THE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL FOR DROP-OUTS, REFORM OR RETREAT: A CASE STUDY OF A PUBLIC ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL

by

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to Heinz E. Bondy, from whom I first learned that education, politics, and humanism are not separate, but rather, should be inseparable.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

The focus of this study was a particular Alternative School program designed especially for drop-outs from traditional public high schools in a working class community in the Pacific Northwest. The general problem addressed in this dissertation was whether this type of alternative educational program was a legitimate reform, or instead, a retreat from meaningful reform? In this study meaningful reform refers to changes in the organization and function of public schools which serve to increase the opportunities for all students. This study has sought to understand that general problem by focusing its attention on a specific case study.

The importance of this general problem lies in the proliferation of Alternative Schools for alienated students in public school systems across the country. Since the support for these programs usually comes from the advocates of meaningful reform, and since these programs are often well received by the young people for whom they are created, the appearance of positive change is usually present. At the time

of this study there was considerable material available on "free" and "open" school theory. There was also some documentation available on the success or failure of school ventures employing those theoretical notions. Simultaneously, in other circles, a body of literature had arisen which was asking questions about the effects of sorting, segregation, and other types of special programs for deviants (Dunn 1968 and Shafer and Olexa 1972).

The primary task in this study was to apply the available data and theory on educational reform and special school programming to the new phenomena of Alternative Schools for alienated students. As part of that task a particular case study was examined. In fairness to the people interviewed and to the students at the Alternative School which was studied, the school will not be referred to by name. The community in which this school is located will arbitrarily be called Bridgeport.

If after analyzing the data from this case study, it is shown that the negative consequences of this type of special programming is substantial, then the image of reform will have been established as illusion. If however, the data from this case study contradicts the evidence, from analogous programs on the negative effects of sorting, then the image of reform

will appear to have an adequate basis in reality.

A Historical Perspective On The Problem

To appreciate both the "Alternative School Movement" and the theoretical notions supporting this movement, an examination of recent history is necessary. In the late sixties the United States was in a major state of social turmoil. The source of this turmoil can be traced to several factors: 1) The hopes of minorities and the disadvantaged were not being met, while the resources and commitment of the federal government was focused on a civil war in Asia; 2) white liberals were increasingly frustrated over the recognition of their inability to stop the war in Vietnam; 3) the college-age children of the middle-class became part of the short lived student movement, while 4) their younger brothers and sisters became part of the suburban drug culture. Many of the educated young members of the middle-class were thoroughly disenchanted with the social system, but lacked a strategy or alliance capable of bringing about meaningful change. As a result, they dissipated into small groups of cultural drop-outs.

The counter-culture of the late sixties and early seventies lacked an effective political program. Those who

talked about social change often envisioned a type of Utopian Socialism; the new culture would convert people by demonstrating a new and more humane life style. Two of the most widely read and discussed books on college campuses during this period were Walden Two by B.F. Skinner and Deschooling Society by Ivan Illich. Illich was quite adept at perceiving the dehumanization which has become a bi-product of technological society. However, after surveying the damage wrought by our institutions, Illich suggested we can only be saved if we abolished one of the most influential of these institutions -- namely the public schools. After making a persuasive argument that present schooling practices help perpetuate oppression, he offers only blind faith that from the abolition of the public schooling apparatus we could evolve a better system. In Walden Two, Skinner (1954), like Illich, suggested the need for massive change in our social institutions. Both suggested that the best strategy to achieve this change was through demonstration projects. What is important in this discussion is that the strategy of getting away from present institutions and establishing separate model communities was a very popular idea among the youth of this period.

In 1960, A.S. Neill published Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing. Neill was the psychologist to

Illich, the social critic. His major thesis was that children are made unhealthy by the way we educate them. He argued that left to their own devices in a humanistic environment they would educate themselves. He felt that lessons are unnecessary if the child prefers play (Neill 1960 page 26).

The twin notions that 1) schooling is unnecessary and that 2) if we are going to have schools at all, they should be happy places, devoted to promoting affective goals ahead of cognitive skills, quite understandably became popular among a large segment of the young, educated, affluent population. These two notions were an easy answer to their deep frustration. To the young college educated drop-outs these notions confirmed their own doubts about the value and validity of their own recently completed educations. To those with a social conscience it offered the feeling that even while dropping-out they could still be part of the process of change. To the teen-agers of suburbia who were rejecting the values of their parents and teachers, it was an opportunity to latch onto something new, radical, and relevant.

This period, the middle Vietnam years 1968-1970, was a period of growth for progressive, independent schools (Private Schools). The children of the affluent and some of their parents, began choosing "free" schools over traditional public

or private preparatory schools. The more that drug-abuse spread through the suburbs, the greater was the interest generated in finding something relevant for the young people. In response to parent and community pressure public schools liberalized their dress and behavior codes and some districts initiated experimental schools and programs. As the evidence of unhappy kids in suburbia surfaced, the greater the market became for books which criticized the schools as a prime contribution source of middle-class alienation. A few examples were Holt 1964, Holt 1967, and Postman, Weingartner 1969.

Back in the ghetto the same problems which have existed throughout our urban history continued. Poor and minority children were coming to schools with lower skill development (measured by standarized tests) than their advantaged counterparts, and the gap was increasing as they progressed through school. Drop-out rates at inner-city schools continued to exceed the rates at other schools. Authors such as Kohl (1967), Kozol (1967), and Herndon (1968), taught in ghetto schools and wrote about their experiences. Drug addiction, a companion to poverty, was still excessive and growing in the inner cities. The fervor with which addiction prevention programs were started, once heroin hit the suburbs, was a source of cynicism to slum parents (Kozol, 1972). It only reinforced their firsthand knowledge of the

injustice of contemporary American society. Black children had been dying from addiction for years but society didn't seem to care. Now that white youths were getting hooked, people began paying attention. Similarly, the discovery of problems in suburban school systems was met with immediate concern and action, while slum schools had been ignored for years. As in the case of drug abuse, the movement of school problems into the suburbs brought with it a rash of crash programs.

Fueled by the zeal of visionaries, many of the radical school reformers who were busy designing programs for the alienated affluent children asserted that their free school visions were also appropriate to the needs of the disadvantaged. However Kozol (1972), wrote about his experience with an inner city alternative school in which he made it quite clear that he saw an enormous difference between the goals of the middle-class "open" school and his inner city "free" school. Kozol asserted that the poor inner city child needs to develop "hard skills." He rejected the notion that "hard skills" are of secondary importance.

Increasingly, public school districts have been creating alternative schools for alienated students. Specifically, these programs are aimed at drop-outs and "pre drop-outs."

This trend has been fostered by several developments: 1) political and legal pressure has been put on school districts to stop placing behavior problems in special education programs (Dunn, 1968). 2) The reforms which have been made in traditional comprehensive high schools, i.e. dress codes, have been responsive to some of the demands of the middle-class students, but have not been addressed to the practices and mechanisms which militate against the students from disadvantaged backgrounds. As a result, the number of low income students who were previously inclined to fail and drop out has not been decreased. 3) The availability of ESEA Title I funds has enabled districts to provide direct services to these students in alternative schools. 4) The middle-class college rebels, who were the spiritual base of the free school movement, have provided school districts with a reservoir of credentialed people with a commitment to deinstitutionalize schools.

Significance of the Study

It is the position taken in this study that change is needed in our educational institutions. The many problems of disadvantaged youth in our schools is ample proof of this need. As stated earlier the general question to be

asked by this dissertation is whether alternative schools for drop-outs were, in actuality, reform, or retreat. When one surveys the educational critics cited later in this dissertation, one finds that there is a great difference in the nature and scope of the changes they sought. Arthur Pearl (1972) stated:

> What is needed is sweeping reform--extending to every aspect of education. The power system that controls policy must be altered to include those now unrepresented or under represented. The curriculum must be changed so that socially relevant matters are included. The teaching force must be drawn from all strata of the population. The style of presentation and media used in the classroom must be up-dated to conform to modern technology. The narrow provincialism of current school concerns must be supplanted by national and international outlooks. The distinction between reform and revolution is important. With the former it is possible to analyze the current scene and build upon defensible activities. With the former, power is viewed as a means to achieve an improved educational program rather than as an end in itself. (page 42)

Postman and Weingartner (1973) described Pearl, among others, as a radical critic who is seeking revolutionary changes and is an opponent of reform. They say,

> ...while much of what the radical historians and analysts say is probably true, there is little immediate prospect for a radical change in the structure of American institutions. Thus, if one is serious about helping to improve the lives of children, one must work at those levels where improvement can actually occur in the foreseeable

> future. In a way the question is, What does one do about the schools until the revolution comes? The radical critic says, 'Nothing. Spend all your time bringing the revolution about.' The reformer says, 'Spend your time improving schools as much as possilbe. There are real kids in the schools now who can benefit in significant ways from efforts at reform. '...
>
> ...we might say the radical tends to be a utopian who...foregoes the easy solution and speaks to and for posterity. The reformer tends to be a pragmatist who will take what he can get... (pages 79-80)

What is important about the conflict between Pearl and Postman and Weingartner is not that they can't agree on terms, but that the challenge presented by Pearl is seen as unrealistic in the "foreseeable future" and is thereby dismissed in favor of more modest proposals.

