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An Analysis of Secondary School Alternative Programs in Relationship to the Needs of Tumwater High School

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AN ANALYSIS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL ALternative programs
IN relationship to the NEEDS
OF tumwater HIGH SCHOOL

A Project Report
Presented to
The Graduate Faculty
Central Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Education

by
Kathy Fryar-Odegaard
August, 1981
AN ANALYSIS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS
IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE NEEDS
OF TUMWATER HIGH SCHOOL
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This project report presents the development of an alternative education program for Tumwater School District, Tumwater, Washington. The program was examined in four parts: the existent conditions as the program began, the initial organization of the program, development and implementation, and the reorganization and closure of the program.

The recommendations included additional research on the effect of alternative education program's on student achievement.
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INTRODUCTION

During the spring of 1978, the administration of Tumwater High School, Tumwater School District, was engaged in re-examining its attendance policies and their effect on students continuing in school. The need and the opportunity existed to develop an alternative education program for those students who dropped or were forced out of school. This study was begun in the spring of 1978 and continued through the organization of the alternative education program.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study was to develop and implement an alternative education program for those students who could not fulfill the traditional classroom attendance expectations. The thrust of the undertaking was the development of a learning activity package, drop-in based alternative education room. The application of that thrust was in the specific subject areas of English, mathematics, health, science, and social studies.
Importance of Study

The administrative decision of 1978 which tightened the attendance requirements for students at Tumwater High School necessitated the development of an alternative education program for those students who were unable to meet the newly established standards. The study demonstrated the success of an alternative education program when given proper and sufficient developmental support. It further demonstrated the need for the developer to work closely with staff, students, and administration in order to provide the necessary reinforcement to sustain the overall effort toward development and implementation.

Scope of Study

An accounting of the development of a learning activity package, drop-in based alternative education program comprised a major portion of the study. Specifically the study centered on the development and implementation of an alternative education center for students at Tumwater High School. The focus of the study was the developmental design of the program from the spring of 1978 through the spring of 1979.
Delimitations of Study

The delimitations of the study were:

1. A study of student achievement was not included.
2. An examination of specific subject matter content was not included.
3. An examination of the rate of student return to regular school attendance was not included.

Limitation of Study

The limitation of the study was: The development of the alternative education program was restricted administratively from employing program elements usually found in alternative programs in the areas of time, space, and curriculum development.

Methods and Procedures

As this study was developed the following steps were followed:

1. The available literature was analyzed and visits to similar programs were conducted.
2. The needs of the Tumwater High School community were assessed.
3. An initial organizational model was selected and the resources to implement it were assembled.
4. The alternative education program was implemented and revised.
5. The recommendations were based on the study and the related literature.

6. The program was terminated in its second year due to the program's inability to attract potential students.

**Definition of Terms**

**Alternative education center**: A facility usually distinctly separate from other school facilities, which served as the hub of alternative program administration.

**Alternative education program**: The program, developed in Tumwater School District, aimed specifically at drop-outs or potential drop-outs who could not meet the attendance expectations of the regular school program.

**Counter culture**: The socially politically active movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s characterized by an insistence of the rights of the individual, on the one hand, and the repressive nature of the establishment on the other hand.

**Drop-in alternative education room**: A room established at the Tumwater High School for the purpose of receiving and securing the educational needs of drop-out students whose attendance patterns did not conform to the norm.

**I.C.O.P.E.**: The International Commission on Public Education, an international cooperative established for the purpose of examining comparative education.
Learning activity package: A series of self-contained lessons and learning experiences, cumulatively comprising a course of study in usually one subject area.

Traditional school program: The common school experience characterized by required attendance, course credit, time allocations, and place designations. The entire program is designed by the administrative staff.

Trimester: An administrative time designation, usually 60 days in length used to determine the length of a singular course of study and most often implemented to expand the course offerings in a secondary school.

