

2005

# Alternative High Schools on the Virginia Peninsula

Oliver Robertson  
*Old Dominion University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/ots\\_masters\\_projects](https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/ots_masters_projects)



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Robertson, Oliver, "Alternative High Schools on the Virginia Peninsula" (2005). *OTS Master's Level Projects & Papers*. 139.  
[https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/ots\\_masters\\_projects/139](https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/ots_masters_projects/139)

This Master's Project is brought to you for free and open access by the STEM Education & Professional Studies at ODU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in OTS Master's Level Projects & Papers by an authorized administrator of ODU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@odu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@odu.edu).

Alternative High Schools on the Virginia Peninsula

A Research Paper

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Occupational and Technical

Studies at

Old Dominion University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Science in Occupational and Technical Studies

By

Oliver Cornell Robertson

August 2005

## Signature Page

This research paper was prepared by Oliver Cornell Robertson under the guidance of Dr. John M. Ritz in Occupational and Technical Education 636, Problems in Occupational and Technical Studies. It was submitted to the Graduate Program Director as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Masters of Science.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_

John M. Ritz, Ed.D  
Graduate Advisor, Graduate  
Program Director of  
Occupational and Technical  
Studies

# Table of Contents

	<b>Page</b>
SIGNATURE PAGE.....	ii
LIST OF TABLES.....	v
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vi
<b>CHAPTER</b>	
<b>I</b> INTRODUCTION.....	1
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM .....	2
RESEARCH GOALS .....	2
BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE.....	3
LIMITATIONS .....	4
ASSUMPTIONS .....	4
PROCEDURES .....	5
DEFINITION OF TERMS.....	6
OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS .....	7
<b>II</b> REVIEW OF LITERATURE .....	8
ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS.....	9
THE STUDENT.....	11
THE ENVIRONMENT.....	12
VIRGINIA PENINSULA ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS....	13
AT RISK STUDENTS.....	15

<b>III</b>	<b>METHODS AND PROCEDURES . . . . .</b>	<b>18</b>
	POPULATION . . . . .	18
	METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION . . . . .	19
	INSTRUMENT DESIGN . . . . .	19
	STATISTICAL ANALYSIS . . . . .	19
	SUMMARY . . . . .	20
<b>IV</b>	<b>FINDINGS . . . . .</b>	<b>21</b>
	SCHOOL RESPONSE RATE . . . . .	21
	SCHOOL RESPONSES . . . . .	21
	SUMMARY . . . . .	26
<b>V</b>	<b>SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS . . .</b>	<b>27</b>
	SUMMARY . . . . .	27
	CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	30
	RECOMMENDATIONS . . . . .	32
	REFERENCES . . . . .	35
	APPENDIX . . . . .	37

## List of Tables

<b>Table</b>	<b>Page</b>
Table 1- VIRGINIA PENINSULA SCHOOLS AND DROPOUT NUMBERS .....	9
Table 2- VIRGINIA PENINSULA ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS.....	15
Table 3-ADMITTANCE AND COMPLETION CRITERIA.....	24
Table 4-RESPONSE TO SURVEY QUESTIONS.....	25

## List of Figures

<b>Figures</b>	<b>Page</b>
Figure 1-DROPOUT AND GRADUATION RATE.....	23

# Chapter I

## Introduction

Throughout the United States parents and educators were sending students to alternative schools. Whether it was because of a lack of faith in the traditional school system, at risk and troubled students, overcrowding, or just an administrative decision that an alternative school would be better for both the school system and the child, alternative schools were being used more to help students complete the education requirements needed for high school graduation.

In the state of Virginia there were a total of 29 various types of alternative educational programs (Hill, 2002). These educational programs offered both teenagers and adults different avenues to receive a high school diploma or a General Education Development (GED) equivalent. This study was done to look at alternative high schools on the Virginia Peninsula for the school aged young adult who needs or desires to complete high school and receive the same credits as are issued by the traditional school district.



There were eight alternative schools listed for the Virginia Peninsula. These were schools where a student can attend and receive the same or similar seat time that he or she would receive in a traditional school setting. One of the schools studied seated 185 students (Middle and High Schools Directory, 2005). This school served both Hampton and Newport News.

### **Statement of Problem**

The purpose of this study was to determine the capacity of alternative high schools on the Virginia Peninsula to admit those students from its public school system that needed to complete grades 9 through 12.

### **Research Goals**

To guide this study the following research goals were used.

