Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education:

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PREFACE TO EXEMPLARY PRACTICES

Across the United States, alternative schools, programs and classrooms are serving students who are not succeeding in the traditional educational setting. Often this population of learners exhibits one or more of the following traits: under-performing academically, possessing learning disabilities, displaying emotional or behavioral issues, being deliberate or inadvertent victims of the behavioral problems of others, displaying a high risk of potential expulsion, suspension, or dropping out of school, and/or displaying the need for individualized instruction. Alternative education offers innovative, non-traditional approaches to teaching this population of learners, which aides in preventing these students from becoming dropouts.

With that in mind and in an effort to enhance the quality of alternative education in all fifty states, the National Alternative Education Association (NAEA) has identified and crafted ten exemplary practices in the field. Forged from research on productive alternative programs and the wisdom of alternative educators, the exemplary practices represent a national effort to develop a common core of principles. Furthermore, the Association has identified specific indicators of quality programming that signify meeting each of the identified exemplary practices. Both the exemplary practices and the indicators are considered essential to quality alternative education programming.

The exemplary practices cover a broad range of areas. When navigating this document, the reader will notice that each exemplary practice includes a synopsis of the practice and indicators that demonstrate successful attainment of that particular practice. The practices relate to the following topic areas:

- Mission and Purpose
- Leadership
- Climate and Culture
- Staffing and Professional Development
- Curriculum and Instruction
- Student Assessment
- Transitional Planning and Support
- Parent/Guardian Involvement
- Collaboration
- Program Evaluation

When reading each exemplary practice and the corresponding indicators, the reader will notice that the authors refer to a(n) "alternative education program, alternative program, or program." Nonetheless, these terms are used to represent all types of alternative learning environments. The identified practices are appropriate for all alternative education settings.

The NAEA offers this work in anticipation that it will be used to ensure that quality alternative education programming is taking place. It is the hope of the authors and the NAEA membership that this document will be utilized in the following ways:

- To guarantee and promote high quality educational services for the identified population of students
- To develop a common core of principles and technical language under which alternative educators will operate
- To promote viable new alternative education programs built upon exemplary practices in the field

Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming

- To evaluate the effectiveness of new and existing programs
- To inform policy relative to alternative education

It is also important to note that while this work is built upon a sound set of principles, it is imperative to acknowledge that the field of alternative education is a fast growing and evolving discipline. As the field progresses, *Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming* will be revisited and revised to reflect the most innovative exemplary practices for alternative programs.

We strongly encourage that educators utilize and share this document. Please circulate it widely to members of the public, within the professional community, and to policy-makers. It is through a shared vision of alternative education that our students are assured the schooling they will need to carry out the responsibilities of the future. Questions regarding *Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming* may be directed to James Vince Witty at (615) 532-4768. For more information on the NAEA or other resources visit our website at http://the-naea.org.

EXEMPLARY PRACTICE 1.0: MISSION AND PURPOSE

An exemplary alternative education program develops a guiding mission and purpose that drives the overall operation of the program.   All stakeholders (i.e., administrators, community representatives, parents/guardians, staff, and students) share in developing, implementing, directing and maintaining the program's mission and purpose. The mission and purpose of the program include the identification of the target student population and promote the success of all students. Additionally, the mission and purpose embody high expectations for academic achievement, along with the nurturing of positive social interactions between staff and students.

Indicators of Quality Programming:

1.1	The program mission clearly articulates the purpose, goals, and expectations of the program to students, parents/guardians, program staff, and the community at large.
1.2	The mission and purpose are documented, published and visible to students, parents/guardians, program staff, and the community.
1.3	All stakeholders are involved in developing the mission, purpose, goals, and expected outcomes for the program.
1.4	The program mission includes the identification of the student population for whom the alternative education program is designed to serve.
1.5	The mission and purpose of the program have a unifying theme that evokes high levels of student and other stakeholder support.
1.6	The driving mission and purpose of the alternative program is consistent with the district's goals while aligning with specific state standard(s).
1.7	Student success is central to the mission and purpose of the program, which includes learning across academic areas, behavioral management, life skills, and the vocational domains.
1.8	The mission and purpose of the program promotes the personal safety, security, and emotional and physical well being of all students in the program.
1.9	The mission and purpose is communicated through the use of symbols, ceremonies, stories, and similar activities.
1.10	Needed resources are sought and obtained to support the implementation of the mission and purpose.
1.11	Barriers to achieving the mission and purpose of the program are identified, clarified, and addressed.
1.12	The mission and purpose shape the educational plans and activities undertaken by the alternative program.
1.13	The mission and purpose are regularly monitored, evaluated, and revised as needed.

Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming

EXEMPLARY PRACTICE 2.0: LEADERSHIP

An exemplary alternative education program employs passionate, innovative, competent, and experienced leadership that has administrative and bureaucratic autonomy, as well as operational flexibility. The administrators, teachers, and staff must be committed to full implementation of the program's mission and core values. On-site leadership utilizes and engages in a collaborative approach that ensures shared decision-making, high expectations for the program, and continuous monitoring of program quality. The superintendent or designated district administrator sustains the independence of the program and allocates sufficient resources (i.e., financial or other necessary resources) to protect the integrity of the program while supporting overall program quality.

Indicators of Quality Programming:

2.1	The district provides sufficient oversight to ensure quality programming while protecting the autonomy of the alternative education program's operation.
2.2	The district provides adequate financial support and other needed resources for implementation of quality alternative education services (i.e., teaching and non-teaching staff, equipment, technology, supplies, curriculum, etc.).
2.3	Program administrators are experienced and competent, enabling them to be engaged in all aspects of the program's operation and management.
2.4	The shared vision of the alternative education program is communicated by the leadership through the program's mission and purpose.
2.5	Where appropriate, leadership engages stakeholders in a collaborative process when making program decisions (i.e., Advisory Board and other opportunities that promote stakeholder participation in the decision-making process).
2.6	Program leadership ensures that decisions regarding program operation align with state legislation and local policies and procedures.
2.7	Program leadership develops and operates under a current policies and procedures manual that is consistent with the mission and purpose of the program, approved by the local board of education, and articulated to all stakeholders in the form of standard operating procedures (SOPs). Elements of the manual should address the following: - Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for all teaching and non-teaching staff are written and fully explained to program staff. - Referral, screening, and intake procedures are outlined and promote timely, user-friendly access to program services for students. - Procedures to collect, share, and store individual student records are developed for participants that ensure student confidentiality. - Processes are established that coordinate effective placements, assess student needs to match appropriate program services and interventions, and formalize the transition of students from one learning environment to the next. - Reliable assessments are identified and inform procedures for developing an individualized student learner plan (ISLP) that addresses the academic,

Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming

	behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational needs of the participant.
	• Programs have established a thorough written code of conduct and a comprehensive student discipline action plan that outlines rules and behavioral expectations, appropriate interventions, consequences of misbehavior, and celebrates proper student behavior (i.e., level system or similar behavior support mechanisms).
	• Program policies encourage the active engagement of parents/guardians as equal partners in the planning, implementation, and development of the alternative education program.
	• Policies for developing collaborative partnerships with public and private agencies are established and formalized by program leadership (i.e., memoranda of understanding or MOUs) and outline the roles and responsibilities of partnered social service organizations (i.e., mental health organizations, the juvenile justice system, public health departments, local and state advocacy agencies, child welfare agencies, family support groups, judicial/legal agencies, youth service agencies, and research/evaluation institutions).
	• A formal crisis plan is developed and managed by program leadership to include strategies that sustain a safe, well-maintained, caring, and orderly program environment that is in compliance with state and local policies, standards, procedures, and legislation.
	• Process and outcome evaluation monitors are in place that determine student and program progress. This includes the identification of areas of weakness while ensuring that a plan of action exists when and where remedy is necessary.
	• Procedures to collect, store, and share program data ensure that students, parents/guardians, and staff are protected and identities are preserved.
2.8	Program leadership recruits, hires and trains qualified teachers and non-teaching staff.
2.9	Program administrators ensure low student to teacher ratios exist, that ratios reflect the needs of the student population, and that the student to teacher ratio never exceeds 12 to 1.
2.10	Leadership promotes collaboration among the school of origin, community, and home, thereby fostering an effective learning environment for the student.
2.11	Administration ensures that reliable data and student performance measures guide the instructional practices of the program.
2.12	Program leaders work to offer transportation, food services and appropriate health services to students.
2.13	Consistent and constructive performance evaluations of administrative, teaching, and non-teaching staff are conducted by leadership in a timely manner.

Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming

EXEMPLARY PRACTICE 3.0: CLIMATE AND CULTURE

An exemplary alternative education program maintains a safe, caring, and orderly climate and culture that promotes collegial relationships among students, parents/guardians, and program staff. The program culture and climate are characterized by a positive rather than punitive atmosphere for behavioral management and student discipline. Program staff establishes clear expectations for learning and student conduct. The staff actively models and rewards appropriate student behavior. The program uses proven practices such as positive behavior support to organize student support systems. The alternative program actively promotes connections among students and between program staff that is positive and encourages academic, behavioral, and social success.

Indicators of Quality Programming:

3.1	Alternative education services are efficiently organized into effective delivery systems whether the entity is an alternative school, program, or classroom.
3.2	The program is housed in a safe, well maintained, aesthetically pleasing, and physically accessible environment that supports optimal student learning.
3.3	Rules and behavioral expectations are clearly written (i.e., code of conduct and comprehensive student discipline action plan), understood and accepted by staff, students, and parents/guardians. Both mechanisms ensure that students are actively taught, rewarded, recognized and monitored which guide and manage student behavior, evaluate progress, and direct the learner's experience in the alternative education program.
3.4	The program has a designated team of representatives (i.e., administrative, teaching and non-teaching staff, parents/guardians, and, if possible, student representatives) that strategically plan, monitor, and implement prevention and intervention strategies that reflect the culture and climate of the alternative education program.
3.5	The program actively promotes student engagement and affords students with the opportunity to have a role in shaping the learning environment to facilitate feelings of connectedness.
3.6	The alternative education program communicates high expectations for teacher performance, which in turn results in improved student academics and behavior with opportunities to celebrate individual successes on a regular basis.
3.7	Student and staff evaluation data and feedback regarding the program are presented at staff meetings and used to make appropriate programming changes.
3.8	The program demonstrates an understanding and sensitivity to academic, behavioral, cultural, developmental, gender, and societal needs of students, parents/guardians and the community.
3.9	Short and long-term program goals address the needs of the students, staff, parents/guardians, and the program.
3.10	Program objectives are measurable and built upon student academic achievement, student behavior, and social improvement and are the basis of program accountability, evaluation, and improvement.

Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming

EXEMPLARY PRACTICE 4.0: STAFFING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

An exemplary alternative education program is staffed with effective, innovative, and qualified individuals trained in current research based teaching methods that facilitate active learning. Written professional development plans exist that identify staff training needs, match needs to relevant training, emphasize quality implementation of research based and best practices, and establish performance evaluations aimed at improving program and student outcomes and overall program quality.