Organization of Study

The project was organized in the following manner: Chapter 1 is an outline of the organization of the project. Chapter 2 is a review of the available literature related to the major elements of the alternative education program. The Chapter was designed to bring the reader to an understanding of the major elements in alternative education as well as the manner in which various program elements combine to sustain alternative education programs once instituted. Chapter 3 is an accounting of the development of an alternative education program in Tumwater High School during the 1978-1979 school year. Chapter 4 is a summary of the study and includes recommendations based on the study.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of the available related literature identified six elements on which the literature focused. While some of the literature concentrated on one of the elements, others discussed each of the following:

1. A comparison of alternative and traditional school programs.
2. An examination of the characteristics of alternative schools.
3. The types of alternative schools.
4. How alternatives were begun.
5. The growth of alternative schools.
6. A review of why alternative school programs have failed.

A knowledge of each of the six elements was important in the development of the project, insofar as the literature identified the nature and characteristics of successful programs, as well as the pitfalls to be avoided.

While traditional and alternative school programs share many common characteristics, they differ in the following six dimensions of learning:

1. Who was involved in the learning process?

Unlike the traditional school, alternative students shared,
to a greater extent, the decision making process that resulted in the development of the curriculum.

2. What was learned? In the alternative school programs the scope of the curriculum was more closely aligned to the specific needs, interests, and desires of the students the program served.

3. Why was it learned? Whereas in the traditional school, it was learned because the staff had determined the learning to be necessary; in the alternative school learning was a function of the relevancy of the instruction based on the student's perception of what was necessary. The perception was most commonly bolstered by the staff counseling.

4. How was it learned? The alternative schools tended to allow the student to make significantly greater choices than the traditional school in determining the scope and nature of learning experience.

5. Where was it learned? Alternative schools, unlike traditional schools, made greater use of the total community resources for learning experiences. Alternative schools did not exhibit the characteristics that nearly all traditional schools did in restricting the place of learning to the school itself.

6. When was the learning taking place? Where traditional schools kept regular hours and assigned students learning experiences in and outside the school
day, the school day was undefined in the alternative setting. The students openly participated in the decision regarding when they would undertake the learning (9:12). In general the traditional programs tended to predetermine the dimensions, whereas the alternative programs tended to allow the learner to interact more freely in determining the dimensions.

According to Conant, the special features of the traditional school were "required attendance, course credit, time allocations, and place designations" (19:89). The entire program is designed by the administrative staff without consulting students. Individual programming is virtually nonexistent, and the students only choose from required courses and schedules or previously determined electives. In addition, the organization is structured in a classical hierarchical bureaucratic fashion (19:90). The structure of the traditional public education program tends to deny students the right of significant choice. While diversity is not necessarily good in and of itself, uniformity is frequently bad. Parents and students alike felt that public schools were supposed to be serving their divergent interests. As such, they expected and even demanded more of the traditional school system (4:11).

One characteristic claimed by all alternative school programs was some sort of departure from the educational status quo. To have an alternative meant
that there was something from which to depart. In the case of alternative schools, the benchmark was conventional schooling (9:11). The National Council on Options in Public Education defined an alternative school as,

any school within a community that provides alternative learning experiences in the conventional school program and that is available, by choice, to every family within its community at no extra cost (10:1).

Although school reorganization was an ongoing issue, the emphasis shifted from efficiency in education to assuring that school did not actually thwart learning (4:12).

The traditional school program did reasonably well what it was designed to do, to provide an educational program aimed at meeting the needs of the majority of its students. It did not do well, however, what it was not designed to do. It did not confront effectively the wide variety of needs of students who are outside the norm. Alternative school programs grew up in response to these students and are a recognition that the traditional school program was not the only answer (4:9).

The most popular practice among alternative school programs was to change the very dimensions of learning from telling students to do what they are told, to offering them and opportunity to do what they want. "The importance of this shift is not to be underestimated, since it transferred authority, or the right to make instructional decisions from the teacher to the student" (9:11).
Robert L. Fizzell, coordinator of the Action Learning Center in Skokie, Illinois, has studied schools and students to determine what influences the average student's progress in school. Fizzell developed profiles for 11 programs serving different social classes in both urban and suburban schools. He studied such things as personal characteristics (self concept, social orientation, social class background); academic characteristics (academic self concept; learning style, interest, time preferences); and external factors (family, peers, legal problems, health). In all, Fizzell identified some 50 variables that related to student success in different programs. Generally, he found students who do well in traditional schools have very average profiles, while those who don't have several characteristics outside the average range. However, one finding was clear, that was that often characteristics associated with success in one school are associated with failure in another (5:15).