1. Identify the number of seats in Peninsula alternative schools.
2. Identify the academic resources of those schools.
3. Identify the admittance criteria to those schools.
4. Identify the credit and degree the student receives at completion of those alternative schools.
5. Determine the future capacity of alternative high

schools on the Virginia Peninsula.

### **Background and Significance**

The state of Virginia had a graduation rate of 74%, according to the Manhattan Institute's web site. This left another 26% of students without a high school diploma. Some of that 26% were expunged from the public school system, held other obligations that the student believed to be more important, or had given up on completing their high school education. Also, of the 26%, were those students who completed the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, but because of the standards of learning held a certificate of completion instead of a high school diploma.

Whatever the reason, in order for these young people to have a decent life, further their education, or gain technical and vocational skills, they needed to complete their high school education. This study was to determine whether there was a place for those out of school students when they have to leave the public school system and seek alternative means to complete their high school education. It was also undertaken to determine the future capacity of existing alternative high schools on the Virginia Peninsula.

## **Limitations**

The limitations of this study were as follows:

- This study was conducted only on the Virginia Peninsula in an attempt to investigate the need for alternative high schools and the credits that were issued by the existing schools.
- It reviewed criteria used by those schools to determine admittance.
- The seat times required by those alternative high schools to complete high school and the unit of credit they were issued.

## **Assumptions**

The assumptions of this study were:

- The alternative high schools on the Virginia Peninsula were issuing the same credit as were issued at the local high schools.
- There were smaller class sizes in the alternative schools than those at the traditional high schools.
- There were not enough seats to accommodate the need for the prospective students from the traditional public school system on the Virginia Peninsula.

## Procedures

Being that there were not many alternative high schools or alternative schools on the Virginia Peninsula most of the data were collected through fax and personal interviews with administrators using a survey as a guide. This study also used previously recorded data; data available to the public. The interviews were conducted through questionnaires completed by the researcher and the administrators of the schools. The questions on the questionnaires were of open and closed form. The recorded data were collected from sources available to the public and from the school records that were available to the public. The type of data collected consisted of:

- Graduation rate.
- Unit of credits earned.
- Transferability of earned credit.
- Expansion of alternative Virginia Peninsula schools.

## Definition of Terms

The following were definitions of terms that were used in this study:

**Alternative High Schools** - schools that are designated for at-risk-youths. Not alternative schools within a public school, but physically distant from the public school and issued the required credits for high school completion.

**Public School System** - the traditional school system.

**Virginia Peninsula** - an area on the Peninsula of Virginia consisting of Hampton, Newport News, Williamsburg, Wythe, and York County.

**Capacity** - the maximum number of students that a building can physically safely seat.

**Resources** - the tools made available to those schools for the students to graduate: transportation, computers, tutors and counselors.

**Seats** - where a student can physically sit and receive an education.

**Criteria** - the standard that an individual has to meet for admittance.

**At-risk-youths** - students that are having trouble in the public school system and may not graduate high school.

## **Overview of Chapters**

Chapter I was an introduction to the research study. This chapter included information on the graduation rate throughout the state of Virginia and basic information on the graduation rate throughout the country. This chapter also included the number of alternative schools listed as such for the Virginia Peninsula.

Chapter II, Review of Literature, discussed other studies and research that has been conducted on alternative schools in Virginia and other parts of the United States. Chapter III, Methods and Procedures, discussed the instrument and measures used during the study to collect data. Chapter IV, Findings, discussed the analysis and results of the study, and Chapter V, Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations, concluded the study and the discussion.

## Chapter II

### Review of Literature

This review discussed alternative schools, the students, the environment, and the type of alternative high schools on the Virginia Peninsula. It discussed the different types of alternative schools throughout the country and the type of students that were enrolled in those schools.

Alternative high schools were becoming the norm and may prove to be the wave of the future for high school education. Those students that were advancing from grade 8 and going to grade 9 in some districts were viewed by the school administrators as being "at risk". Those students were being prepared for the challenges of both entering and completing high school at some of these alternative schools. The schools also served as an alternative for "at risk youths" who were having trouble with the traditional high school system or have been considered to better benefit from an alternative school through to graduation. Table I gives a description of the 2003 and 2004 drop out rate for the Virginia Peninsula (Virginia Department of Education, 2005).