Slater (1970) talked about strategies based upon the "toilet assumption". This assumption holds that when a social problem becomes too unpleasant to confront and correct we simply remove it from view. Thus, our response to slums has been Urban Renewal, psychotics have been placed in secluded mental hospitals, criminals have been locked up in isolated prisons, and the aged have been sent to nursing homes. This is functional for the rest of us since using the "toilet assumption" we are convinced that the problems have disappeared along with the symptoms. What is important to recognize is that

in every one of these cases a rationale is offered, showing that placement in these programs is in the best interests of the people involved. Another significant question for this study is: Are alternative schools for drop-outs based on the "toilet assumption," and if so, is it still possible for people like Postman and Weingartner to view these programs as reforms?

The importance of the above question increased as the pervasiveness of the programs increased. Why has it been that programs based on the "toilet assumption" proliferate? Do these programs require data which proves them successful to be perpetuated, or do they simply have to succeed in keeping these problems out of sight? In other arenas this appears to be the case. Correctional institutions keep being built, although there is scant evidence of any correction taking place. It would certainly be a shame if schools constructed for alienated students not only fail to reduce their alienation, but, in spite of that failure, continue.

Alternative School Movement

In recent years the call for alternatives in education has been one issue steadily gaining in momentum and impact. In the past the only alternatives ever open to elementary or

secondary students was private education. Families who could not afford, or did not want, to send their children to private or parochial schools had no choice but the local public school. In response to some of the historical forces mentioned earlier, an increased number of private and public alternative schools opened in the late sixties. Many commentators labelled this phenomena as "the alternative school movement". The use of the term "government" was misleading since, within this particular movement there was an extraordinary amount of variation.

In response to this growing "new movement" several organizations were established to coordinate and chronicle its progress. Among these were the National Consortium for Options in Public Education and the National Alternative School Program. The National Consortium for Options in Public Education was formed at the University of Indiana. The Consortium made the first comprehensive listing of alternative schools being operated under the auspices of public school districts. A more recent study of the same population has been conducted on a federal grant by the National Alternative Schools Program at the University of Massachusetts. Their recently completed survey, (1974), reveals the existence of

495 public alternative schools in operation. Another indication of the size and vitality of this movement is the fact that two of the most influential educational journals have devoted entire issues to this phenomena ("Harvard Educational Review", August 1972 and "Phi Delta Kappan", March 1973). A recent issue of the Wall Street Journal (May 31, 1974) carried a feature article on this new trend. Mario Fantini cites the alternative school movement and the movement towards educational vouchers as two of the most significant happenings in American Education (Fantini, 1970).

The report of the National Commission on the Reform of Secondary Education made the following recommendations:

> Recommendation #12: Alternative Paths to High School Completion. A wide variety of paths leading to completion of requirements for graduation from high school should be made available to all students. Individual students must be encouraged to assume major responsibility for the determination of their educational goals, the development of learning activities needed to achieve those goals, and the appraisal of their progress.
>
> Recommendation #13: Local Board Responsibilities for Funding Alternatives. Whenever a student chooses an acceptable alternative to the comprehensive high school, local boards should fund his education at the level of current expenditure computed for other students.

The significant issue then is not whether a movement towards alternatives is happening, but rather, what is happening within that movement. After making its recommendations the Commis-

sion acknowledged that,

> An alternative school or program is often established in a desperate attempt to resolve acute problems in the school rather than as an effort to improve educational opportunities. Some of the problems that various districts have sought to diffuse by alternative approaches are spiralling drop-out rates, truancy, pupil control difficulties, drug abuse, pregnancies, and hostilities attendent on racial integration. It is not surprising that few alternative programs or schools can bear this unwieldy burden.

By examining the Bridgeport Alternative School for drop-outs, a clearer picture should emerge of the nature and scope of change that was contemplated and later achieved within that district. It is irrelevant that Pearl and Postman have different meanings for reform and revolution. What is essential is the understanding that what may appear to be modest positive change might actually be a thinly guised "toilet" strategy, since, as the National Commission on the Reform of Secondary Education acknowledged, these schools are often used for purposes other than providing every young person with increased options. If applicability of certain radical "free school" notions have yet to be proven effective for disadvantaged youth, the classification of these programs as meaningful change agents may be in error. When one heeds the advice of Postman and Weingartner and "takes what he can get", he may be buying illusion, while

putting already disadvantaged young people into programs which may well further their disadvantage.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In pursuing an answer to the central problem of this study, are alternative schools for drop-outs a reform or a retreat from reform, it will be essential to review the literature as it affects certain aspects of the problem.

Specifically, it is important to understand what are the goals for education that various reforms wish to pursue. If a judgement is to be made on the validity of any specific reform, that judgement needs to be made in the light of a set of objectives. Since there is no unanimity of opinion on this subject a review of the debate is called for.

What is the Goal of Education?

Whether a repair, a reform, or a revolution is successful, is dependent upon the goal of the enterprise. In the debate between Pearl and Postman and Weingartner in chapter 1, the controversy over how radical reforms needed to be, in order to bring about meaningful changes, was addressed. One factor which could account for much of the disagreement on

educational strategies is the lack of consensus on objectives.

Numerous educators have written on changes needed in contemporary American education Kozol (1968, 1972), Skinner (1968), Pearl (1972), Graubard (1972), Holt (1964, 1967), Postman and Weingartner (1969-1973), Silberman (1970). There was, however, no set of objectives that all of these critics agreed upon. It seemed apparant that prior to evaluating the validity of any education strategy a set of criteria must be established. Silberman pointed out that this essential first step, the declaration of purpose, is often avoided if not actually ignored. He quotes Conant, the author of the most definitive study on secondary education, as saying that a discussion on educational philosophy or goals is so distasteful to him that when those issues are presented he is "ready to define education as what goes on in schools and colleges". Throughout Silberman's study the absence of clear goals to precede establishment of policy presents itself as a central problem. That very lack of goals finally provides Silberman with a reason to be optimistic:

> "What makes change possible, moreover, is that what is mostly wrong with the public school is due not to venality or indifference or stupidity, but to mindlessness. To be sure teaching has its share of sadists and clods, of insecure and angry men and women

> who hate their students for their openness, their exuberance, their color, or their affluence. But by and large teachers, principals, and superintendents are decent, intelligent, and caring people who try to do their best by their lights. If they make a botch of it, and an uncomfortably large number do, it is because it simply never occurs to more than a handful to ask why they are doing what they are doing, to think seriously or deeply about the purposes or consequences of education." (pages 10-11)

Silberman is talking about traditional school programs in the above statement. However, if he were talking about new and innovative reforms he might have observed the same mindlessness. In a response to Ivan Illich, Arthur Pearl suggested that:

> "Any dream of a good life offered by a responsible critic should have at least: (1) its attributes sufficiently spelled out so that advocates and opponents know what they are arguing about; (2) its essence analyzed for ecological, political, psychological, and economic reality; (3) its political course laid out so that we are alerted to the tactics and strategies needed to get us from where we are to where we ought to be." (Social Policy, March, April 1972)

The fact that many critics do not follow Pearl's three sequential steps--articulation of goals, strategies and tactics--presents a problem for the student of reform. Many reformers offer only tactics, and others, like Illich, offer strategies. However, since these suggestions lack a common context, meaning a shared set of objectives, a debate based upon their applicability becomes meaningless.

