



Office of the Legislative Auditor
State of Minnesota

An Evaluation of Minnesota's Alternative Education Programs

**Family Impact Seminars
February 18 & 19, 2010**

1

Using Evidence in Policymaking

- Defining a public problem
- Proposing a solution that will address the problem and examine the costs and benefits
- Implementing the solution
- Evaluating and improving the solution for highest impact
- Expanding the solution for broader impact

2

Evaluation Questions

- How does alternative education differ from other public school choice options?
- Who attends alternative education programs and for what purposes?
- How have students in these programs performed, and how is performance most appropriately measured?
- Is there adequate state and local oversight of alternative education programs?

3

Alternative Education is Provided by:

- Area Learning Centers (ALCs) ✓ More than 1 district
✓ Middle & high school
✓ Comprehensive
- Alternative Learning Programs (ALPs) ✓ May be 1 district
✓ Can determine grades served
- Contract Alternatives ✓ Nonpublic organizations
✓ Contract with district

4

Alternative Education Programs

“Regular-Day”

- Substitute for traditional school
- Grades K-12 (mostly 9-12)
- Full time or part time
- Typically in a separate site
- Funded through general education

“Extended-Time”

- Supplemental programs
- Grades K-12
- Before or after school, summer, weekends
- Often at traditional school
- Funded through “extended-time” revenue

5

Extended-Time Programs

Targeted Services

- Grades K-8
- Remedial
- General learning skills
- ALCs ONLY

Credit Recovery

- Grades 9-12
- Make up failed credits
- Course specific
- ALCs, ALPs, and contract alternatives

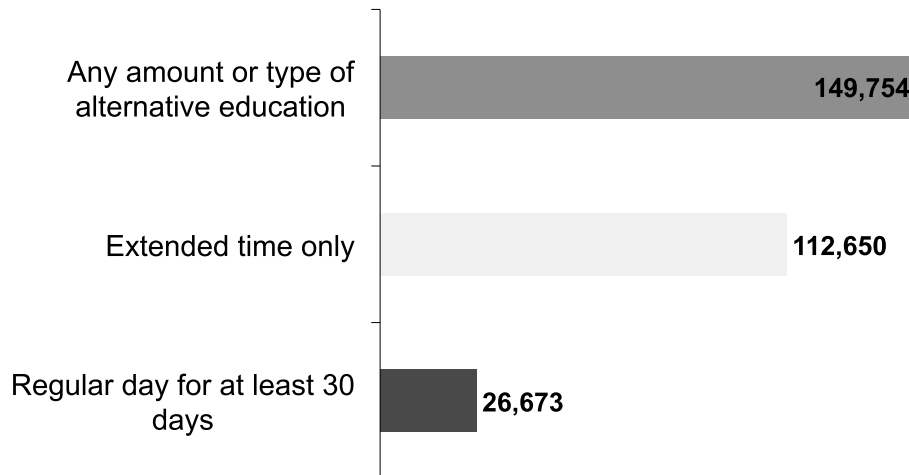
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Student Eligibility Criteria

- Behind academically
- Pregnant or a parent
- Assessed as chemically dependent
- Excluded or expelled
- Experienced mental health problems
- Limited English proficiency
- Others, see *Minnesota Statutes* 2009, 124D.68, subd. 2

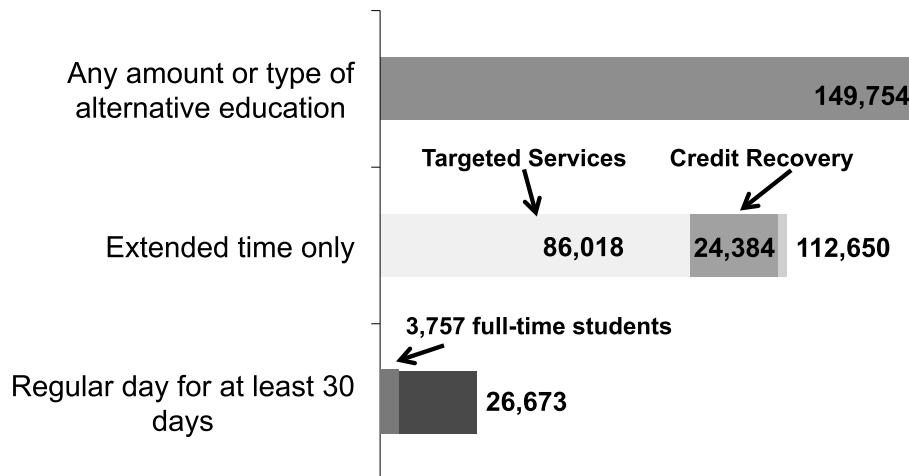
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Alternative Education Student Enrollment, 2009