**Table 1. Virginia Peninsula Traditional Schools and Dropout Numbers.**  
**School by City**                      **Dropouts**                      **Number of High Schools and Middle Schools**

<b>Newport News</b>	64	13
<b>Hampton</b>	236	10
<b>Poquoson</b>	4	2
<b>Williamsburg</b>	90	5
<b>Wythe</b>	26	6

The web site did not list the number of students that had been expunged from the school system or those that were under long term suspension.

### **Alternative Schools**

Alternative education to the traditional school system began in the 1960s as an attempt to educate students that were having trouble in the traditional school setting (Fay, 1980). Today most school districts are required to have an alternative means of educating school-aged young adults in their districts so they will have an opportunity to complete high school.

Across the country alternatives to the traditional educational system are growing. As of January 2000 there were 1,390 alternative high schools in the United States (Collins, et al., 2000, p. 5).



There were three types of alternative schools. Type I schools were those alternative schools that students choose to enroll in. This could be because the student was seeking a greater challenge than he or she was receiving in the traditional school setting, or just for change. The Type I school was usually considered a magnet school or a technical-vocational school. Type II schools were those schools that were the end of the line for what was considered the troubled student. These students had been put out of the public school system or were on the verge of being dismissed from the public school system because of excess absences, fighting, or disruptive behavior. Those students had been labeled as troublemakers or troublesome to that particular environment. Type III schools were usually for remedial course work and "social skills" that the student had to acquire to positively function in society. Type III schools specialized more so in the community aspects of education (Rayle, 1998, p. 244).

Most of those schools had been labeled as schools for students that were not capable of performing at the traditional high school level. This included the Type I alternative school, and some of the students were labeled as, "at risk youths", because of the alternative label.

The label "at risk youths" involves poor academic, and behavioral, performance attendance, and in some cases attitude problems.

### **The Student**

In many situations the student at an alternative high school was on his or her last attempt to complete high school. He or she was usually on the verge of being put out of the traditional school system and had been stigmatized as having some type of problem. They were either expunged from school, expelled, or they just decided to quit school. Either of those actions placed them at risk of becoming a part of the juvenile justice system. This course of action also marked them for what some have grown accustomed to, "being lost in the system" (Kamerick, 2003, n. p.).

Most arrived at an alternative school unable to trust or confide in the teachers and counselors that were provided at the school. The staff had to find a way to change learned behaviors, attitudes, and at the same time earn the student's trust (Kamerick, 2003, np). With most of those schools there was not much time to accomplish that task. This situation placed the staff at these schools in playing various roles. They had to teach, become social

workers, family members, and counselors (Oklahoma, 2003, p. 16), not only to assist the student in becoming comfortable with the environment but also to keep them in school.

Once the student had learned that he or she could have confidence in the staff, most began to develop their potential. They began to realize that they were not being affronted by the staff at the schools and became most comfortable with their surroundings. Quite a few of those students came from backgrounds that either gave no support, or very little, which hindered their success in the traditional school system (Hill, 2002, p. 16).

### **The Environment**

Unlike the traditional high school system where the student teacher ratio was much greater, most classes at alternative high schools were much smaller. There usually were about "15-20 students per class" (Rayle, 1998, p. 244). Given the circumstances of the students, who arrived at the school with low self esteem and an inability to adjust, added to the various roles that the teacher may have had to play during the course of a given day. The teacher or instructor may have had to be a counselor, an advisor, and, a friend to a student at any given time. The smaller class size for the alternative high school was

ideal for the student. It provided some alternative school students for self-paced learning and the individual decided how he or she would learn the objectives and lessons. They were given options as in the traditional high school but the rules were usually stricter and there was a low tolerance for the abuse of any of the rules. Things that some students could get away with in the traditional high school system, like picking fights and playing pranks during class time were not tolerated at alternative high schools (Rayle, 1998, p. 244).

### **Virginia Peninsula Alternative Schools**

There were eight alternative schools that served the Virginia Peninsula. They were:

- ✓ Aviation Academy
- ✓ Enterprise Academy I & II
- ✓ Jackson Academy
- ✓ Hampton Harbor Academy
- ✓ New Horizons (with 2 locations)
- ✓ Point Option
- ✓ Telecommunications
- ✓ York River Regional Academy (Middle and High Schools Directory, 2005).

Only three of the schools listed educated students from

grades 9 through 12. Aviation Academy served grades 9 through 12. Aviation Academy was a Type I school. Aviation Academy was not the type of school for students that had been or were on the verge of being expunged or had to leave the public school system for whatever reasons. The school educated students that were currently enrolled in the public school system and wanted something extra such as an information technology component in conjunction with their regular studies. Enterprise Academy, both I and II, carried students from grades 6 through 12, and it issued a standard diploma. The credits issued at Enterprise were transferable to the traditional high school district.