In most educational reform literature the emphasis is on tactics; this usually amounts to a discussion of alternative methods of instruction. Another area of educational criticism proposes another type of tactical maneuver--namely curriculum change. These critics assure that the problem lies in the content of public schooling, therefore, a change in that content should bring about the desired change in the students. These two categories, critics of methods and critics of curriculum, differ in their primary emphasis; however, they should not be viewed as distinct categories. There is an emerging trend which says that the way schools are run, i.e. the process, teaches children as much as what is taught within the classes.

Kozol (1972) and Graubard (1972) are two writers who are challenging the content, process, and goals of the public schools. They write of the need for major curriculum reform. Kozol feels that the public school curriculum is irrevocably wedded to its socialization function. He states that, "The school that flies the flag is, in the long run, no matter what the handsome community leader in the startling Afro likes to say, accountable to that flag and to the power and values which it represents." (page 15) The above quote reflects his fear that that co-optation of goals cannot be

avoided in the public school system.

On the other extreme (primarily concerned with methods) is B.F. Skinner, who raises little or no objections to the goals of contemporary public education. His concern is with its apparent inefficiency. He would like to extend a "technology of teaching" into our schools so that the same goals might be pursued with greater success (Skinner, 1968). By offering no more than a tactic, Skinner offers nothing to the critic who feels the goals and the direction of the public schooling process is in err.

Another educator, who holds radically different views from Skinner on both human nature and the goals of the educational enterprise, is A.S. Neill. Nonetheless, Neill's writings on education, like Skinner's, are not explicit on what the outcome of the schooling process should be. Neill (1960), gives his most explicit comment on goals saying, "My own criteria for success is the ability to work joyfully and to live positively." (page 29) One has to wonder whether Neill could consider a society of lobotomized adults as a group of successes. Since both Skinner and Neill limit their discussion to tools or tactics, they rest the morality of their respective cases on the blind faith 1) that children will always choose wisely for themselves and thus select the

proper goals, and 2) that the other offers the same blind faith to the packagers of programmed instruction.

Neill is not the only widely read critic who believes that the goals of education should be established by children. John Holt (1964), states his vision saying,

> "The school should be a great smorgasbord of intellectual, artistic, creative, and athletic activities, from which each child could take whatever he wanted, and as much as he wanted, or as little." (page 222) and

> "What we need to do and all we need to do, is bring as much of the world as we can into the school and the classroom; give the children as much help and guidance as they need and ask for; listen respectfully when they feel like talking; and then get out of the way. We can trust them to do the rest." (1970) page 189.

He rejects the notion of an essential curriculum in saying,

> "I would be against trying to cram knowledge into the heads of children, even if we could agree on what knowledge to cram, and could be sure that once cramed in it would stay in...For it seems to me a fact that, in our struggle to make sense out of life, the things we most need to learn are the things we most want to learn..." (page 187)

George Leonard, Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner are popular critics who offer additional classroom methods ranging from Questioning and Inquiry method (Postman and Weingartner 1969 chapter 3 and 5) to Talking Typewriters (Leonard 1968 page 189). These critics seem to feel they are

being very radical. Postman and Weingartner even suggest that inquiry is a "revolutionary", reform. However, by failing to connect their tactics into any comprehensible strategy for large scale change the impact of their suggestions becomes minimal. Graubard observes,

> "George Leonard, Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, and John Holt are and have been very popular with the free school and public school reformers, just as they are now being cited more and praised by high government education people, establishment writers like those of the NEA, for example. What makes this possible is the acceptability of the accompanying political analysis-or more accurately the accompanying lack of political analysis." (page 260)

Arthur Pearl is one education critic who has focused upon the public schools as part of an overall strategy for social change. As a result Pearl has formulated a list of educational goals and then offered suggestions on tactics and strategies consistant with those goals. (Pearl 1972) Pearl has asserted that in a "technologically advanced free society" educational programs should have these outcome goals for their students,

(1) The considered choice of a life career...

(2) The ability to exercise intelligent choice in democratic decision making...

(3) The acumen to make intelligent choice in cultural matters...

(4) The ability to develop oneself and live harmoniously with one's neighbors... (page 12)

Articulated goals, like Pearl's, have implications for both methods of instruction and content of instruction. While using the list of goals offered by Pearl and examining where these goals are in conflict with the notions of the other reformers, we can understand better the nature of the conflicting strategies.

The goal of political competency is one aspiration not shared by many "free schoolers". Graubard states, "This is an extremely depressing issue within the new schools. As in the counter-culture, politics is sometimes treated as a dirty word." (page 248) If one rejects competence in political matters as a legitimate goal, then the adoption of certain strategies makes sense, while those same strategies, i.e. Neill's child determined approach, would appear ludicrous in the context of a program that values political competency as an objective.

Whereas Ivan Illich is never very clear about his goals, one can surmise from reading his works that his vision of a desirable world is not that dissimilar from Pearl's vision. A major problem with Illich is his failure to provide realistic tactics and strategies. Illich demonstrates the danger of a shortsighted strategy when he proposes, "we

need a law forbidding discrimination in hiring, voting, or admissions to centers of learning based upon previous attendance at some curriculum." (page 11) There are many who could support such a measure, yet, some free school people are acting as if that law were already on the books. The question then becomes, can one be meeting the goal of offering every student career choice while disregarding the established prerequisites. This concern is especially crucial to the policies of reformers who claim to be particularily concerned with a transformation of education structures because of the role those structures play in perpetuating class, race, and ethnic bias, Kozol addresses this premature rejection of the credentialing process as practiced by some "Free-schoolers" when he states,

> "Parents are less backward and more realistic than some of their white co-workers are prepared to recognize. It seems to me that a tough, aggressive, skeptical and inventive skill like learning how to attack a tough and racist and emmensly difficult examination for the civil service, for City College, or for Harvard Law School rings a good deal more of deep down revolution than the handlooms and the science gadgets and gerbil cages that have come, in just five years to constitute an innovative orthodoxy on a scale no less totalitarian than the old Scott Foresman reader." (pages 52-53)

What is apparent in the above is that while Kozol is no lover of the credentialed society, he is aware of the need to make his tactics conform to his overall goal. This is a

key issue in evaluating the free school strategy; for if a strategy requires the sacrifice of children in the short run, to achieve an illusive long range goal, that strategy has a high moral price tag. A good strategy can work towards the long range goal, in this case decredentializing society, but should not do so at the expense of setting up children--worst of all, already disadvantaged children.

There is, however, still one fundamental difference in the strategy advocated by Kozol and Graubard and that offered by Pearl. The major conflict is that Kozol and Graubard accept the conservative bias inherent in a functional analysis of the public schools, and then they shy away from a confrontation with that function. Graubard (1972) cites Durkheim while analyzing public schools in a functional context, and then he declares,

> "If one opposes some of the basic values and institutional arrangements of a social order, then one certainly opposes socialization institutions that sustain those values and institutions and would obviously oppose a school system which fullfilled Durkheim's conception of the school role of educational institutions. But, if one holds attitudes radically critical of the dominent values and institutions, how can one seriously expect public schools or any other official institution to represent or support attitudes that are significantly subversive of the status quo?" (page 8)

The above statement helps explain why many in the "alternative school movement" decided to work outside of the system

and bring about change by conversion. However, their dreams did not materialize as Robert Barr, editor of Changing Schools, and a leader in the "alternative School movement" realistically concluded after a recent survey of the movement,

> "The free school movement failed during the 60's to become the wave of the future, and, if we are honest, I think we must all now admit that it probably never will."

Pearl rejects the pessimism implicit in Graubard's and Kozol's outside the system strategies. He feels that schools are essentially political places where beachheads can be established. He asserts,

> "The greatest obstacle to educational change is the defeatest attitude of so many in the system. Teachers and administrators, like so many others, are victims of a society that overwhelms, depersonalizes, and renders useless. A beachhead established by a single person can set into motion a chain reaction that can alter this state of hopelessness. And all of us are in a position to do something and then map out a strategy to extend the influence of our efforts." (page 44)

Ascertaining which of the two above views offers greater likelihood of achieving real change is one of the objectives of this study.

Clarification of Terms

In the course of this study various types of alternative school programs will be refered to. Since there are really no absolute established definitions for these terms it is important to define them in the manner in which they will be used in the course of this study.