According to Paul Abramson, education should be centered on the child. The learning environment should be matched to the child with appropriate materials and methodologies (1:38). It is significant that characteristically alternative school programs departed from the status quo in an attempt to match child and learning environment. Alternative school programs differed in curriculum and instructional practice, in their involvement of staff and students in decision making, in their flexibility and responsiveness to evaluation and planned change, in the extent that they used community resources and facilities, and in their commitment to be more responsive to some community needs (2:2).

Alternative schools recognized that different students may do better in different types of schools. Alternative schools therefore stress variety rather than
uniformity (4:3). The programs demonstrated the organizational ability to create an environment that was conducive to the personal satisfaction of their students.

In the alternative setting the relationship between the individual and the organization extends beyond identification with goals or role . . . the individual becomes personally fulfilled by doing the work of the organization (19:101).

The right to choose to attend an alternative school program was found to be of paramount importance. The alternative school program was a total program that required all or most of a student's educational time. While some programs were established for specific groups of students, none were forced to attend (10:3). "The most basic requirement for an alternative school program is that students or parents choose it" (4:5).

The picture that emerged from the descriptions contained in most of the evaluations and reports was a group of relatively small public alternative schools employing a variety of innovative though not unique techniques, and enrolling students who often had experienced frustration or failure in conventional school settings.

There are few instructional or curricular characteristics of alternative schools that cannot be found in conventional schools. Some alternative schools, however, have a greater concentration of innovations than do these conventional schools (11:465).

Alternative school programs were generally found to be innovative, founded on choice, relatively small, physically separate from the typical large school building,
and administratively independent. They tended to be more community oriented making greater use of non-professionals and more frequently capitalizing on non-school facilities as places to learn. Alternative schools often reflected a more democratic approach to decision making. There was a distinct danger however in an acute application of the decision making mode, in as much as it is cumbersome, slow, and no one may want to take final responsibility for the decision (4:3-50).

The one characteristic shared by all alternative and very few conventional schools is their small size. If alternatives as a group are ever found to produce similar effects on students, this factor may be more important than others (11:466).

The emphasis on relatively small size and a lower pupil teacher ratio appeared repeatedly in conjunction with other enumerated characteristics such as: non-traditional instruction, comparable cost levels, and reduced specialized facilities (10:2).

Fontini set forth six ground rules that he contended legitimized an alternative school program. His contentions were: (1) they had a common set of objectives, (2) they must not be exclusive, (3) they treat all alternatives equally, (4) they allowed for a freedom of choice in selecting alternatives, (5) they carefully evaluated the program, and (6) they should hold their own financially (13).

Characteristically alternative school programs contain a number of different elements and between programs
some differing characteristics. One, however, is universal. They all departed, in some form, from the status quo (9:11).

The departure from the status quo, for alternative school programs, takes a variety of differing forms. Schools without walls, open schools, dropout schools, free schools, career schools, fundamental schools, multicultural/multi-ethnic schools and schools for the gifted/talented were those most often cited as examples (10:2). The largest increase of any alternative school program has been enjoyed by the schools within a school alternative. The most often cited example of schools within a school was the North Hunterdon, New Jersey School System, which employs seventeen such programs accounting for nearly half of the system's enrollment. "Each unit has its own staff and goals and unique identity fostered in part by a specific curriculum focus or approach to instruction" (5:32).

Free schools were frequently cited as emergent examples of alternative school programing. They were most often characterized as private, utilizing the pedagogy of freedom, reflective of parental control and reforming the social order (4:13).

At the forefront of any discussion of alternative education, the Parkway School in Philadelphia was held up as the model for schools without walls.

It is quite possible that the high school in 1980 will not be a place, but rather it will be a growth period.
and a social condition. The student designated as a high school student will have the whole city for a classroom (4:14).