New Horizons carried students from grades 11 and 12. This school was also for students that were enrolled in the traditional school system and wanted a technical component with their regular studies. Point Option carried students from grades 10 through 12, but the students were enrolled in the traditional school system and wanted a vocational component according to the school's administrator. Jackson Academy carried students from grades 6 through 8 only (Middle and High Schools Directory, 2005). York River Regional seated those in need of a high school curriculum during its morning session, and a middle school curriculum

during the afternoon session. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, the school offered General Education Development (GED) classes for two sessions. One session was in the morning and the second session was in the afternoons (Welcome to York River Regional School, n. d.). See Table 2 for the school listings and types.

**Table 2. Virginia Peninsula Alternative Schools.**

School	Type	High School Completion
Aviation Academy	Type I	No
Enterprise Academy I and II	Types II and III	Yes
Hampton Harbor Academy	Type I	No
Jackson Academy	Type I	No
New Horizons	Type I	No
Point Option	Type I	No
Telecommunications	Type I	No
York River Regional Academy	Type II	No

Note: Type I-Alternative schools that were considered magnet or technical-vocational schools.  
 Type II-Schools for students that were having trouble in the traditional school setting.  
 Type III-Schools for remedial coursework and the community aspects of education.

**“At Risk Students”**

It was at grade 9 where most of the problems tended to escalate with students. There were high rates of truancy, drop outs, retentions, and other negative factors that caused alarm for teachers and the principals within the traditional school system (Epps, 1998, p. 40). Only two of the schools listed above offered grade twelve completion,

but grade 9 seemed to be the most difficult for most at risk students who got that far in their education.

Minnie Howard was a school for grade 9 only. The school was in Alexandria, Virginia, and it was not a Virginia Peninsula alternative school. The school acted as a buffer or a prep-school for students leaving junior high and were about to enter high school. Thanks to this school, all of the negative factors that may cause a student to drop-out of high school seemed to have diminished. The state of Virginia was ahead of most states, and its Legislature had mandated that each division within the state offer an alternative means of education. This would provide more options for those students that were considered to be at risk throughout the state (Duke, n. d., p. 1).

Most of the accredited alternative high schools that offered the traditional high school coursework and credit had had a tremendous impact on the success of youths throughout the United States (Hill, 2002, n. p.). Alternative high schools will be the wave of the future (Duke, n. d., n. p.).

## Summary

As the high school drop out rate across the United States has increased by 10%, in recent years most of those students choose to enroll in alternative high schools (Manhattan, 2003). Students tended to perform better once they realized that the staff of those schools were there to help them realize their full potential. This was when they excelled both academically and socially. Some of those students returned to the traditional high school and were able to maintain a high grade point average and were better able to adapt to the social environment. Those who remained at the alternative schools also did very well, in fact, they did better than they would have if they had returned to the traditional school system (Rayle, 1995, p. 244).

The next chapter discussed the Methods and Procedures that were used to conduct this study. The chapter will focus on the population, instrument design, and the statistical analysis used during this study of Virginia Peninsula alternative high schools.



## **Chapter III**

### **Methods and Procedures**

This study was undertaken as a case study. The research was conducted on the Virginia Peninsula at its alternative high schools, grades 9 through 12. This chapter, Methods and Procedures, discusses the population, instrument design, methods of data collection, statistical analysis, and summary.

#### **Population**

The population for this study was the alternative high schools on the Virginia Peninsula. There were eight alternative schools. The schools studied were:

- ✓ Aviation Academy
- ✓ Enterprise Academy I & II
- ✓ Hampton Harbor Academy
- ✓ Jackson Academy
- ✓ New Horizons (with 2 locations)
- ✓ Point Option
- ✓ Telecommunications
- ✓ York River School

All of these schools were listed as alternative schools on the various web sites for Peninsula Virginia City schools.

Not all of them carried students from grade 9 through high school completion. The facilities that made up those schools, and the class size or student to teacher ratio for each of the alternative high schools, were also used in this study.

### **Instrument Design**

The questionnaire had both closed and open form questions. The closed form questions had a ranking from one to five with five being the highest rank and one being the lowest. Data available to the public were also collected and used in this study. See Appendix A for the survey used to complete this study.

### **Methods of Data Collection**

The methods of collecting data for this study were faxed surveys and personal interviews with administrators using a questionnaire as a guide for what questions to ask. The data were collected from June 01, 2005 through July 30, 2005.