"Free School"--This term is used to connote a school which is basically in the Summerhill tradition. The "Free School" holds that the student's individual freedom is supreme. The goals of education originate with the student as does the code of acceptable conduct. Activities are student initiated and spontaneous generation of curiousity is what produces the curriculum of the school. Note: Others have used the term "free school" both to refer to the cost of education and the goal of school in preparing students for liberation. Kozol talks about such a "free" school even though it has no resemblence to Summerhill.

"Street Academy"--These are usually inner city alternatives. Street academies are established to meet the needs of the student on the street. Sometimes the students in a street academy are drop-

outs and sometimes they are truant. The curriculum consists of crash preparation for the GED (general equivalency) exam, or intensive work on basic skills. Street Academies often have classes on minority culture and can serve as catalysts in generating pride in disadvantanged students who had previously received only degradation from schooling.

"Continuation School"--A Continuation School is a school which was set up specifically to meet the needs of the student who has dropped-out. California law requires school districts with population desiring continuation classes to provide them. Continuation schools often meet in the evenings as many of these students hold jobs. Most continuation schools prepare students for the GED exam. Some of these schools are affiliated with Community Colleges.

"School-without-Walls"--This is an alternative school which uses the community as a classroom. The best known School-without-Walls is the Parkway Program in Philadelphia where an effort is

made not to have a home base so that maximum use will be made of the community. In Schools-without-Walls tutorials can be arranged with individual staff members, otherwise mini-classes are scheduled at private homes or at community sites.

"School-within-a-School"--This is an alternative school which is placed within a larger institution. In most schools-within schools the innovative school has a wing or floor all to itself. Usually it has a special staff and a distinct curriculum. It shares some of the facilities of the larger parent institution and often allows students from the parent institution to take classes offered through the School-within-a-school. This program allows the experiment to operate within a fish-bowl.

"Innovative Mainstream School"--This is an alternative which has replaced a traditional school. It is open to all students within its attendance area and offers programs substantially different from the traditional school.

"Alternative School for Alienated Students"--This is the

category in which the "Bridgeport" alternative school is found. These schools are founded on the notion that a separate school can offer alienated students a better educational experience than the mainstream school from which they dropped-out or in which they became involved in difficulty. The curriculum and programs at these schools can vary from the extreme "free" school to much more formal models.

It should be noted that none of these categories are distinct. Many schools are combinations of several of the above. Many alternative programs prepare students for the GED exam, also many programs make extensive use of community resources. The purpose of these categories is to make it simpler to identify the basic characteristics of the many alternative programs.

Potentially any one of these programs could be tried in any district. When a school district elects to adopt one model over another there should be an explanation based upon the needs of the students in terms of the district's educational goals.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES

This chapter introduces the case study and explores the methods used to conduct this research. In this exploratory field study the researcher was a participant observer. The primary sources of data were the other participants in the Bridgeport Alternative School. The methods for collecting data were personal interviews and mailed questionnaires. The instruments used and their justification for their use shall be discussed in this chapter.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this case study was to provide a specific in depth view of an Alternative school for dropouts. It was then possible to analyze the general problem addressed in this dissertation; are these alternative schools in reality reform, in the context of a particular example. The researcher recognized that it was wrong to assert that what had happened in one community would necessarily mirror what would happen in another. Every effort has been made to portray Bridgeport in an accurate light. The problems that

were faced by the Bridgeport secondary schools will be detailed. Because of the number of inquiries received at the Bridgeport Alternative School from other districts contemplating similar programs and the number of similar programs being reported in the Title I literature, it is assumed that the lessons learned from this study will apply elsewhere.

In the course of this case study the researcher wanted to evaluate the quality of the educational program being provided for the Bridgeport Alternative School students. To aid in this process he looked for answers to specific question. These question were:

1) What motivated the Bridgeport School District to open an Alternative School for drop-outs?
2) How was an educational theory chosen and what was the rationale behind that choice?
3) What have been the effects of the alternative program on the Bridgeport educational system?
4) What effect has the program had upon its students?
5) What alternative strategies could Bridgeport have used?

Finally, the researcher evaluated the program using the four goals of education outlined by Arthur Pearl, as the criteria

for success. These four goals are as follows:

(1) The considered choice of a life career...

(2) The ability to excercise intelligent choice in democratic decision making...

(3) The acumen to make intelligent choice in cultural matters...

(4) The ability to develop oneself and live harmoniously with one's neighbors...(Pearl 1972, p. 12)

Methods Used

The researcher was a participant observer at the Alternative School. This technique was chosen because it afforded the researcher access to the many levels of activity involved in the program. As the Head-teacher at the Bridgeport Alternative School the researcher was capable of being:

1) A member of the staff,

2) A teacher in constant contact with the students,

3) A member of the School District's administrative team.

One pitfall of participant observation, being discovered as a spy, was avoided by the researcher who advised the students, staff, and administrators of his research work at

the outset. All students, staff, and administrators participated voluntarily with the understanding that their comments and answers were part of a research study. Another pitfall of participant observation, researcher bias, could not be easily avoided. The researcher made the effort to present the data objectively and included all the interview transcripts and answers to the questionnaires in the appendices. Becker (1958) pointed out that a participant observer constantly uncovers new hypotheses as he gathers his data. The continual rediscovery of hypotheses was one area where the researcher's biases always emerges. As long as the researcher makes his reader aware of the questions he is seeking answers to and leads the reader through his rediscovery of new questions, he eliminates that as a major problem. Becker asserts that the participant observation technique consists of more that simply emmersing oneself in data and then having insights. This study utilized two of Becker's suggestions for presenting results, specifically his suggestion that data be unravelled in a systematic manner and second that appropriate statistics be presented to the reader.

Groups Surveyed and Questions Asked

There are five groups from which data were collected. Three of these groups will be discussed in chapter IV and the remaining two groups will be discussed in chapter V and VI.

The first three (3) groups comprise the adults who have historically had an effect on decision making as it involved the Bridgeport Alternative School. These three groups are:

Group 1. People involved in founding the program.

Group 2. Counselors and administrators at the traditional high schools.

Group 3. Central office administrators in Bridgeport.

Group 1

This group includes the people involved in the formation of the program. Basically this amounted to four people. The school district's Director of Federal Projects, a social worker with the council for youth services, and the first two teachers at the school. The people in this group were asked questions pertaining to the history of the program. Specifically, the researcher wanted to know the assumptions, expectations, and goals which were placed upon the program. The basic question of the dissertation was whether or not

this alternative was in actuality a reform. For that question to make sense, it was essential to determine what the founders expected from the program. The data from this group will be presented in chapter IV which is a narrative history of the Alternative School program.

Group 2

The people in group two consisted of the two Principals of the traditional high schools in Bridgeport, East and West Campus High Schools, and the counselors at these two schools. The counselors were interviewed in groups, and the principals were interviewed individually. These people were asked how they perceived the Alternative School from their perspectives. The researcher was probing to see what role they felt the Alternative School should play as part of the secondary school system. They were asked who were the students which they felt would succeed most in the alternative program.

Group 3

This group involved the Director of Secondary Education, the Assistant Superintendent, and the Superintendent. These are the people engaged in making policy at the school

district level. They were asked what purpose they saw the program as serving, if they felt it was needed, and how they felt it should be evaluated. The results of the interviews with group three are reported with the first two groups in chapter IV.

The substance of chapter IV will deal primarily with the first two-and-a-half years of the Alternative School. It will set a foundation for the reader, by showing him the history of the Alternative Program in this community and by revealing the role that this school plays in the total school system.

Chapter V presents data on the fourth year of the alternative program. This is the period in which the participant observer was in the position as Head-teacher. While chapter IV dealt with the function of the school within the district, chapter V will examine the effect of the program on its students. The results of questionnaires filled out by students will be presented. The questionnaires covered the following:

1) Some basic biographical information.
2) It asked questions on how they perceived the school.

3) Questions which would give self-report evidence on whether or not the school was meeting the four goals of education mentioned earlier.

The questionnaires were short answer form, but allowed space for students to elaborate on their answers. All the answers are presented in the appendices.

The school's records were used to compile data on the rate of student achievement. Students who earned less than ten points per quarter, equivalent to five hours of school work were not counted in the data.

Chapter VI will present data from the fourth year teaching staff. This data was acquired through open-ended interviews where the teachers were urged to elaborate their assumptions prior to joining the program as well as their later evaluations of the program.