8

Alternative Education Student Enrollment, 2009



9

Alternative Education Student Demographics, 2009

Alternative education students are more likely to be:

- Nonwhite
- Eligible for free or reduced-price lunch
- Mobile

10

Student Performance – Multiple Measures

- Proficiency on MCA-II
- Growth on MCA-II and MAP
- Attendance Rates
- Graduation Rates
- Student Satisfaction

11

Proficiency on MCA-II, 2009

- Alternative education students had significantly lower rates of proficiency than traditional students
- Gap was larger for regular-day alternative education students than for those receiving targeted services

12

Growth on Assessments – Targeted Services Students (K-8, Extended Time)

- Targeted services students showed significantly more growth on the MAP and MCA-II when compared with other students

	<u>Math</u>	<u>Reading</u>
National Norms (MAP)	√	√
Comparison Group (MAP)	√	-
Other Minnesota Students (MCA-II)	√	√

13

Targeted Services Conclusions:

- Growth for students in targeted services is encouraging
- Problem: MDE limits who can provide targeted services (only ALCs)
- OLA recommendation:* The Legislature should allow all school districts to offer targeted services, regardless of whether they provide other alternative education programs

14

Growth on Assessments – Regular-Day Students (Mostly Grades 9-12)

- Fell further behind on all three benchmarks
- Appropriate benchmarks hard to determine

	<u>Math</u>	<u>Reading</u>
National Norms (MAP)	X	X
Comparison Group (MAP)	X	X
Other Minnesota Students (MCA-II)	X	X

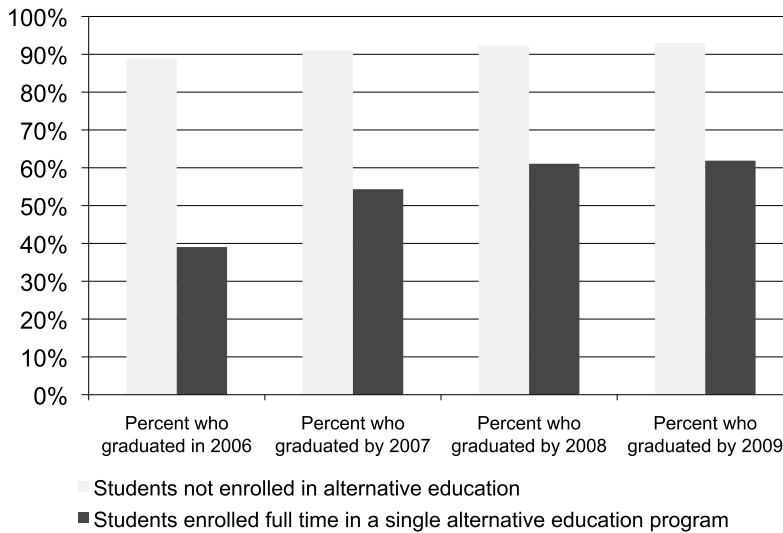
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Attendance Rates – Regular-Day Students

- All Minnesota students: decrease in attendance as grade level increases
- Adjusted for grade-level, 40 percent of full-time alternative education students improved attendance rates (2008 to 2009) relative to peers

16

Percentage of 2006 Grade 12 Students Who Graduated in Subsequent Years



17

Student Satisfaction – Regular-Day Students

- Students generally satisfied with alternative education
- Reported increased academic performance, attendance, and behavior

18

Legislative Recommendations:

- The Legislature should allow all school districts to offer targeted services, regardless of whether they provide other alternative education programs
- The Minnesota Legislature should allow MDE and school districts with students enrolled in alternative education programs to challenge the validity of the curriculum provided by those programs.

19

Other Recommendations:

- MDE should initiate a pilot project to use and evaluate additional measures of alternative education student performance
- MDE should increase its ongoing oversight of alternative education programs
- MDE should review its policies for determining alternative education schools' adequate yearly progress (AYP)

20

Alternative Education Programs

is available at:

www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us