### **Statistical Analysis**

The analysis of the data collected through the closed form portion of the questionnaire was tabulated using a ranking from one to five with one being the lowest in rank. The mean for the answers was the only statistical analysis

used during this study.

### **Summary**

This chapter focused on the methods and procedures used to complete this study. It listed the schools studied and how the data were tabulated. The finding of this study will be reviewed in Chapter IV, Findings.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Findings**

The purpose of this study was to determine the capacity of alternative high schools on the Virginia Peninsula to admit students from its public school system that needed to complete grades 9 through 12. This chapter will present the findings of the research and will present supporting data using tables and figures.

#### **School Response Rate**

Of the schools studied, Aviation Academy, Telecommunications Jackson Academy, New Horizons, Point Option, when contacted, did not consider themselves alternative schools. They considered themselves to be magnet and vocational schools, according to their administrators. Although the eight schools were contacted and responded, only two of the schools met the criteria for this study, i.e., the completion of grades 9 through 12, the insurance of a diploma, and the same state accredited credit issued by the traditional high school system.

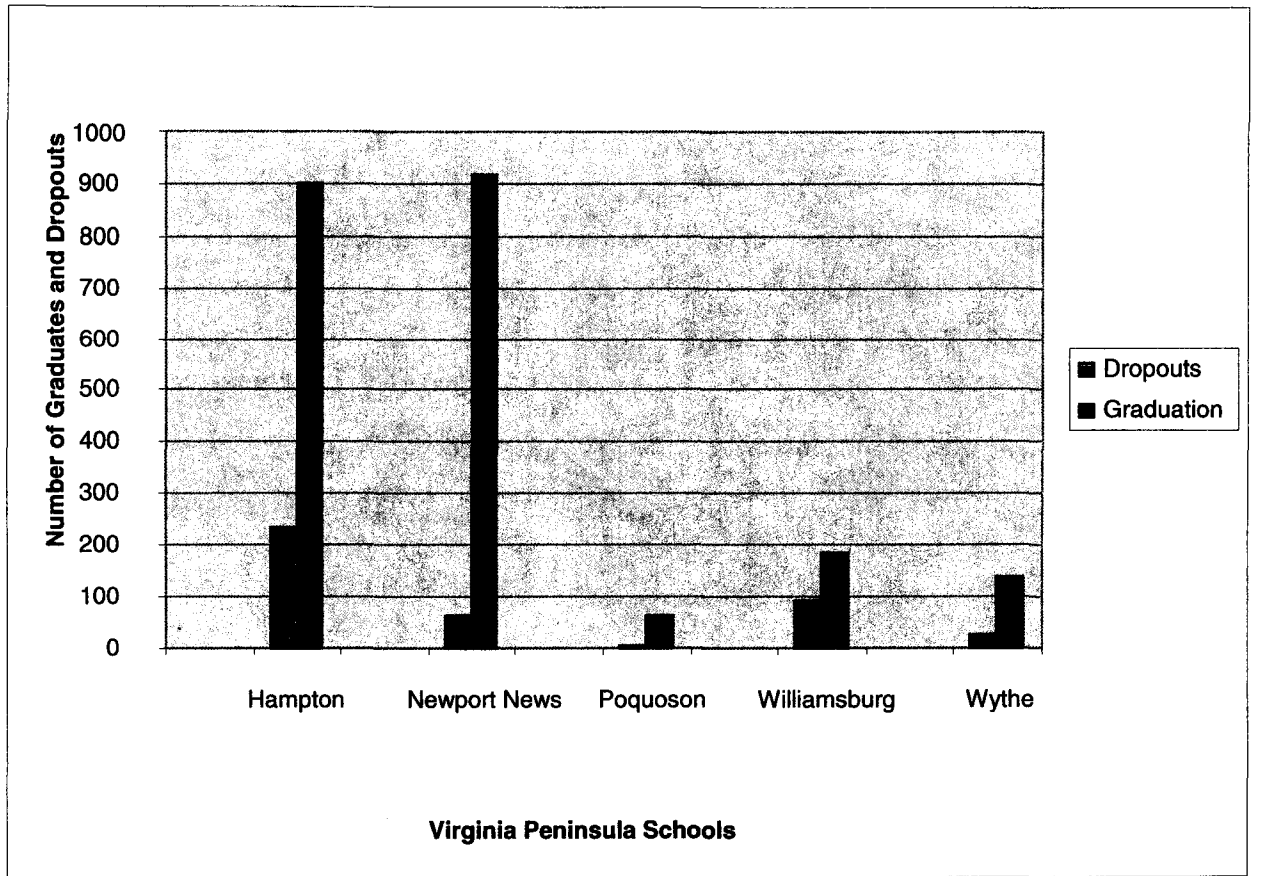
Enterprise Academy II and York River Regional Academy were the schools that served the entire Virginia Peninsula as alternatives to the local school district for "at risk"