CHAPTER IV

A DESCRIPTION OF THE BRIDGEPORT ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL

In this chapter the history of the Alternative School in Bridgeport will be discussed. The method for reporting this history will be through statements of recollection and opinions narrated by the researcher and explained by the people who were instrumental in development of these events. The history will concern itself primarily with the fundamental questions of this study. Therefore, the assumptions held by the people setting policy for the school, will be of central importance. Full transcripts of the interviews can be found in appendix I. The format for this chapter will be as follows:

1) Introduction of Cast of Characters--these are the persons officially involved in the administration of the Bridgeport School district.
2) Setting the Stage--a brief description of Bridgeport and the Alternative School.
3) The history--this will be divided into four subheadings or questions about the Alternative School:
   a) Why was the school formed?
   b) What does the school do?
   c) What are its goals?
   d) How is it held accountable?
4) A Summary--the researcher gives a brief summary of the findings.

Cast of Characters

Director of Federal Projects - This is the person in the Bridgeport School District who has supervisory responsibility for all programs receiving federal funds. In 1973-74 the Alternative Program acquired two-thirds of its funding from ESEA Title I. In previous years the proportion of federal dollars was even higher. All proposals and evaluations from the alternative program must go through this person's office.

Director of Secondary Education - This person has supervisory responsibility over all secondary programs. The three principals of the comprehensive secondary schools and the Head-teacher at the alternative school are under his supervision.

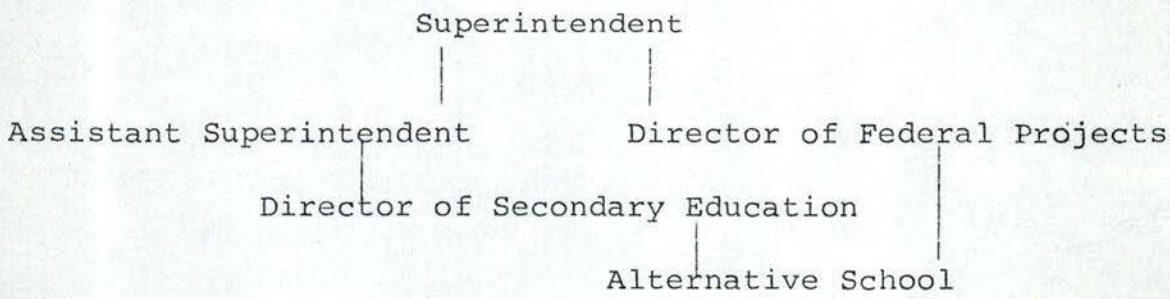
The Head-teachers - For the first years of the program a husband and wife team shared the responsibility of being co-directors. The researcher of this study is the present Head-teacher. The responsibilities of the Head-teacher are to supervise and manage the alternative programs.

Assistant Superintendent - The top person in the school district with responsibilities for instructional programs. This person is the immediate supervisor over the Director of

Secondary Education.

Superintendent of Schools - This is the chief administrative office of the school district. This person also serves as executive secretary of the elected board of education.

Below is an organizational diagram of the roles of the above people as they affect the alternative school.



The Stage

The Alternative High School in Bridgeport was founded as a response to the growing incidence of dropping-out in the Bridgeport Schools. Bridgeport School District is made up of fifteen schools, ten elementary and five secondary. The total enrollment is 7,549 with the two high schools having 1200 and 1400 students. Bridgeport, with a population of 40,000 is a working-class community with one major government industry, which presently employs 7,000 people.

Graduating students from the Alternative High School receive a standard high school diploma from East or West

Campus High School. Students do approximately seventy (70) hours of work for one credit. The hours of work may be done at school in classes, at home independently, on field trips, or by any negotiated system. They must satisfy the standard class requirements prescribed by the state: six (6) English credits, six (6) social studies credits, two (2) math credits, two (2) science credits, four (4) physical education credits, two (2) occupational education credits, plus electives that add up to thirty-six (36) total credits. No grades are given and attendance is optional. Admission to the Alternative School is restricted. It is open on a first come first served basis to students who have either dropped-out of school or have their principal's consent to transfer.

The History

In the fall of 1970 steps were initiated to begin an alternative school in Bridgeport. One of the people who became instrumental in the creation of this public school program was the school district's Director of Federal Projects. The researcher asked the Director of Federal Projects if she could recall the source of the initiative. She recalled that the impetus for the alternative school came from within the district as well as from people outside of

the district. She remembered that among other,

> It came from someone on the school board...who was deeply concerned about the drop-out rate at West High School. The West High Administration at that time was not interested in even being told that drop-outs existed, they were just not concerned... I was at that time Director of Secondary Education, and I was deeply concerned about the kids. Not so much the drop-outs, but the kick-outs (and) we weren't willing to offer them any solutions (then). In the fall of that year the Bridgeport School District received approximately...$20,000 or more dollars. We had not anticipated this (money) from Title I funds, and it came after the school year had started.

The three points which were made in the above quote,

1) That the West Campus High School administration was hostile to this proposal,
2) That a major problem in Bridgeport was kick-outs, not simply drop-outs, and
3) That Title I funds were the prime factor that enabled Bridgeport to finance this project,

have remaining issues central to existance of the Alternative School.

A community social worker, who will be called Jim, was another person who became deeply involved in the Alternative School project. The researcher asked him to recall why he had felt the need for a program of this type. He said,

> During '69 and '70 we began to experience a great number of families where one of the problems was that one of their sons or daughters had been kicked-out, sometimes they were suspended for the balance of the semester, which meant they lost their credits and sometimes I feel they were sort of eased

> out and sometimes the students quit. We found that as these children were out this way they were running a great risk in terms of law enforcement.

The continual re-occurance of these problems, kick-outs, ease-outs and drop-outs in Jim's caseload motivated him and several people in his agency to consider what type of alternative program might be established for these kids.

After the Title I funds arrived the Director of Federal Projects and the Title I parent's advisory committee authorized a mini-grant program. In this program, people in the district and people from the community could write proposals with possible funding coming from this federal program for disadvantaged students.

Jim expressed to the researcher a desire to have the Alternative Program be independent from the local school district. Specifically he recalled that,

> When we talked earlier about funding, the original intention was to fund this school outside of school funds. But we realized it was going to be very difficult to get support from a small district and decided to apply to Title I to get some funds - anything to get the program going.

As things unfolded Jim, the assistant principal at East Campus High School, the school board member, and several others drew up a proposal for an Alternative High School

for drop-outs.

It should be noted that, as Jim pointed out in the above quote, some of the authors of the proposal found this procedure of going to the school district for funding, as a necessary compromise. Apparently Jim concurred with Kozol and Gruabard that alternative schools should be independent of the public schools system.

The Director of Federal Projects pointed out to the researcher that getting actual approval for this project was in fact a political issue. She noted that,

> It had to have board approval, and we did have some vocal opposition. One member of the board was definitely against it and we had vocal opposition from a certain segment of the community...It was in November when we finally got board approval--and then we began the search for people to staff the school. (To add to the political task of convincing the school board, the promoters of this program had to recognize as the Director of Federal Projects remembers,) that we had no support from any of the schools except East Campus High. We had underground support from a couple of the counselors. Three out of the four counselors at West Campus High School gave us real support; we had support from the Principal and Assistant Principal at East. We had in my opinion, no support from the other areas.

In summary of the above statement the following is emphasized:

1) Easing-out, dropping-out, and kicking-out were prevalent problems in the Bridgeport Schools.
2) People both within and outside the district were concerned about remedying that problem and suggested establishing an Alternative School.

3) The administration at West Campus School was in opposition to this proposal, as were some segments of the community.
4) Some of the initiators of the Alternative program were hesitant about pursuing district funding.
5) Funding was finally approved using Title I funds.

It would be valuable at this point to find out who were the students for whom this group of adults felt the need of a special and separate program. The principal at West Campus High School, who, the reader will recall, was an opponent of the Alternative School, rememered that,

> The school (the alternative school) was basically, for students who were having troubles adjusting to the school here, based upon problems they had at home, problems they had with the law, problems they had with the faculty. Students who were maybe eighteen or nineteen years old, and all of a sudden have decided I want a High School education, and for one reason or another didn't want to go to Olympic College, and they wanted to go back to school. Here they are running around with kids who are thirteen and fourteen years old, many of them just couldn't take that. Many of these kids had been on the needle and various kinds of drugs, we know them as pushers and users here at school and they just didn't want to return here. Girls that were pregnant, girls that had children, and decided to come back to school.

