



Thank you for your request to our REL Reference Desk regarding evidence-based information about accountability in alternative schools. Ask A REL is a collaborative reference desk service provided by the ten regional educational laboratories (REL) that, by design, functions much in the same way as a technical reference library. It provides references, referrals, and brief responses in the form of citations on research based education questions.

The information below represents the most rigorous research available. Researchers consider the type of methodology and give priority to research reports that employ well described and thorough methods. The resources were also selected based on the date of the publication with a preference for research from the last ten years. Additional criteria for inclusion include the source and funder of the resource

Question: *What does the research tell us about school/school leadership accountability in alternative schools?*

Search Process

Key words and search strings used in the search: *accountability AND alternative schools; leadership AND accountability AND alternative schools*

Search databases and websites:

- Google Scholar (<http://scholar.google.com>)
- ERIC (<http://www.eric.ed.gov>)
- JSTOR (<http://www.jstor.org/action/showAdvancedSearch>)
- Institute of Education Sciences (IES) Resources: <http://ies.ed.gov>
- What Works Clearinghouse: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

Based on the database searches described above, there were no results that reflected rigorous evaluations addressing your question when searching for research on accountability in alternative schools. Little data is available that would reflect rigorous research, as defined by the U.S. Department of Education – Institute of Education Sciences. Below are some resources that may assist you in your search.

Sample Citations Retrieved (NOTE: Abstracts and executive summaries are copied directly from the reports when possible to ensure accuracy):

Barrat, V. X., & Berliner, B. (2009). *Examining independent study high schools in california. issues & answers. REL 2009-no. 074.* Regional Educational Laboratory West, 730 Harrison Street, San Francisco, CA 94107-1242. Retrieved from: http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/west/pdf/REL_2009074_sum.pdf



Summary/Abstract: This examination of California's independent study high schools (alternative schools in which 75 percent or more of students in grades 9-12 are enrolled in full-time independent study) describes enrollment trends since 2001-02 and the number and characteristics of schools and students as well as teacher qualifications in 2006-07. The study used a merged school-level longitudinal dataset to track student enrollment from 2001-02 through 2006-07, and used school, teacher, and course-level datasets for 2006-07. The quantitative analysis contrasts the characteristics of independent study high schools with other non-traditional and traditional high schools. Qualitative data from the latest available School Accountability Report Card for each independent high school identified targeted student populations. Reported findings include: (1) In 2006-07, 58,788 students were enrolled in full-time independent study in grades 9-12 in California's 231 independent study high schools, an increase of 44.2 percent from 2001-02; (2) Approximately 54.9 percent of independent study high schools reported targeting a specific student group; (3) In 2006-07, the students population of independent study high schools was less diverse than that of other types of high schools, with larger percentages of White students and female students, and lower percentages of socioeconomically disadvantaged students, English language learner students, students with disabilities, and migrant students, than other types of high schools; (4) In 2006-07, independent study high schools were less likely than other types of high school to be located in urban areas, or to have been open before 2001-02; and (5) Teachers in independent study high schools were less likely than teachers in other types of high school to hold an advanced academic degree and a secondary subject-specific teaching credential. Two appendices are included: (1) Data Sources, Methodology, and Limitations; and (2) Descriptive Statistics.

Carver, P. R., Lewis, L., & Tice, P. (2010). *Alternative schools and programs for public school students at risk of educational failure: 2007-08 (NCES 2010-02)*. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office. Retrieved from: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2010/2010026.pdf>

Summary/Abstract: This report provides national estimates on the availability of alternative schools and programs for students at risk of educational failure in public school districts during the 2007-08 school year. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) previously reported results from a similar survey of alternative schools and programs conducted during the 2000-01 school year (Kleiner, Porch, and Farris 2002). The estimates presented in the current report are based on an initial district survey about alternative schools and programs available to students during the 2007-08 school year and a short follow-up survey. The initial survey asked about alternative schools and programs administered by the district and covered many of the same topics included in the 2000-01 survey. The follow-up survey expanded the coverage by asking about students enrolled in the district who attended alternative schools and programs administered by an entity other than the district. Appendices include: (1) Standard Error Tables; (2) Technical Notes; and (3) Questionnaires. (Contains 32 tables and 6 footnotes.)



Hughes, A. F., & Adera, B. (2006). Education and day treatment opportunities in schools: Strategies that work. *Preventing School Failure, 51*(1), 26-30. doi: 10.3200/PSFL.51.1.26-30

Summary/Abstract: In recent years, the number of alternative schools has continued to grow and an increasingly large number of students at-risk for school failure have been enrolled in alternative settings. Critics blame this increase on the fact that the school-aged population has become increasingly diverse, presenting a broad range of issues that the schools have not been able to effectively address. Furthermore, with the renewed push for accountability and the mounting challenge of serving students who exhibit emotional and behavioral problems, schools have had little choice but to resort to enrolling these students in alternative educational settings. Federal legislation emphasizes that educational programs serving students at-risk for school failure should use strategies and procedures for which there is empirical support regarding their efficacy (F. A. Hughes, P. Baker, A. Criste, J. Huff, M. Link, C. Piripavel, et al., 2006). C. A. Lehr and C. M. Lange (2003) argued that although it is clear that students with disabilities are attending alternative schools, the extent to which these students are being educated and the nature and quality of these educational programs is still unclear. In this article, the authors will provide an overview of strategies and practices that work in effective alternative and day treatment programs. The authors will examine research and pedagogical literature relevant to the aforementioned core characteristics and discuss practical recommendations for integrating these core characteristics into daily practices using specific examples from model programs

Lehr, C. A., Tan, C. S., & Ysseldyke, J. (2009). Alternative schools a synthesis of state-level policy and research. *Remedial and Special Education, 30*(1), 19-32. doi: 10.1177/0741932508315645

Summary/Abstract: The number of students enrolled in alternative settings for youth at risk of school failure has increased significantly in recent years. Students with disabilities, primarily students with emotional/behavioral disabilities and learning disabilities, are included in the population of students who are being educated in these settings. This article provides a synthesis of information gathered through (a) a comprehensive review of legislation and policy on alternative schools/programs from 48 states and (b) a national survey about alternative schools and students served completed by key contacts at state departments of education. Information is organized and discussed with regard to state-level definitions of alternative schools, enrollment criteria, school characteristics, students served, staffing, curriculum and instruction, and outcomes. In addition, information about the provision of special education in these settings and the extent to which students with disabilities enroll is included.



Raywid, M. A. (1995). *Alternative schools: The state of the art*. *Educational Leadership*, 52(1), 26-31.

Summary/Abstract: Alternative schools are definitive departures from the programmatic, organizational, and behavioral regularities inhibiting school reform. Many reforms now pursued in traditional schools were pioneered by alternative schools. Types include popular innovations, last-chance programs, and remedial programs. Advantages, disadvantages, common elements, success factors, and image problems are discussed.

Referrals

Organizations:

- Center for Educational Reform: <http://edreform.com>
- National Alternative Education Association: <http://www.the-naea.org>
- Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center:
<http://www.wested.org/cs/we/view/pj/448>
- **US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences (IES) Resources**,
<http://ies.ed.gov>
- **What Works Clearinghouse**, <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

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