youths. Enterprise Academy II was the only alternative school that took students through to high school completion and it served both Hampton and Newport News. York River Regional Academy served all of York County but had only grades nine and ten.

Enterprise Academy had 170 students during the 2003 and 2004 school year and there were approximately 300 students who dropped out of the Hampton and Newport News traditional school system between grades 7 and 12 during the 2003 and 2004 school year. Figure 1 gives a complete picture of the out of school students to those that completed high school during the 2003 and 2004 class year according to the Virginia Department of Education's Web Site (Virginia Department of Education, 2005).

Because of the way the schools were listed on the Virginia Department of Education's web site, both high schools and middle schools were included in Figure 1. Though this study was investigating grades 9 through 12, the middle school was included in the Virginia Department of Education's data. This takes the data from grades 7 through 12, instead of grades 9 through 12.

Figure 1. Dropout and Graduation Rates.



The dropout numbers for the Virginia Peninsula schools were high. These numbers do not include expulsions and long term suspensions.

York River Regional Academy had a capacity to enroll 42 students for grades 9 and 10. The resources for Enterprise Academy and York River Regional Academy were readily available and provided to these schools. The resources provided to both schools allowed students who wished to return to the traditional school system to do so,

transferring the credit earned with them.

The admittance criteria for both schools were different. They included both local and state requirements, see Table 3.

**Table 3. Admittance and Completion Criteria.**

	<b>Enterprise Academy</b>	<b>York River Regional Academy</b>
Admittance Criteria	Varies from school district to school district.	Independent charter school. Sanctioned by local educational agency and the state for curriculum purposes.
Assist students in completing high school.	Student is assisted by course offerings and support services.	Not applicable
Type of diploma or degree offered	Standard diploma	Not Applicable
Retention rate through to completion	Not Applicable	Encouraged to complete entire year for grades 9 and 10.
Seats	185	42
Seats available	15	5

Enterprise Academy was more prepared to accept students from the various school districts than was York River Regional. Enterprise could accommodate the different completion criteria that other school districts have. York River Regional worked more with the local school district and was not considered a part of the public school system

as was Enterprise Academy. Enterprise Academy was also a Type II and III school, which meant that most students that attended that school had reached their end in the traditional school system and may not be allowed to continue their education in the Virginia public school system. Whether it was because of behavioral problems, administrative or a parental decision, it was a final attempt to complete high school.

Enterprise Academy had plans for future expansion. This would enable them to accommodate more students. York River Regional had no plans for expansion, even though it had been considered. The student did have input in deciding whether he or she will attend either school and the students were allowed to transfer the credit earned to a traditional school system.

The survey that was sent to both Enterprise Academy and York River Regional was summarized below. It gave a breakdown of the responses from the administrators and the mean for each closed form question. See Table 4.

**Table 4. Responses to Survey Questions.**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Tabulated Responses from both schools.</b>	<b>Mean for the response to each question for both schools.</b>
Are there adequate seats for incoming students at your school?	Enterprise answered favorably to this question but York River's answer was unfavorable.	3



Does the student have any input on attending your school?	Both schools answered favorably to this question.	5
Are students allowed to transfer the credit earned to a traditional school?	Both schools answered favorably to this question.	5
Is there a plan for future expansion for your school?	Enterprise answered favorably to this question but York River was unsure.	3.5

### **Summary**

This chapter provided the details of the information that was gathered for this research. The data presented were collected through questionnaires and interviews conducted with administrators of the schools. Only one school failed to respond and this was due to the school moving to another building and The Standards of Learning tests that were being administered during the time of this study. Chapter V will provide the Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations of this study.

## **Chapter V**

### **Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

This was the final chapter for this study. This chapter discussed the summary, conclusions, and recommendations for this study based on the data that were collected and reported.

#### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to determine the capacity of alternative high schools on the Virginia Peninsula to admit those students from its public school system that needed to complete grades 9 through 12. The research goals were as follows:

1. Identify the number of seats in Peninsula alternative schools.
2. Identify the academic resources available to those schools.
3. Identify the admittance criteria to those schools.
4. Identify the credits and the degree the student received at the completion of these alternative schools.
5. Determine the future capacity of alternative high schools on the Virginia Peninsula.

The data for this study were collected through questionnaires answered by the administrators of the Virginia Peninsula alternative schools and data available to the public on the Internet and at public libraries.

The state of Virginia had a graduation rate of 74%, according to the Manhattan Institute's web site (Education Working Paper, 2003). This left 26% of students without a high school diploma. Some of these 26% were expunged from the public school system, held other obligations that the student believed to be more important, or had simply given up on completing high school. Also, of the 26%, were those students who completed the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, but because of the standards of learning, held a certificate of completion instead of a high school diploma.

Whatever the reason, in order for these young people to have a decent life, further their education, or gain technical and vocational skills, they needed to complete their high school education. This study was to determine whether there was a place for those out of school students when they have to leave the public school system and seek alternative means to complete their high school education.

The limitations of this study were as follows:

- This study was undertaken only on the Virginia Peninsula in an attempt to look at the need for alternative high schools and the credits issued by the existing schools.

- It reviewed criteria used by those schools to determine admittance.
- The seat times required by those alternative high schools to complete high school and the units of credit they were issued was analyzed.

The population for this study were the alternative high schools on the Virginia Peninsula. The schools studied were:

- ✓ Aviation Academy
- ✓ Enterprise Academy I & II
- ✓ Hampton Harbor Academy
- ✓ Jackson Academy
- ✓ New Horizons (with 2 locations)
- ✓ Point Option
- ✓ Telecommunications
- ✓ York River School

All schools were listed as alternative schools on the Virginia Department of Education's web site (Virginia Department of Education, n. d.). The facilities that made up those schools, and the class size or student to teacher ratio for each of the alternative high schools, were also used in this study. The instrument used for this

study was a questionnaire. The questionnaire had both closed and open form questions, with a ranking from one to five with one being the lowest rank for some questions. The data were collected through a questionnaire that was tabulated to find the mean between the answers given by the two schools that met the criteria for this study. The analysis of the data collected through the closed form portion of the questionnaire was tabulated for Enterprise Academy and York River Regional Academy.

### **Conclusions**

The findings of this study showed that there was a need for expansion of alternative high schools according to the research goals which were as follows:

1. Identify the number of seats in Peninsula alternative schools.

There were only 185 seats at the only school designed for 9 through 12 grade completion. Enterprise Academy was the only school on the Virginia Peninsula that gave students the same high school credit as given at the traditional schools at completion. York River Regional Academy only carried students from grades 9 through 10 and only seated 42 students.

2. Identify the academic resources available to those schools. According to the administrators, the resources for Enterprise Academy and York River Regional Academy were readily available to

both schools. Resources such as instructional materials, computers, and, teachers were there to assist students in receiving a quality education.

3. Identify the admittance criteria to those schools.

According to the findings, the admittance criteria were different for both Enterprise Academy and York River Regional Academy.

Enterprise Academy's criteria differed according to the school district that the student enters. York River Regional Academy's admittance criteria was set by the local education agency and the state for curriculum purposes. The student did have input on whether he or she would attend either of the schools.

4. Identify the credit and degree the student receives at completion of these alternative schools.

Enterprise Academy allowed students to earn the same credit that was earned through the traditional school system. The school issued a standard diploma upon completion of grade 12. York River Regional Academy allowed students to transfer the credit earned in grades 9 and 10 to the traditional school system for the student to enter the eleventh grade.

6. Determine the future capacity of alternative high schools on the Virginia Peninsula.

There were only 185 seats at the only school designed for grades 9 through 12 completion and was considering expansion. Enterprise Academy was the only school on the Virginia Peninsula that gave

students the same high school credit as given at the traditional schools at completion. York River Regional Academy only carried students from grades 9 through 10 and only had a 42 seat capacity with no intention for expansion. Their students were allowed to transfer the earned credits to a traditional public school system. There were more students out of school during the 2003 and 2004 school year than there was a place for them to complete the requirements for high school graduation. This does not include expulsions or long term suspensions.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the finding of this research, it was recommended:

1. More consideration should be placed on Type II and III schools for alternative education on the Virginia Peninsula. The dropout numbers for Hampton alone were 236 students which did not include expulsions and long term suspensions. If considered in time, the alternative school would lower the high school dropout rate for incoming high school students.
2. A study should be undertaken to determine the attitudes and desires of the students at the alternative schools. The alternative school had a higher rate of completion for students that had to leave the traditional high school and seek alternative means for completing their high school education, and they usually did complete high school after attending an alternative school.