The researcher then asked if the purpose of the alternative wasn't to separate those students from the rest of the West Campus students. The principal disagreed stating,

> They were out of school by this time, they had separated themselves and some of them we had separated, the law had taken some of them out of school, and I don't think I'd want to say we separated them. I would say they were separated, some by their own

> volition, some by the law, and some of them just wouldn't attend school.

If the West Campus principal was right, that the students going to the Alternative School were drop-outs, who had separated themselves from the regular program, that definition soon became outdated. Programs of this type seem to follow Parkinson's Law and generate a demand for their service.

West Campus High School soon found students who wanted to transfer to the alternative school even before dropping-out. The principal at West mentioned this new group of drop-out transfers when he admitted that,

> We had students who wanted to go to the Alternative School. We had students all the way down to freshmen who wanted to go to The Alternative School. When I look at the majority of these kids who want to go to The Alternative School I find that those youngsters had problems at home (and) problems relating to students here. They were running around with an older and faster crowd and they felt that their peer group was the type of kid who was going to Alternative School. These kids were just not getting along in the academic community here.

The reader might note that at this point a different group of students is being discussed. If one glances back several pages one will see that the program was originally established for drop-outs, while in just a short period of time it has become a resource for students with "problems at

home" and "problems with other students."

Over the course of the study the researcher asked people involved in policy making for the secondary schools in Bridgeport if they still felt this alternative was needed and for what students was it still needed. They were unanimous in their belief that it was still necessary. The following are some of their explainations why: The East Campus principal was emphatic,

> Yes, I think it is needed. I find that there are people who in my experience just can't cope with the emmensity of a school like for example, East Campus School, and this isn't a large high school, but for a person who has difficulty dealing with mass type situations, East Campus High School becomes nothing but a massive place. The smallest group you can ever be lucky enough to become part of in a formal sense would be maybe twenty to twenty-five people in a class at the very smallest.

In the above quote one finds a <u>new</u> explanation for the need for the Alternative School, namely the size of the regular school. An East Campus counselor felt that the setting of the traditional school may be the problem. He theorized:

> I think there is a segment of our high school, and probably of every high school, at this point in time anyway, there is a segment of kids that just can't cope with this kind of setting...and needs an entirely different kind of setting and, yet, he can't, even though he doesn't like it here, but he knows he needs some type of formal education.

Another East Campus counselor felt the traditional school may

be too restrictive, hence he concluded,

> I think there has to be something for the student who can't somehow fit the traditional mold of the high school. And we are assuming that everyone is of the same temperament and same pattern in our present high school and that isn't so...

If the above counselor is right that East Campus does assume that all students have the same temperament, then apparently West Campus does things the same way. Here is a similar analysis from a West Campus counselor,

> We have kids we can't do anything for...the way we are set up. Some of the kids I've seen who are most successful at the Alternative School are real bright kids who were slowed down by the program we have and turned off by it. I can see a need for the kid who is losing interest in the traditional school. It is a service for the kid who cannot reconcile his lifestyle with our traditional lifestyle. It is obvious to me that we can't change much. The size of us is overwhelming to a lot of kids, they can't identify with the school, it has nothing for them so when they get into a smaller school and they work more closely with an individual, they get rewarded, they feel more important, they produce more, and are happier.

The researcher wanted to see if the central office administrators held the same opinion on the reason for the existance of the Alternative School as was held by the traditional school administrators. When the Director of Secondary Education was asked the purpose of the program he said,

> We don't have all the answers in the regular school program and many of these kids that are dropping-out for one reason or another...In many cases that individual is not dropping-out because he can't

> provide the intelligence, the fortitude, and everything else to get through the regular school program, but in many cases he is dropping-out because of these school programs and the fact that it can't provide for him. I think this is a chance for us to at least attempt to provide for that kid who is disenfranchised and really through no fault of his own. Some kids simply don't have time to become involved in the regular school program for one reason or another, other things are more important to them. Maybe taking care of the baby at home is more important to them than sitting in a formalized high school structure for six hours a day and this is an attempt to provide an alternative for those kids.

Apparantly, he agrees with the counselors at East and West Campus High School, that the traditional school is just too restrictive. This is significant since the Director of Secondary Education is the administrator with direct supervisory responsibility over the two high schools.

Where the Director of Seconday Education believes that students are "disenfranchised through no fault of their own" the Assistant Superintendent has a different analysis. He claims the Alternative School,

> is a means by which kids, who for one reason or another can't cope with or feel that they can't cope with the regular high school, be it because of home problems, learning problems, personality problems, just can't seem to grab what they feel they need and what the institution feels they need for a formal education. So I see the alternative school providing (1) the environment in which these kids can cope and (2) a

> program whereby they can get some of the basic skills they need to be able to cope, personal needs and academic needs. I don't see it as a place where kids can run away and hide...A purpose of the environment is to provide a time and place where these kids can find themselves. I think maybe one of the problems of these kids is that they can't see their role in the broad spectrum of the world. They don't see how they can fit it, consequently they decide to go against what society and the school district can offer them in the school setting.

In the above statement the disenfranchising is seen as having its roots in "home problems", "learning problems" and "personality problems". Clearly he views the problem as belonging to the student, not as the fault of the school. The East High principal apparantly agrees with that assessment of the problem when he asserted to the researcher,

> There is no way, shape, or form that I feel that a school, or a school system is going to undo in five to six hours a day, 180 days per year, what the individual, and whoever else he has dealt, with another eighteen hours and 365 days a year to create and so what I'm saying is that there are factors that we can't excercise control over. If this mother is sleeping with his next door neighbor and it is driving him nuts, and he doesn't like his next door neighbor, or his mother and people in general, school becomes a place where he can take out some of those feelings, unless we can change that environment we're dead. I'm picking up a freak situation, but there are those kinds of problems which do exist...
> I would say there are some of those kids of life

> time situations that an alternative school might have a better chance (of helping with) than a regular school. Just because it won't be missed as routinely as it would be missed here.

The Superintendent of Schools is the most pragmatic and he recognized the need for the high school diploma as a passport to success in the job market and concludes that even though,

> It is possible that the alternative school may not provide the skill, but it will provide the opportunity to complete a diploma, because these kids generally, but not in every case, will turn the institution off, and consequently they are through with what we call our educational institutional program.

It appears that a consensus exists that an alternative school for drop-outs and alienated students was and still is needed in Bridgeport. Among the reasons cited are that:

1) The large comprehensive school cannot accommodate a particular type of student.

2) That some students with personal and family problems need more relaxed and personalized atmosphere to develop fully.

3) That drop-outs in Bridgeport should get a second chance.

In the preceding portion of the history of the Alternative School it has been told how and why the program was created. The next question to be pursued is how was the nature of this new school to be determined? Was

there a theory of instruction imposed upon the Alternative School?

The Director of Federal Projects who was in direct charge of this program was asked by the researcher, if a plan of operation or theory of instruction was agreed upon prior to hiring the head-teacher. Her response was,

> I'm a firm believer that we can say what you are going to do but, the people who are working with it are the people who really determine the method and so we gave Peter really a free hand. By we, I would say I did. He reported directly to me. I'm a firm believer in...if I had said, "you will have to do these things" I don't think that would work. My philosophy is that you must let them carry on no matter what you have written down on paper. That is the person that makes the difference. I think that the thing we had to do was establish a trust level in that school setting, that would attract kids to come to it. They did a lot of things by trial and error.

In the above statement the Director of Federal Projects makes it plain that the Bridgeport District was not going to impose any theory on this new program. By leaving the theory of the program up to the discretion of the head-teachers, the Director of Federal Projects was making a statement about what she felt the students needed. She summarized her thinking this way,

> My theory was that we had to have strong persons, and the persons must be attractive; they must be able to establish rapport, and if you can establish rapport with kids you can carry on most any kind of message. ...that has always been my theory in teaching...

> I felt that I had to work with some kids some way and other kids others, and I felt that was the important thing. They had to develop with each student. That is a tough job. I realize that it is very idealistic sometimes.

In summary, we see that the Bridgeport School District, through it's Director of Federal Projects, promoted a program based upon the notion that these students were in primary need of "strong" "attractive" persons who could "establish rapport with kids." Jim, the social worker, was asked if he had a theory to which he expected the school to adhere. He replied,

> Every head teacher has to give the school their own style...we saw that. We saw the Alternative School as being a changing, dynamic, and moving school, that would be changing as to different kinds of problems that arose in the community and also under different leadership.

