply involved in the education of their children. An involved parent has the ability to offer incentives in the form of recognition and rewards, but uninvolved parents may not be able to recognize and support their children in the alternative program. The other importance of parents' and guardians' involvement centered on the issue that alternative programs are effective only during school hours. Parents are needed to help reinforce the skills being taught in the programs. The model indicates this integrated approach in the use of interrelated concentric rings that embed the influence of inside and outside forces.

The data generated in this study imply that the teachers of alternative programs must work to create an experience for the student that encompasses

many different skills. Winzer (1999) refers to this as a holistic approach. This is an approach that gives students experiences in many different areas, such as academic social, career, future, and survival needs. Winzer argues that programming should focus on life experience to help create well-rounded individuals who can solve problems, make decisions, and communicate.

Teachers need to feel free from conforming to models or particular uses of strategies. Strategies must be varied and modified to meet individual needs. Reflective teachers must be committed to the constant cycle of identification, intervention, and assessment. Communication should be emphasized among students, parents and guardians, teachers, specialists, and schools. Decisions regarding individual teaching and learning strategy for each student are to be made through the careful guidance of the teacher (Bowyer, 1993). Programs should be concerned first with a student's emotional and social well-being, regardless of the program's specific purpose.

Implications for Theory

When I began to investigate the topic of alternative education, I found that there was difficulty in defining what constituted alternative education. The term alternative was ambiguous, and I found that public boards did not label their programs as alternative. I also discovered that there was discrepancy in what assessment of alternative programming referred to. For example, some literature advocated external assessment of the program and some literature supported the internal assessment of the student. One reason for these perplexities was that the study was conducted during a period of educational downsizing which had

created fewer options for students. A further reason was that the terminology was shifting from alternative education or programs to, for example, an alternative package.

The research for this study indicated that these ambiguities need not be puzzling if a process of identification, intervention, and assessment is followed in every classroom. Furthermore, the process of identification, intervention, and assessment should be focused on internal assessment of the student as well as on external assessment of all the elements of the program. The model proposes this process to dissipate many of the ambiguities.

The theoretical implications of the study include a clear delineation of the interrelation of several elements of alternative programming, as demonstrated in the Concentric Planning Model. The model also demonstrates that students have the capacity to become more involved in their own evaluation and assessment. Regardless of the program, social and emotional needs must be addressed before the student can begin to acquire the skills being taught in any alternative program.

Implications for Future Research

Upon the completion of this study and the creation of the Concentric Planning Model, several issues presented themselves as areas that could be developed, discussed, questioned, and researched. Three major areas in need of future study include assessment procedures, notions of multiple intelligences, and reflective practices of teachers.

Assessment in education must be seen as opportunity not only for the evaluation of the effectiveness of student programs but as an opportunity for

achievement and reward. Gardner (1999) supports this notion of assessment as a positive activity that engages a student in stimulating problem solving. Gardner proposes that students should be introduced to assessments early and as a regular part of education. He speaks about students joining in the process of self-regulation as a form of assessment (p. 38). Assessment is an area that requires continual modification for each student. It is an indicator of progress and success and should not be viewed as a stressful or unpleasant aspect of education. Research is needed into the many ways that students and teachers can use the results of assessment to modify instruction and to improve students' academic performance.

Multiple intelligences is an area that Gardner has developed over a number of years. Inevitably, when examining alternative teaching and learning strategies, the topic of multiple intelligences must be discussed. Teachers and education practitioners must look at individual learning needs. As responsible educators, the concept of developing, accessing, and addressing individual learning styles and needs must be addressed. Chapman (1995) has taken Gardner's theories of multiple intelligences to specific strategies. She examines cultural differences, and lesson examples for targeting intelligences, in an attempt to understand how multiple intelligences applies to education. It is essential that this area continue to be researched in the way that Chapman began. The requirement of constant assessment of learning skills and needs that are addressed by the multiple intelligences theory was made clear in Gardner's (1999) most recent

book, which identified yet another new intelligence, indicating that there is a need for educators to constantly ponder the question of multiple intelligences.

The reflective practice of educators is an area that must be given attention in research and practice. To understand what improvements, and modification, changes, and repetitions need to take place, teachers must reflect upon experiences they have inside and outside their classrooms. The following is a list derived by Brubacher, Case, and Reagan (1994, pp. 21-22) of elements that are indicative of the effective reflective education practitioner. Brubacher's original list has been modified by the results of this research study to generate the following criteria for reflective teachers:

- content knowledge of their subjects;
- strategies of classroom management and organization;
- professional understanding;
- knowledge of learning characteristics to aid in employing multiple intelligence techniques;
- knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values;
- curriculum knowledge; and
- commitment to personal research and learning (p.21-22).

It is important to note that a more diversified and intensive teacher training certification course that trains all teachers in effective identification intervention and assessment strategies will aid classroom teachers in the reflective practices that are integral in the identification and intervention of meeting students' needs.

However research is needed into the ways in which to create, support, and maintain reflection in teachers' daily practice.

Research completed for this study indicated that constant reflection on identification, intervention, and assessment procedures was necessary to meet individual needs in alternative education. For this reason, it will be an area that is perpetually in need of further research:

The following questions were identified as questions for further investigation:

1. What are the differences between alternative education and mainstream education?
2. How might teachers meet the needs of students in regular classrooms?
3. How might alternative forms of education be offered in every school?
4. How might the terms identification, intervention, and assessment be redefined?
5. What is the role of the parent or guardian in alternative programming?
6. How does the involvement of the parent or guardian in a student's education affect student success or failure?