The school without walls was probably the most written and talked about type of alternative school program characterized as saving money and using community resources and talent as the backbone of its curriculum.

The St. Paul, Minnesota Open School was one of the earliest of its type. It opened in 1971 characterized by lottery selection of students and demographic balance. In St. Paul, as elsewhere, the open school approach to alternative school programming emphasized a non-competitive and a highly individualized instructional approach. Open schools stressed learning opportunity not architectural style. In spite of their emphasis, however, open schools declined in popularity throughout the 1970s (5:21). Open schools often offered an answer for students and parents who were looking for more than they were getting from standard, stratified, undeviating, and unimaginative schools (4:35).

Another type of alternative was the continuation school. Continuation schools increased in popularity throughout the 1970s, accounting for 20 percent of the total of all alternative education programs. Most were designed for dropouts, potential dropouts, and teenage parents. Many enjoyed dramatic success. The Metropolitan Youth Education Center in Denver claimed to have helped, even to
reentry in some cases, as many as 25,000 students (5:22).

While they vary with the type of student they serve, all have the prime objective of trying to revive or maintain a student's interest in school so he or she doesn't become a dropout and eventually will be able to return to a regular school (4:29).

The amorphous nature of alternative school programs both aids and hinders the inception of the programs. How to start an alternative school program is a substantial undertaking.

Although the reasons for failure or success of any program are complex and often unique to a particular place and set of conditions, at least two factors seem to emerge from all these programs. Successful alternative programs usually rest on strong commitment by administrators and an insistence that alternative programs must cost no more than regular programs (17:26).

One of the first tasks was to determine for whom the program would be designed: dropouts, academically failing, disruptive, disturbed, talented, for whom (4:11)? For whomever it was designed the alternative school must in the case of older students allow for the harmonization of work and school schedules (20:21). "Our new system, however it may be devised, must be based on individual choice of goals and individualized progress toward these goals" (4:12).

Alternative schools, regardless of their design, provide no guarantee of educational excellence. Like traditional schools they are only as good as the people in
them. They are subject to more potential problems than the
typical school, many of whose faults may go generally
unnoticed because they have been present so long (4:44).
In designing the alternative school program there were some
legitimate concerns that need special attention. They were:

1. Designers should not waste time and energy in
developing adversary relationships with the traditional
program.

2. They should take care to design the program so
that it does not foster racism or elitism.

3. The design should keep options open to all
prospective students.

4. In staffing the program steps must be taken
to insure that the staff accepts its obligation to understand
differing values, the use of options, and to be honest and
open in advising students (4:10). "Another suggestion from
alternative leaders is to set up the new school so that its
continuation does not depend entirely on its founders" (4:46).

The United States Office of Education and the National
Association of Secondary School Principals in a joint
conference on alternative education developed the following
four goals for alternative school programs:

1. Dejuvenilize secondary education and involve
students in curriculum planning and school governance.

2. Increase community involvement.

3. Emphasize education not attendance.
4. Shift the focus of the curriculum from basic skills only to include values and decision making (5:6).

The growth that alternative school programs have experienced was the result of parents and students desiring and even demanding a choice, an alternative to the traditional program. The growing number of alternative schools also were a reflection of their increased desirability professionally (4:1).

Since 1967 when Clifford Brenner, director of development, Philadelphia, gave birth to an idea that resulted two years later in opening of Parkway School there has been a dramatic increase in the number and variety of alternative programs (2:0). This growth was attributable to:

1. Support from professional organizations, foundations, federal and state departments of education.
2. Recognition that alternative programs offer viable options to traditional programs.
3. A better match of teaching and learning styles because of smaller enrollments (10:1).

In 1975 the National School Board Association Survey concluded that,

The alternative school concept is definitely not on the fringe of American public school activity; it is an important part of the program in many school districts and its significance is growing (2:2).

In 1974 the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools set out to adopt and implement a set of policies and
standards for alternative (optional schools). Since that
time similar associations across the country have adopted
similar standards for the accreditation of alternative
school programs (2:10).