Jim was not willing to be quite as laissez faire with the school policy as was the Director of Federal Projects. He discussed with the researcher what he felt were essential "organizing principles."

> We saw necessity for really involving the parents from the very beginning. In the decision making of how the school should be run the parents were included. To provide them with...feedback as to what was going on; we shared concerns with them and likewise heard their concerns. We saw the need for regular meetings with parents. In the evening we had the visits since some of the parents worked and we just pulled together and just talked about the school. We felt the school was small enough to use

> the democratic model. . . . That was one of the organizing principles . . . a second . . . (principle) was group process. We saw that as being very important. We also saw as being important the opportunity for students to be involved in the decision making. Particularly in the aspects of the school that in the regular system had been disappointing to them. Such as attendance, curriculum, and trouble with authority figures.

Once the funding was secure a young couple was hired as head-teachers. They had just written a proposal of their own for an alternative school in another community and were very excited about the prospect of starting a new school. The Director of Federal Projects explained the way they were hired.

> Peter was named as Head-teacher and Sally was named as an aide. Sally didn't quite accept that though, she felt that we had to name them as a team and they would be equal. The district didn't care how they operated it but as far as the district was concerned that was the role. We were not concerned with the husband-wife aspect, but really felt at that time that it would be good for these kids to see husband and wife work together and also, mostly, the kids had not seen harmonious marriage relations. That's how we hired them.

The importance of the above statement is that it foreshadowed a history of distrust between teachers at the Alternative School and the Director of Federal Projects. The dispute over who was actually the Head-teacher could not diminish the enthusiasm with which Peter and Sally proceeded,

> We shopped around and found an old building that had been condemned, that the district would let us use.

> We were funded at $13,000 . . . the first year and . . . most of that ended up going into salaries, heat, lights, stuff like that, very little for supplies. There wasn't any equipment in the building or furniture. The Director of Federal Projects wanted us to sit down and order things and plan out the school. She set us down with a couple of catalogues. We played that game for about a week . . . We wrote letters to the people who dropped-out of school in the past year and asked, you know, told them kind of what we were thinking about, very open endedly, just starting a new school, starting to put up a school and asked them to come. We met on the bare floors and talked about what we were going to do and our hope was that they could help us decide what was necessary to get what was needed and also to give us a chance to meet them so that we would have some idea who we were talking about.

Meeting the students confirmed Peter and Sally's preconceived notion about the type of student they would have in the Alternative School. They shared a vision of how a good alternative school should be organized. One of them shared that vision with the researcher,

> We really wanted to have an open structure that changed itself into whatever it wanted to be. I guess an organic thing (made up of) all the different people who were involved, students, staff, administrators, community and everything, and all their different wants and needs and stuff like that. The thing which we wanted to provide was some sort of petrie dish in which all of this could start growing.

The school began in February 1971 in an old elementary school in downtown Bridgeport. The first six months were marked by an imposed hardship, austerity. The sacri-

fices that poverty imposed on the Alternative School helped foster the "organic" sense of community that Peter and Sally had hoped for. Sally bemoaned the fact that that sense of "dependence" which was there in that early period did not stay. She described that time,

> "We had no telephone which meant everytime we had to contact the school to get something we had to go by car. There's not even a pay phone in the area. I think that really created a lot more dependence on each other. We had to hustle around and pick loads of stuff up for the school, people would volunteer things. I think that...it was never the same after that first year, the first six months, we started in January and I think when we were all working together to make the school happen, frustrating as it was, because there was no organization...If there were some way to continue that kind of cooperation...I'm not sure how to do that, I never figured that out. It never was quite the same because after a while it got into some things that...things where the teachers took over every room. The students would tell us what they wanted or we'ed ask what their opinions on things but there was never the same equality. We were all in sort of the same situation where no one had anything, the students didn't have anything, we were all in the same boat. It wasn't like the teachers had all the knowledge, all the goods, all the forms, all the phones, all the materials, and to me that was the best time in that school.

Peter concurred with Sally's assessment and offered additional explanations for the success of these early months,

> We all had to work together in order to make everything happen. In a way that was the model that we started out with, but by building a school...we

> learned lots of things. We tried to involve people in purchasing everything, we even had somebody who was involved in the budgeting, working with us on that, getting evaluation on working out the rules of the school, working out the credit system, there were students involved in everything. And so in a way it was out of necessity, in a way it was because that's what the kids wanted, or that's what we wanted for them. In a way, that was the only way they could be in a school because every place they had ever been before, every organization or whatever...they were powerless. Everybody was making decisions about them and they felt it was screwing them over...that they were making payment for everybody else's roller coaster. So, the only way that anything could be there is literally for us to have it open, cause they couldn't trust us, or anybody else, or any-place else, to give them love, because they hadn't stayed long enough. So that's the way we started out.

In the above quote Peter expressed his realization that the students in the Alternative School were lacking an ability to "trust" others and had not had the opportunity to receive love from others. These realizations and others, caused the Head-teachers to adjust their orientation. Peter observed how the Alternative School evolved,

> I think originally it was more than a school, it was a community. A learning center, maybe a socialization center, maybe a therapy center, in terms of what traditional education is all about; skill building, imparting traditional knowledge, that was happening before, but it happened because we were being successful with everything else. So what became clearer and clearer was that we hadn't come there to run a school, necessarily, we'd come there with some sort of committment to communitizing education and seeing education as broader things than

> school which normally is, traditionally, consists of at some levels rote...
> I think what we ended up going towards because of where we started at, because of the needs of the students..because of the expressed desires of the students, because of our response to what we saw going on in those (needs) became more of a therapy model...

The reader is advised to note how in a very short span of time the focus and purpose of the Alternative School has been transformed. What was originally conceived of as an educational option for students who were eased-out or kicked-out of school has now "become more of a therapy model" than an educational model.

Sally explained to the researcher that nothing was ever static in that first six months, she reflected,

> Every week we changed that's why it is so hard for me to tell you what was going on. The best way to describe it is that we experimented week to week again and again...

The first months of Bridgeport's Alternative School project were marked by the following:

1) Head-teachers were hired and given the responsibility to design their own program.

2) The budget was very little for the first year and the resulting financial pinch brought the school closer together.

3) After a period of time the Head-teachers realized

that they "hadn't come there to run a school" and moved more to a therapy model.

4) The program was "changed drastically" from time to time as the staff experimented with different approaches. The second year brought several changes to this fluid educational enterprise. Peter explained that,

> We were constantly going back and forth about, but finally decided (that) for the second year we'd get more organized. Because the organic growth bit, was largely mine, I think Sally is a much more organized person than I am. She's fantastically efficient. Having been in the army I have a gross distrust for efficiency.

Another major change in the second year was that money was available to hire additional staff. Peter and Sally now had to decide on how to select staff for the Alternative School. Sally explained their reasoning,

> We had this idea that if we hired people who... who seemed to be good people, good communicators, who cared about other people that they would be the people to work in the school.

Along with the larger staff came added problems, as Sally notes,

> Oh, the instructors just didn't know what to do with Peter. Because, Peter is a very non-directive person and they were extremely frustrated. They had more trouble with it than the students because they were already so set in their patterns. The students seemed to welcome the responsibility much more than the instructors; the instructors, when they had to do their own thing and weren't quoted what to do by someone else was going crazy.

At this stage Peter was the accepted Head-teacher and Sally had ceased to fight for equality in that role. With Peter being "very non-directive" and having a "gross distrust for efficiency" while being charged with supervisory responsibility for a teaching staff, it occured to the researcher to inquire what Peter felt should be the role of "teacher". He responded that,

> I think mostly it is somebody who can make contact with these people many of which have never had a friend. Somebody who can help them start to like themselves and can make them feel that they can have some success, that they can do something right and help them start taking some responsibility for themselves, and, then once over that, maybe start taking responsibility for other things.

When asked how that is done he replied,

> I think that is really hard to get at. And I think that it is in a lot of different ways. Mostly it is by being human, I guess. But, you can be that anywhere; to be human without power expectations, to accept them where they are at. I guess I am talking about therapy, which for me is the most meaningful education. Not therapy in the traditional Freudian sense, but in terms of working with someone who has some fairly obvious problems of adjusting, alienated people. And it seems you have to reach to them personally.

