

**Purpose:** To provide a summary of preliminary results from a survey distributed to state level personnel.  
*Description, Students Served, Staffing, Outcomes, Special Education Issues*

## Survey Development Based On

- Interviews with state directors of special education
- Project research questions
- Identification of critical topics
- Reviewed by alternative school stakeholders

## Response Rate

- One survey distributed to each state [n=50]
- 36 states completed and returned surveys (72%)
- Respondents were primarily state level personnel responsible for working with alternative schools in their state

## FINDINGS

### General Background [n = 36]

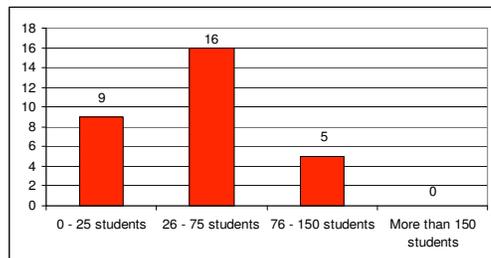
- 28 states reported the existence of state **legislation**
- 21 states reported the state has documented **definition**
- 17 states reported the state **specified criteria** for students to attend alternative schools

### Setting

Majority of alternative schools are located in [n=33]

Separate buildings	12 states
Within regular school buildings	2 states
Both	19 states

### Typical Enrollment [n=30]



## Definition

The *Common Core of Data* defines an alternative education school as “a public elementary/secondary school that addresses needs of students that typically cannot be met in a regular school, provides nontraditional education, serves as an adjunct to a regular school, or falls outside the categories of regular, special education or vocational education”(U.S. Department of Education, 2002, p.55).

### Approach that Most Closely Describes Alternative School [n=33]

- Designed to prevent students from dropping out of school (17 states)
- Short term placement for remediation and transition back to resident school (14 states)
- Designed to provide another educational option (13 states)
- Intended to serve as a consequence for students (12 states)

### How many students attend alternative schools?

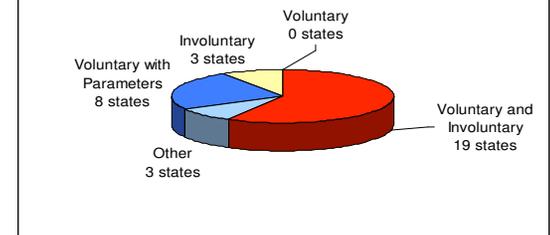
- Number of students [n=20]
  - Total students = 1,023,260
  - Average across 20 states = 51,163
  - Range = 770 (DE) to 405,553 (CA)
  - % of total student enrollment ranges from less than 1% to 18%
- 17 states indicated an increase over the past 5 years [n=30]
  - This number is significantly higher than that reported by NCES, 2002

### Who attends alternative schools? [n=33]

Alternative schools most often serve students with

- History of poor attendance 29 states
- Behavior problems 29 states
- Suspension or expulsion 22 states
- Learning difficulties 20 states
- External stressors 18 states
- Social/emotional problems 17 states
- Referral from court system 12 states

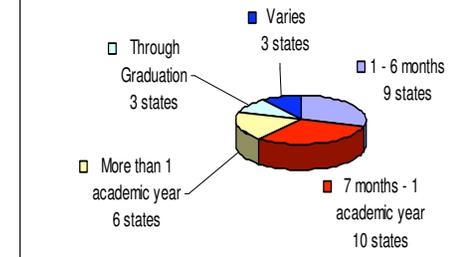
## Student Participation



### Grade Levels Served [n=33]

- 30 states indicated they primarily serve students in grades 9-12. (94% of reporting states)
- Nearly half of the states report serving students in grades 1-5. (49 – 61% of reporting states)

## Length of Student Enrollment



### Students with Disabilities

- 17 states indicated they collect data on outcomes for students with disabilities [n=34]
- Percentage of students attending alternative school with active IEPs ranged from 0-25% [n=12] (Ave. = 12%)
- Primarily students with EBD, LD or OHI
- Used as Interim Alternative Education Settings? [n=25]
  - 60% rarely or not at all
  - 32% sometimes
  - 8% often or almost always

### States rated as likely to occur

- SWD are discouraged from attending [n=29] 15 states
- Special education services are typically terminated upon entrance [n=29] 7 states
- Students IEP is modified [n=29] 24 states
- Alternative school has no knowledge of whether student has received special education [n=27] 6 states

### Curriculum and Instruction [n=34]

- 94% indicated working towards a set of state standards
- Academic Basics 33 states
- Interpersonal Skills 32 states
- Content Areas 31 states
- Life Skills 30 states
- Remedial Instruction 29 states
- Computer Based 26 states
- Career/Vocational 25 states
- Phys.Ed., Music, Art 20 states
- Independent Study 19 states

### Outcomes [n=36]

- 19 states reported having a state level system in place for collecting data and documenting outcomes (53% of reporting states)
- 25 states indicated *Some* or *Many* students return to traditional setting (100% of reporting states)

### What are the most important issues facing alternative schools in the next few years?

- Lack of **funding** 61%
- Quality and quantity of **staff** 44%
- **Accountability** and Standards-Based Reform 28%
- Also issues tied to programs, curriculum, increased growth, facilities, and transition

### What are the most important special education issues facing alternative schools in the next few years?

- Availability, quality, and licensure of staff to work with students with disabilities in alternative schools.
- Provision and quality of services in place for students with disabilities.
- Ensuring procedures and services are in place to facilitate success for students transitioning into and out of alternative and traditional settings.

### Select References on Alternative Schools

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