Alternative school programs grew fiftyfold between
1969 and 1975 and although that rate has not been maintained
they have continued to increase in numbers. Barr, in a
1975 I.C.O.P.E. report, commented on the growth of alternative
school programs. Barr felt that the growth was due to:
increased attention paid by professional publications,
increased attention in general circulation periodicals, the
development of accreditation procedures, state and federal
endorsement, private funding, and the development of teacher
education programs specifically in the area of alternative
programs. Those programs receiving the widest acceptance were
in the area of fundamentalist schools, magnet schools, and
programs for disruptive youth (6:4). This reflection of
our social evolution speaks well of the responsiveness of
alternative education in general.

In spite of their rapid growth, however, alternative
school programs were experiencing difficulty, many to the
point of failure. One of the major problems was financing,
the major conclusion to be drawn . . . is the
necessity of long-term public financing for alterna­
tive schools. Funds from private sources and even
one shot federal funding cannot guarantee, in the long
run, the financial stability of alternative programs,
though such funds can help to initiate these programs
. . . alternative schools will have to work in coopera­
tion with the public school system (14).
There were a host of problems facing alternative school programs, notable among these are charges that they were: too democratic, not responsive enough; poorly evaluated; overly ambitious; and financially troubled (4:2). The list of why many programs failed was expanded to include: not achieving significant educational goals; insufficient income; politics; politics and traditional school structure worked to erode alternative programs and the effect of the waning of the counter culture of the 1970s (9:10).

Alternative school programs from the very beginning were struggling to be accepted by the educational community, plagued by financial crisis, lacking in appropriately trained personnel, bogged down by their new patterns of decision making and a lack of constructive and accurate evaluation (10:3). Finally the changes in decision making and a significant shift to a egalitarian type democratic structure resulted too often in an inability to cope with new and developing authority patterns (9:10).

Alternative schools, all of which developed from a euphoric stage where "things were never better," soon found themselves in a dissatisfaction stage where the feeling was "this is no better than anything else." How the programs dealt with this last stage was the key to their success or failure. Their response to the dissatisfaction stage determined whether: (1) they dissolved, (2) they
resolved and remained, or (3) they evolved to a conventional school status (9:15).

These then were the six elements as they were reviewed in the literature: comparison, characteristics, types, development, growth, and failure. The focus of the reviewed literature was relevant to the inception and development of this project as outlined in Chapter 3.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Background

During the 1977-1978 school year Tumwater High School held the uppermost position in the six-two-four configuration of the Tumwater School District. A relatively new and modern facility, Tumwater High School had a student body of approximately one thousand students in four grade levels.

Typical of most secondary schools, Tumwater was faced with numerous school problems, not the least of which was school attendance. Tumwater's attendance problem was compounded by the fact that in the early 1970s the Tumwater School District had decided that Tumwater High would operate on a trimester system. In this configuration, Tumwater would operate very close to the clock hour limits required for the issuance of high school credit. Whereas prior to that time excessive absence had been considered an annoyance, the change to a trimester structure dictated that decisive steps needed to be taken to curb absenteeism. The solution that was arrived at spoke to the potential problem of excessive absence in a trimester program, however, it did not provide for any constructive alternatives. The decision was made that students who had been absent nine times in a trimester would receive no grade from the course and those
whose absences exceeded fifteen would be dropped from the courses in which they had been enrolled.

Although, for the majority of students the change in attendance policies had no appreciable effect, for a select few the change dictated the end of their high school careers. In detail the circumstance of each of the students was different. However, a general condition existed for all, they could not meet the attendance requirements then enforced and had to withdraw from school. In this regard some students actually dropped out whereas others were literally forced out of the school environment.

From 1976 until the spring of 1978, there was no undue amount of concern evidenced by the dropout or force out situation. In the spring of 1978, however, the administration began to make some inquiries into the problem. It was fairly rapidly decided that some effort ought to be made to provide some constructive alternative to those students who on a long-term basis could not fulfill the traditional classroom attendance expectations.