Conclusion

In spite of the diversity of the two sites, I found commonalities in alternative programming. I discovered that students' basic needs were similar across programs and that teacher identification of these needs was fundamental to the intervention process through alternative programming strategies. I found it important for teachers and specialists to vary strategies to meet individual needs.

Identification of missing skill sets and intervening strategies were essential for attainment of these missing skills and for meeting student needs. Intervention and attainment of skills were developed through communication among programs, students, teachers, parents, and program administrators and are essential for success. The use of continual hypothesis testing, in the form of reflective practice of the educator and the student, was also necessary, as individual needs are never “fixed” but continue to be an inherent aspect of the human condition.

This study was meant to aid in the development of a hypothesis for students identified as exceptional. The hypothesis represents the strategies chosen for intervention for the student requiring alternative forms of education. These strategies are to be developed out of the communication between the educator, the student, and the parents. This helps the student to feel a sense of responsibility and self-management, and it creates a form of triangulation of support and consistency for the student in need. These strategies must be varied and constantly reassessed by the student and the educator through positive forms of assessment. This requires contemplative reflection. It is important to note that the research conducted and the model created can represent all teaching and learning in the secondary school system. This research and the model created need not be tied only to alternative education but can be also applied to mainstream education. For this to occur, the commitment of the educator to the identification, intervention, and assessment of all students is completely necessary. This requires education, commitment to self-improvement, constant reevaluation, and reflective procedures. For this to occur, it is essential for all involved in education to view

students as individuals requiring unique programs. At the core of the results of this study is the necessity of caring reflective educators to take on the responsibility of helping young people develop all facets of their lives to become responsible, productive, functioning individuals who feel that they have an important role in and connection to society.

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Appendix A
Program Documents

Categories for examining program documents:

1. Rationale
2. Philosophy
3. Objectives
4. Admission criteria
5. Structure of curriculum
- 6 a. Structure of program
 - b. how many students
 - c. how many teachers
7. Needs Identified: How are needs identified? What are the needs? What methods are they identified through?
8. Assessment of success and evaluation of students

Appendix B
Observation Checklist

Participants

Setting

Events and Activities

Communication

Dialogue

Gestures

Needs Being Addressed

Observer's Analytical

Comments

Appendix C
Student Interview Guide

1. What is your educational background?
2. How did you become a part of the program?
3. How satisfied are you with the program? Why do you feel this way?
4. What are your academic goals? Were your goals different before you entered the program?
5. Is the program challenging and interesting to you? Why do you say this?
6. Does this program allow you to follow your personal interests?
7. Do you feel you have the support of your fellow students and teachers?
8. Do you feel you can talk to fellow students and teachers in the program about personal problems?
9. What do you want to do in the future? Does the program help you with these plans?

Appendix D
Teacher Interview Guide

- 1 a. What is your educational background?
- b. What is your teaching experience, levels, areas, and programs?
2. How did you become involved in this alternative program?
- 3 a. Do you view your job as any different from that of a regular classroom teacher?
- b. Why do you say so?
4. What are your future teaching plans?
5. What is your role in the planning of this program?
6. Do you feel this program is supported by your school and school board? Why do you say so?
7. How are the following needs of students met or not met by this program in your opinion:
 - a. academic needs
 - b. social needs
 - c. emotional needs
 - d. career needs
8. What improvements would you suggest for the program?
9. Do you feel the students are satisfied with and benefit from the program?
10. What experiences are the students receiving here that they would not receive in a regular classroom?
11. To what extent is this program necessary?

Appendix E
Program Administrator Interview Guide

1. What is your educational background?
2. What is your role in the running of this program?
3. What do you do to support the program?
4. How did this program evolve?
5. What are the important elements that make this program succeed?
6. What do you think is the main objective of the program? To what extent do you think the program meets that objective?
7. Does the rest of the school, the school board, and the ministry support this program?
8. How do you feel that the following needs are met by the program:
 - a. academic needs
 - b. social needs
 - c. emotional needs
 - d. career needs
9. If you could improve the program how would you do so?
10. What are the future plans for this program?
11. What experiences are students receiving in this program that they would not receive in a regular classroom setting?
12. To what extent do you view the program as necessary?

Appendix F
Student Questionnaire

1. How did you become a part of this program?
2. How long have you been involved in this program?
3. Do you feel this program helps you? Please explain your answer?
4. What are some things that you like about the program?
5. What are some things that you don't like about the program?
6. Do you have any suggestions for the program?
7. What do you hope to achieve during your time in the program?
8. What do you want to do after you are finished this program?

Appendix G
Analysis Matrix for Questions

Table 1

Analysis Matrix For Question One

Gifted Program

	Program Documents	Students	Teachers	Program Administrators
Social				
Emotional				
Academic				
Career/ Future				

Behavior Program

	Program Documents	Students	On-Site Staff	Program Administrators
Social				
Emotional				
Behavioral				
<u>Basic Needs</u>				
Survival Needs				
Behavioral Needs				
Academic				
Career/Future				

Table 2

Analysis Matrix For Question TwoGifted Program

	Need Attainment	Barriers to Need Attainment
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Program Documents

Administrators

Teachers

Students

Behavioral Program

	Need Attainment	Barriers to Need Attainment
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Program Documents

Administrators

Teachers

Students

Table 3

Analysis Matrix For Question ThreeGifted Program

	Need Attainment	Barriers to Need Attainment
Program Documents		
Administrators		
Teachers		
Students		

Behavior Program

	Need Attainment	Barriers to Need Attainment
Program Documents		
Administrators		
Teachers		
Students		

Table 4

Analysis Matrix for Question FourGifted Program

	Students	Teachers	Program Administrators
Social			
Emotional			
Academic			
Career			

Behavior Program

	Students	Teachers	Program Administrators
Social			
Emotional			
Academic			
Career			

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