Indicators of Quality Programming:

4.1	The program employs enthusiastic, energetic, and innovate teachers who demonstrate multiple teaching styles.
4.2	The staff understands and practices the concept of facilitative learning.
4.3	The diversity of the staff mirrors the diversity of the student body and the experience of the alternative education faculty mirrors the faculty experience of the school district.
4.4	A sufficient number of teaching and non-teaching staff are working in or assigned to the alternative education program.
4.5	Staff members create written professional development plans that facilitate personal and professional growth, identify the professional development needs of the individual, establish short and long term goals, and align professional development training to address the individual's overall plan.
4.6	Professional development reflects a good use of internal and external resources by the program.
4.7	The focus of professional development relates to positive student outcomes across academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational domains and increases the likelihood of student success in present and future settings.
4.8	The program uses a variety of professional development approaches, including technology, to accomplish the goals of improving instruction and increasing student achievement.
4.9	Professional development opportunities include information related to effectively collaborating with community support services and how to connect with students and families.
4.10	The program strategically increases staff capacity through training, modeling and ensuring the use of research based strategies that align with the needs of the program population.
4.11	Sufficient resources, such as time, substitutes, and incentives allow all staff to participate in workshops, conferences, and seminars.
4.12	Administration ensures that ongoing professional development is geared towards the adult learner, promotes lifelong learning, helps build the staff's capacity through the use of research based strategies and best practices, and ensures that learned techniques are implemented.

Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming

EXEMPLARY PRACTICE 5.0: CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

An exemplary alternative education program maintains high academic expectations for students across academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational domains. Furthermore, the program integrates a creative and engaging curricula and instructional methods that are relevant to the individual student's needs. Additionally, the program uses an integrated, well-organized framework of research based curricula and teaching practices designed to address the "whole" student while continuing to meet or exceed federal and state standards.

Indicators of Quality Programming:

5.1	The alternative education program ensures that all students have access to the academic core curriculum.
5.2	Teachers are highly qualified in the content area based on individual state standards.
5.3	Teachers are competent in research based teaching techniques and behavior management strategies appropriate for the target student population.
5.4	The program operates in full compliance with laws governing students with special needs.
5.5	Curricular options reflect, but are not limited to, those offered in the traditional educational setting.
5.6	Teaching across all curricula is employed by program staff.
5.7	The alternative education program individualizes the student's curriculum and instruction utilizing an individualized student learner plan (ISLP). The plan engages and challenges the student while also addressing the academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational needs of the participant. The learner plan and processes include the following: - A Student Support Team (SST) is established and involved in forming and monitoring the student's progress on the learner plan while further providing the reinforcement necessary for achievement. - Parents/guardians are on the SST and involved in drafting, developing, and implementing the student's ISLP to include processes for communicating the learner's progress to the parents/guardians. - Plans are developed based on the student's differentiated (remedial or accelerated) needs. - Processes for the learner plan include reviewing current credit attainment and ensuring that the student is making adequate progress toward graduation. - Four areas are embedded into the learner plan that engages the student in planning for the following: community participation, employment, independent living and post-secondary education. - Teachers utilize individual student data in making instructional decisions and developing the learner plan. - Plans incorporate goals for changing negative behavior patterns which may have

	impeded the student's progress and success (e.g., absences, suspension and/or expulsion, tardiness, etc.). • The learner plan addresses required services to meet the educational needs of students with disabilities. • Formal and informal assessments document students' progress toward completion of the ISLP and are used to determine programming changes for the student. • The plan allows the student to monitor his or her own learning and progress while promoting lifelong learning.
5.8	Teachers identify and provide appropriate instruction designed to close gaps in student learning.
5.9	A variety of instructional strategies are employed to accommodate for students with different backgrounds, individual learning styles (e.g. visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners), and multiple intelligences.
5.10	Students have opportunities to learn and/or participate in non-core content areas to include, but not limited to, the following: adventure learning, art, character education, health, music, physical activities/education, recreation, and vocational education.
5.11	Programs promote community involvement using service learning as a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction, teaches civic responsibility, and aims to strengthen the learner's role in his or her community. Furthermore, the community involvement component includes student reflection as a part of the learner's experience.
5.12	Instruction integrates life skills (e.g., career preparation, citizenship, conflict resolution, decision making skills, problem solving, public speaking, self-management, social skills, teamwork, time management, work-based learning, etc.) into the curricula and affords the student with opportunities to put the acquired skills into action.
5.13	Secondary programs provide opportunities for career exploration (e.g., job shadowing and training, mentorships, work-based learning, career fairs, etc.) related to the student's career interests and postsecondary goals.
5.14	Group delivery systems are used to build social relationships by supporting collaboration and teamwork.
5.15	The alternative education program uses researched based dropout prevention strategies for those learners at risk of dropping out of school.
5.16	Technology is embedded in the curricular delivery process and distance learning is utilized when appropriate.
5.17	The curriculum is supported by access to a balance of up-to-date, well-maintained collection of textbooks, library media, technology, software, and other instructional supplies and materials.

Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming

EXEMPLARY PRACTICE 6.0: STUDENT ASSESSMENT

An exemplary alternative education program includes screening, progress monitoring, diagnostic and outcome-based measurements and procedures to improve short and long term results at the student level. Student assessments are used to measure achievement and indentify specific learner needs. The program exercises a research based framework that values use of reliable measures to monitor student progress and adjust program services accordingly.

Indicators of Quality Programming:

6.1	Program administrators enforce data-driven accountability to measure achievement and identify individual learner needs.
6.2	The purpose of assessments is clearly defined and communicated to students, staff and parents/guardians.
6.3	Data collection procedures are clearly outlined to ensure reliable and valid student assessment results.
6.4	Teachers use formative and summative assessment tools that are frequent, rigorous, and align with curriculum and instruction to track student performance and progress.
6.5	The program utilizes multiple assessments that continually monitor the academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational needs of the student while using those assessments to make individual programming decisions for the learner.
6.6	Frequent, reliable and rigorous measures using both quantitative and qualitative procedures are used to identify student progress as prescribed by the district and state.
6.7	Assessments are directly linked to choosing curriculum and instructional methods while accommodating a variety of learning styles and multiple intelligences.
6.8	Results of assessments are used to inform students and parents/guardians of learner progress, guide curriculum and instruction, and monitor the individualized student learner plan (ISLP).

EXEMPLARY PRACTICE 7.0: TRANSITIONAL PLANNING AND SUPPORT

An exemplary alternative education program has clear criteria and procedures for transitioning students from the traditional education setting to the alternative education setting, from the alternative program to the student's next education or workforce setting while ensuring timely access to community agencies and support services. This process calls for trained transitional personnel experienced in this particular area. Furthermore, the transitional process ensures that the alternative placement is the most appropriate placement for student's specific academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational needs.

Indicators of Quality Programming:

7.1	The alternative education program has a Screening Committee to ensure that the alternative placement is most appropriate for the student's specific academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational needs (individual student, individual placement decision).
7.2	The program has a formal transition process for students from pre-entry through post-exit which includes the following elements: an orientation which consists of rapport building, assessment of the student, IEP review, information and record sharing regarding the student, short and long-term goal setting, development of an individualized student learner plan (ISLP), and other mechanisms designed to orient the student to the alternative education setting.
7.3	Transition planning and the ISLP afford students the opportunity to maintain and accelerate their current progress toward graduation.
7.4	A Student Support Team (SST) is established that consists of educators from the school of origin, educators from the alternative education program, the student, the parents/guardians and other trained transitional personnel. The team is directly involved in all aspects of the transitional process including assessment, planning, and implementation of the student's transitional plan and ISLP.
7.5	Transition planning includes referral and timely access to community agencies and support services such as mental health, public health, family support, housing, physical fitness activities, and other youth services.
7.6	When appropriate, students in the alternative education program are provided with opportunities to develop and maintain supportive links to the school of origin.
7.7	Student needs (i.e., academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational needs) are addressed before, during, and after the student's transition.
7.8	Prior to a student's entrance and exit from the alternative education program, transition services are coordinated by the SST with all appropriate entities to ensure successful entry into the student's next educational setting or into the workforce.
7.9	Within the bounds of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), information sharing (availability of pertinent records) takes place between the school of origin, the alternative education program, and other social service organizations. Copies of the following items are forwarded to the alternative education program: attendance records, birth certificate, current health treatments and medications needed during the

school day, discipline records, immunization records, report cards, school enrollment letter, social security card, special education file and IEP (if applicable), state assessment test scores, transcripts and other appropriate information on the student.

Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming

EXEMPLARY PRACTICE 8.0: PARENT/GUARDIAN INVOLVEMENT

An exemplary alternative education program actively involves parents/guardians beyond parent/guardian-teacher meetings. The alternative program emphasizes a non-judgmental, solution-focused approach that incorporates parents/guardians as respected partners throughout the student's length of stay in the program. Furthermore, the program works with parents/guardians to provide proper training and support to advance the learning and personal success of each student in the program.

Indicators of Quality Programming

8.1	Parental/guardian involvement is welcomed and actively recruited by the alternative education program.
8.2	Effective communication and interaction takes places between parents/guardians and school staff to include being continually notified of students progress (regular progress reports or as needed).
8.3	Parents/guardians are recognized as equal partners and involved in the decision-making process for the student and the program, including the following: to serve on the Student Support Team (SST), to help develop the individualized student learner plan (ISLP), to help guide and direct the mission and purpose of the program via an Advisory Council, and to help evaluate the overall effectiveness of the alternative program.
8.4	Parents/guardians participate in solution-focused problem-solving for academic, behavioral, life skill, service coordination, transitional and vocational issues involving students.
8.5	Consultation regarding strategies to support the learning and personal success of students is made readily available to all parents/guardians.
8.6	Parents/guardians have access to parent education programs sponsored by the alternative education program or other community social service organizations.
8.7	Privacy is afforded to parents/guardians when engaging them as equal partners in the alternative program.
8.8	Procedures are in place to address all parent/guardian grievances in a timely fashion while respecting and considering the dispositions of parents/guardians.

Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming

EXEMPLARY PRACTICE 9.0: COLLABORATION

An exemplary alternative education program establishes authentic partnerships with community resources based on trust, open communication, clearly defined goals, and shared responsibility which links the program, home, and community. Collaborative partnerships promote opportunities for service learning, life skills, and career exploration for all students. Community representatives also have a role in the planning, resource development, and the decision-making process for the alternative program.

Indicators of Quality Programming

9.1	Authentic partnerships with community resources are secured and established to help the alternative education program solve problems and achieve goals as outlined in the program's mission and purpose.
9.2	Partnerships are designed to support and enrich the program by including the community as a resource for education, advocacy and volunteerism.
9.3	Collaborations with community partners are based on trust, open communication, clearly defined goals, and shared responsibility which links the program, home, and community.
9.4	A comprehensive program of community relations is established by the alternative education program.
9.5	Partnerships exist with community service organizations, cultural groups, faith-based representatives and agencies, and business and industry.
9.6	Relationships are established that support the physical and mental health of students enrolled in the program.
9.7	There is a strong collaboration with law enforcement, the juvenile justice system, and juvenile treatment centers. When appropriate, these partnerships facilitate an integrated case management strategy and wraparound services for students and parents/guardians.
9.8	Program planning incorporates collaboration with community agencies and other support services that help in providing a comprehensive student assistance program which allows for referrals to community agencies when appropriate.
9.9	As needed, collaborative partnerships with public and private agencies are established, formalized (i.e., memoranda of understanding or MOUs), and outline the roles and responsibilities of partner social service organizations (i.e., mental health, juvenile justice, public health, advocacy agencies, child welfare, family support, judicial/legal, youth service agencies, and research/evaluation institutions).
9.10	Community representatives are drawn upon as resources during the planning phase of the individualized student learner plan (ISLP) that involves student planning for the following: community participation, employment, independent living and post-secondary education.
9.11	Community partners are utilized when integrating service learning, life skills, and career exploration into the alternative education program.
9.12	Community representatives serve on the Advisory Board and assist in planning, resource development, and decision-making for the alternative program.

Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming

EXEMPLARY PRACTICE 10.0: PROGRAM EVALUATION

      An exemplary alternative education program systematically conducts program evaluations for continuous program improvement. Data triangulation is employed with three different sources of data collected for analysis. Data collection includes the following items: program implementation ratings, student outcome data, and student, parent/guardian, and staff surveys. All sources of data are gathered and used to assess quality, provide a course for improvement, and direct future activities of the program. The guidelines presented herewith titled *Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming* as well as state specific standards would be an appropriate means in which to evaluate the program.

Indicators of Quality Programming

10.1	The alternative education program routinely conducts program evaluations to determine progress toward meeting the mission and purpose of the program, and plans for continuous program improvement.
10.2	Evaluation measures include a review of program implementation ratings (based on observable data). Ratings are given based on alignment with state specific standards and *Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming.*
10.3	Student outcome data for core content, non-core content areas, and non-academic areas are gathered as a means to evaluate the success of the alternative program. This includes collecting data on the following: absences, disciplinary data, credits earned, dropout statistics, grades, graduation rates, student achievement data, and recidivism rates (quasi-experimental design).
10.4	Student, parent/guardian, and community surveys are administered by the alternative education program to assess attitudes and opinions about discipline, program culture and climate, the learning environment, staff-student and staff-parent/guardian and program-community relations, perceptions of program effectiveness, and success relative to students' academic, behavioral, and social progress.
10.5	Staff surveys are administered by the program to assess attitudes and opinions about discipline, program culture and climate, the learning environment, staff-administrator/staff-staff relations, perceptions of program effectiveness and success relative to students' academic, behavioral, and social progress.
10.6	Transition services are routinely evaluated to determine the program's effectiveness in transitioning the student to the next educational setting or into the workforce. Evaluation of transitional services includes follow-up visits with past students of the program.
10.7	Program evaluation results are used to develop or update a plan for continuous program improvement.
10.8	When available, an external evaluator is called upon to evaluate the program's effectiveness based on the principles set forth. The NAEA offers external evaluators as part of an effort to provide outreach. For more information visit our website at: http://the-naea.org.

CONCLUSION, EXEMPLARY PRACTICES AWARD, AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For years the National Alternative Education Association (NAEA) has been dedicated to information sharing, identification of best practices, and advocacy for alternative learning and teaching. It is the hope of the authors, the Board of Directors, and the NAEA membership that *Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming* reflects that purpose. Furthermore, it is the intent of all individuals involved with this project that the framework presented will be used to promote viable new exemplary programs and evaluate the effectiveness of existing programs. It is hoped that this project will enhance the alternative education opportunities for students across the United States by providing a common core of principles and practices for alternative educators to exercise. It is through a collective vision that our students are assured the education they will need to seize the opportunities of tomorrow and to accept the responsibilities of our future.

In addition to providing exemplary practices, the NAEA wants to celebrate your program and student successes. If you are interested in highlighting the accomplishments of your students and program, the NAEA desires to hear from you. Furthermore, during 2009 the NAEA will begin identifying alternative education programs that embody the practices presented in this work. Recognized programs will be awarded with the NAEA's prestigious *Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education Award.* Recipient programs will serve as national models for those programs encountering challenges, and in addition, serve as model programs for

policy makers who have an interest in the progress and expansion of alternative education in the United States.

The NAEA also wants to remind members and other stakeholders that the Association is actively involved in outreach aimed at advancing alternative education. The Association is made up of constituents with vast and varied experience in alternative education programming. Representatives of the NAEA are available to provide on-site technical assistance, offer professional development opportunities, and serve as external program evaluators for state education agencies, school districts, and alternative education programs.

For questions regarding *Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming,* the 2009 *Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education Award,* or other consultation services visit the NAEA website at http://the-naea.org or contact James Vince Witty at (615) 532-4768.

Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education: Indicators of Quality Programming

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