It was apparent at the close of the 1977-1978 school year that an alternative education program for Tumwater High School needed to be developed for implementation in the 1978-1979 school year. The efforts to achieve the goal of implementing a program were divided into three major endeavors. Foremost was the need to determine the extent of the need within the school community. Secondly,
it was a worthwhile endeavor to research the available literature, then existing, on alternative education in an effort to realize the benefit of others' experiences with the problem. Finally, there existed the need to meld the needs of the local school community with the ideas gleaned from the review of the literature, and apply a specific set of program elements to Tumwater High School's particular situation.

Phase I: Organization

The initial organization of Tumwater's alternative program began in the late spring of 1978 and continued through the fall of the 1978-1979 school year. Having reviewed the literature and having attained a significant grasp on the major concepts inherent in alternative education, it became readily apparent that an examination of local programs was in order. Programs in the Castle Rock, Seattle, Central Kitsap, Federal Way, Lake Washington, and Portland school districts were selected for examination. Each was visited and examined to search out elements that could be applied to Tumwater's particular situation. In addition an ERIC search for additional related literature was conducted, visits to the Superintendent of Public Instruction office were initiated; and courses in the individualization of instruction were sought out.
Phase II: Constraints

Early in the summer of 1978 the administration at Tumwater High School established the basic design constraints for the program. It was determined that the program would only be opened to students who were no longer attending the regular program, no student would be allowed to be enrolled in both the regular and alternative program at the same time. The curricular offerings would cover a number of content fields and students would be required to complete an equivalent work load to receive credit. Finally, it was decided that the program would be strictly self-contained and that the instructors would meet no more often than one hour a week with each student in a special room located apart from the rest of the academic area at Tumwater High School.

Assistant were hired to search out instructional materials and to begin the development of learning packets in the area of social studies and science. At the same time a commercial artist was hired to produce display boards which were used as advertising for the program. The advertising program, news letters, and demonstration materials reflected a firmly held belief that the student population for which the program was designed was outside of the main flow of the regular school system and as such would have to be somewhat courted to re-approach the high school, even in an altered form. Contacts with students
were initiated throughout the community; however, no home visits were made. The number of students signed up for the program began to grow and, with the addition of referrals from the high school administration and self referrals from students who knew that they would not be attending the regular program in the 1978-1979 school year, a nucleus of students was formed. The program was ready to begin.

**Phase III: Curriculum Development**

The curriculum included English, vocabulary, health, social studies, reading, general mathematics, and biology. The amount of student initiative required by the program immediately surfaced as a problem. In the area of contact time alone, some students needed more than one hour a week while some could not meet for even that amount of time. Students were being asked to do large amounts of work and were left on their own, in large part, to assess both the purpose and the structure of their course of study. As the program unfolded a significant effort was put forth to identify elements that were productive from those that were not.

Early changes centered in a reduction in the amount of testing and the amount and nature of the work required of the students. In nearly all cases arbitrary time restraints were lifted and student choice in effort and direction was increased. It became apparent that the
learning was tied directly and proportionately to the amount of personal energy invested by the instructor. The amount of teacher time spent with each student increased dramatically and of that time an increasing portion of it was concerned with personal counseling. The students responded dramatically, producing significantly more work, by choice, than ever before. Many students indicated relief from the restraints of the classroom, its rigorous and sometimes arbitrary requirements. This was primarily responsible for their increased productivity.

Phase IV: Development and Implementation

Development and implementation of the Tumwater High School alternative program brought to the surface a number of related problems. The learning packets themselves were extremely difficult to write. They tended often to limit or significantly reduce choice of direction on the part of the student. The resources available to the student were extremely limited. Reduced choices and limited resources combined to reduce the effectiveness of the learning packets.

The time frame for completion of the learning packets did not fit the organizational restraints of the regular program. Resolving the problems caused by the misaligned time frames between the traditional and alternative programs was a constant task that tended to drain the energy of the instructor.
It was difficult to find a person who would commit enough personal time and energy to make the program work. The instructor was never totally pleased with the program and found that the organizational skills were continuously under attack. In addition it became increasingly difficult to maintain a personal distance from the individual circumstances and personal problems of the students.