3. A study should be undertaken to determine the attitudes of educators at the alternative schools. The educators at the alternative schools seemed enthusiastic concerning the success of students which may account for the completion rate of alternative students. The educators at the alternative schools had to play various roles while handling alternative students which contributed to the overall outcome for the student. The educators attitudes toward the student's success is very important for an alternative education to work.
4. Expansion of Enterprise Academy and York River Academy should take place within the near future. The dropout rate seems to have increased during the recent years and there would still be a need for a higher capacity alternative school. The dropout numbers for Hampton and Newport News were 300 students which did not include the expulsions and long term suspensions. The two alternative schools together could hold only 227 students. If the "at risk" student is caught in time by either the administration at the traditional school system or the parent(s), the "at risk" student could be placed into an alternative school where he or she most usually completed high school. If not for high school completion there could be an improvement of the attitude of the student. This will enable the student to



return to the traditional public school system for high school completion.

5. There should be more Type II and III alternative schools opened for students who had to leave the traditional school system, but also needed to finish high school. The Type II and III alternative schools were for those students that were considered "at risk" in the traditional school district.

## References

- Collins, L. J., Gowda, R., Vani., & Grunbaum, J. (2000).  
Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance National Alternative  
High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey, United States,  
1998.
- Duke, L. D. (n. d.) The Future of High Schools: What Will  
Secondary Education Look Like in the Next  
Century.<http://archone.tamu.edu/~crscenter/programs/Rowlett99/FutureOfHighSchools.html>
- Epps, B., & Duke, L. D. (Ed.). (1998). Spotlight on New  
Learning Environments: A Journal of the Thomas  
Jefferson Center for Educational Design at the  
University of Virginia. (ERIC Document Reproduction  
Service No. ED438688)
- Fay, M. (1980) An Analysis of Alternative Students'  
Attitudes Enrolled In "Exploring The Construction  
Industry" At The Virginia Beach Career Development  
Center. Unpublished manuscript, Old Dominion  
University.
- Hill, M. (2002). A True Alternative: Leadership, 16.
- Kamerick, M. (2003). Alternative High School offers at-risk  
kids a second chance. New Orleans City Business. N/A
- Manhattan Institute. (2003). Education Working Paper.

<http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/>

[ewp\\_03\\_appendix\\_tables\\_2-3.htm](#)

Newport News Public Schools. (n.d.). Middle and High Schools Directory. Retrieved February 26 2005. From

<http://sbo.nn.k12.va.us/schools/secondary.shtml>

Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education.

(2003). Career Tech Programs: Helping Teenage Mothers. Techniques, 16.

Rayle, M., J. (1995). The Exploration Alternative School: A Case Study. High School Journal, 244.

MySchool Online. (n.d.). Welcome to York River Regional School. <http://myschoolonline.com/site/0,1876,51835-46548-53-2993,00.html>

Virginia Department of Education (n.d.). Retrieved June 20 2005. From <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/>.

## Appendix A

### Peninsula Alternative High Schools

School Number \_\_\_\_\_

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to determine the capacity of alternative high schools on the Virginia Peninsula to admit those students from its public school system that need to complete grades 9 through 12.

**Directions:** Ask the administrator or representative all of the following questions, and request that they answer each question to the best of their knowledge. The interviewee will be told that participation in this study is voluntary and that their information will be kept confidential.

1=strongly disagree

2=disagree

3=neutral

4=agree

5=strongly agree

1. Are there adequate seats for incoming students at your school?

1 2 3 4 5

2. How many alternative students are enrolled at your school?

---

---

3. Are academic resources readily available to your school?

1 2 3 4 5

4. What criteria exist for admittance to your school?

---

---

5. Does the student have any input on whether he or she  
will attend your school? 1 2 3 4 5

6. Please describe how your school assists students in  
completing grades 9 through 12.

---

---

---

---

7. Please describe the type of degree or diploma a student  
receives if any.

---

---

---

---

8. What is the retention and completion rate of a diploma  
through your school?

---

---

---

9. Are students allowed to return to the traditional public school setting if he or she chooses transferring the credit earned at your school?

1 2 3 4 5

10. Is there a plan for future expansion for your school?

1 2 3 4 5