The Program

In short, many of the pitfalls outlined in the literature proved to be realities in the Tumwater program and as the 1978-1979 school year closed it was obvious that the future of the alternative program would hinge critically on the ability of the Tumwater School District to identify and address specific inherent weaknesses in the program.

In the fall of 1979 a successor was selected to replace the original instructor who had left the school district. Within that school year the program was eliminated. Apparently the strong personal commitment held by the initial instructor was not held by the replacement. It now appears that the program had drawn its strength from the very close interaction between the instructor and the students. The instructional counseling role had also contributed to earlier success of the program.

Unlike the failure of similar programs outlined in the literature the Tumwater program did not fail because of
excessive cost or any other tangible and external factor. It failed because it had survived on the drive and commitment of the original instructor, a fact supported by the testimony of students' parents and the building principal. That instructor had, as a function of professional personality, secured the confidence and commitment of the students enrolled in the program. A critical element within that personality was a willingness to work with students on their terms without necessarily compromising the standards of the program. The attitudes and behaviors of the instructor were different in kind and degree from those commonly found in the regular program. As significant was the fact that the instructor related readily to the specific needs and interests of the students recognizing that while some students would always be in need of an alternative education program, other students would eventually return to the regular school program. Transitioning students back to the traditional school program was not a basic objective of Tumwater's alternative program, however.

A second factor contributed to the demise of the alternative program during the 1979-1980 school year. As the initial year of the program developed the curricular offerings had been expanded in an effort to provide students with both required courses and courses of personal interest. The original core of content learning packages was not expanded in the succeeding year. Even with the curriculum
that existed, insufficient effort was exerted by the instructor to communicate to prospective students that enough variation existed within individual packages to meet their needs and interests.

The third factor contributing to the demise of the alternative program was that in its second year the time and alternate structure were reduced to a point that the program was perceived to lack an alternative identity. Advertising for and recruitment of students were the first elements to be dropped. The program discontinued any offer to meet students temporal needs by altering or varying its time structure. The succeeding instructor did not have the necessary commitment or desire to work with and meet with the students at their convenience. The practice of periodically meeting students off campus, at work, or on break was discontinued. The net result of these decisions divested the alternative program of a perceived separate identity.

**Summary**

Over reliance on personality, particularly that of the founder of a program; the absence of a diverse and expanding curriculum; and a diminishing identity separate from that of the regular program were all identified by the literature as common pitfalls. In the Tumwater experience, all three of these pitfalls were encountered and the inability of the alternative program to respond appropriately
to them resulted in its closure as the 1979-1980 school year ended.
Chapter 4

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The purpose of the study was to develop and implement an alternative education program for Tumwater High School. The focus of the study was the development of the program from the spring of 1978 through the spring of 1979.

A review of the available literature pointed out the importance of the characteristics of alternative education. The specific study undertaken was the application of all of the theoretical components and characteristics of the Tumwater program.

The development of the alternative education program was examined in four phases. The first was an accounting of the initial organization of the program as well as the resources available to support it. The second was an examination of the constraints established for the basic program. The third phase outlined the curricular development of the program. The fourth phase followed the development and implementation of the Tumwater alternative education program including an examination of the reasons for its failure during the 1979-1980 school year. This phase of
the study demonstrated the inability of the program to be reflective, responsive, and ultimately self renewing. As such the alternative education program at Tumwater High School deteriorated and succumbed to the pitfalls outlined in the literature, over reliance on personality, lack of diverse curriculum, and a diminished program identity.

**Recommendations**

Alternative education programs, to be successful, must include the fewest possible program restrictions in reference to time, space, and curriculum development.

There exists a need for alternative education programs which match the varied learning styles of individuals; the life styles and life demands of individuals; the social behavioral developmental stages of today's youth; and the diverse individual demand placed upon an institution dedicated to public education. Programs can augment the traditional program given ample support, the freedom to develop, thorough planning, extensive evaluation, and subsequent redevelopment.

Alternative education will play an increasingly important role in the near future of education. A recommendation for further study in the area of both the type and extent of student achievement that would result from participation in an alternative education program is warranted. Such studies would help define the most
productive form of the interrelative role traditional and alternative programs will play in the future.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