In the third and final year under the original Head-teacher, the school moved to a new location. Jim, the community worker observed,

> In '72 the kids moved to Westpark. They got out of the downtown area. I saw this as a great advan-

> tage. It was a chance to isolate the students from the excitement of the downtown area, there was much less running around. It was a year of a great deal of parent activity. We gained a school psychologist. She was very helpful in arranging meetings, etc. I think there was also a swing towards a more academic program, a higher academic program. I didn't like a great deal of structure, but on the other hand I didn't want it to be a laissez-faire headless type either. I felt that we had to find that middle ground which I like to call a democratic school.

As the school increased in size and moved towards what Jim called a democratic school, a differentiation in roles occurred. This was a big chance for Peter as Sally explains,

> The school increased in size, we had more staff people, Peter began not by his choice, but he began to be looked at as a director not as a teacher, there was no teacher equality which is what he hoped to achieve.

Having surveyed the two and a half years the school operated with Peter at the helm and trying to understand the theoretical notions upon which the school was based the researcher noted that the school abandoned an emphasis on cognitive skills and concentrated on affective goals instead. The researcher asked Peter about the cost of that change in emphasis. He responded,

> we were tending to concentrate more on the people whose needs we saw being the greatest, at the same time their chances for change were the smallest. But, the other people were being picked up by other

> institutions like they could go back to school, they could make it in the NYC program, they could go the Junior College route, the GED route, and stuff like that.

Summarizing part two: "What was the theory of Instruction?" One finds that the structure and function of the school was left to the Head-teacher. In discharging that duty he believed,

1) A flexible organic structure was the best for this type of school.

2) That a therapy model was more applicable to these students than the available educational model.

3) That leadership was an unfortunate and perhaps unnecessary evil.

4) That good teachers were people with highly developed interpersonal skills.

5) That students desiring an academic program were given a lower priority than students needing affective skills.

Why are we doing what we are doing? (What are the goals of the program?)

The preceding two sections dealt with the questions of why the school was founded and the theoretical assumptions

underlying it's program. This section will ask the next pertinent question, "What were the goals of the program?"

There are two dimensions in which the goals of the alternative educational program should be viewed. First, what are the goals of the Alternative School for its students. Meaning what should a student have a right to expect to get from participation in the program. Second, what is the program supposed to accomplish for the community. The Director of Federal Projects spoke of one of the later goals when she stated,

> We would reduce the drop-out rate. That was our main goal. And, by providing alternative methods. That was the whole idea; to provide an alternative to schooling to these students, and create a method by which they could graduate. And that was the major goal. I feel we got into enough things...self image and all of that...but the major goal was to provide an alternative educational program to the high school drop-outs, and to reduce the drop-out rate.

Peter told the researcher that he had in mind an even larger goal. He describes the long range goal he was pursuing at that time,

> We had hoped for an alternative society, as well as an alternative school in which...and I think this was largely my trip. Having been to Vietnam, I was very concerned about how our penal system, power structures, oppressive power, people getting ground up in...I think, partly, well, we were rampant idealists at the time.

Sally agreed with the goal Peter outlined but placed it into perspective. She says below that that type of change required many different alternatives. She felt realistically they were only a small part of the change.

> But on one hand, I don't think we had any illusions, though, that what we were doing was going to be a panacea because we thought of just one, I mean there were many, many alternatives that could have been formed, not just one. What we were providing was limited by our own perceptions and by what two people could do and I don't think we had any illusions about...that was going to make a big splash in altering education in any drastic form. That was really one small, small step. I'm talking about just in Bridgeport.

Peter addressed himself to the first dimension of the goal discussion, namely the goals for the students, when he explained to the researcher his analysis of the schooling system. He stated,

> A lot of what we were responding to in the whole thing is that...people are basically good. The more we study about the school system's operations where traditional schools, where we say kids in the school where we were getting chewed out, that they were immediately confronted with suspicion that they were doing something wrong and there were a lot of provisions to keep them from doing wrong. There were very few provisions that encouraged them to do right or even to say, "Oh, you made a mistake", or something like that, but especially among the lower socio-economic groups they were under a whole lot of

> pressure from the beginning and it seems to have been very difficult to escape from that, once you are identified as a drop-out or drop-out prone, or a potential drop-out or some sort of label like that anti-social...So what we were hoping to provide...when we went out there was some sort of a community where people pretty much start exploring themselves, together, and know what's going on.

Jim, the social worker from the Council on Youth Services, who was instrumental in founding the program was able to recall several of his goals for the Bridgeport Alternative School. He remembered they wanted,

> To improve their socialization skills, help them to attain an education, a school diploma, and education they could use in making a living, in making an adjustment to community living, their family lives, and so on. To provide them with some social skills and some academic skills. Another goal, and this was very much in mind when the original document was written, was to train these teachers and to also demonstrate to the community what the alternatives could be and the need for an alternative school.

From the above statement, we see that Jim had a basic concern with the students learning "socialization skills." Apparently, he was not alone with that goal. The superintendent gave a very similar statement to the researcher. He felt,

> one of the functions of the alternative school, I think, would really consider quite a purpose, is to help these students adjust more to society.

Sally explained that she personally felt her own education was inadequate and found that it wasn't until she was about to graduate from college that she realized how she was shortchanged. She applied that experience to her teaching and came up with a personal goal,

> I think my goal was to provide a variety of experiences that hopefully some of those experiences would be applicable to someones interests, that someone would find, have the freedom to pursue that interest there that I could facilitate that interest and that someone would go through the discovery of how to learn and the importance of learning.

It appears that the major goal of the school district was the reduction in the drop-out rate. Again, it seems that the education goals, like the program theory, were left up to the head-teacher. His major educational goal was granting students the freedom to learn that which they wanted to learn, at their own speed, with personal encouragement. Even though many people have talked about socialization skills as a goal, it appears that no shared criteria for that goal existed at the alternative school. The researcher suggests that the difficulty with using socialization as a goal is that different groups of adults hold different views on what students should adjust to and accept.

Until that value problem is resolved, conservative superintendents and radical reformers will clash over that.

Who plays the heavy? (Who holds the program accountable?)

The final question to be addressed in this chapter is the question of accountablity. It has been shown that the various people in Bridgeport who were concerned with the Alternative School, had specific goals for the program and had established assumptions about what the school should accomplish. It seemed logical to the researcher to ask how they felt the program should be held to account for its performance.

The Director of Federal Projects was asked how the program was held accountable. She replied,

> The district holds the program accountable in the fact that they have to submit an evaluation report and those evaluation reports are kept.

However, she proceeded to qualify that by saying,

> These reports are always subject to be suspect as long as the person who is running the program writes an evaluation report. Let's face it, you're going to write yourself up a success and in that event we have been highly successful. I would really love to see us able to, wouldn't it be nice if we could go back now and do a follow up of the Alternative School; we really ought to spend some money and do a follow-up.

The Assistant Superintendent explains in the statement below

that he feels the program has not been accountable to his notions of what its "role" should be.

> From walking through it periodically, it appears... it's been a playhouse sort of situation, kids come and go as they wish, kids get credits which is questionable by the people at the different high schools...questionable because students were meeting virtually no standards and still receiving a credit. I'm not quite sure I see that as the role of the alternative high school.

Finally, the researcher asked the Superintendent of Schools how he would evaluate a program like the Bridgeport Alternative School. He found that to be a difficult question and responded,

> I don't know, that would be a hard one to measure, I imagine, I would say right now from the experience we have had they have apparently been somewhat successful. There are a number of these students who normally would be out in society without a high school diploma, that have attended the alternative school, and have met the requirements. I believe it also has been of some help to those young people to realize that society hasn't rejected them nor have they rejected society.

It seems that the problem with accountablity is a corollary of the problem with goals. Without consensus on goals it is hard to reach consensus on whether or not you've met them. The reader may recall from question one early in this chapter that there was pretty close to a unanimous consensus on why the program was needed. The counselors at both East and West Campus High Schools have raised a concern about whether the Alternative School has the ability

to fully and adequately meet that need. The reader will recall that many of the educators in Bridgeport felt that alienated students did not fit the mold of the traditional school and therefore an alternative was needed. One of the West Campus couselors observed that not all alienated students are highly motivated. He suggested that presents certain problems.

> For some of your students it's the total answer, for others they can't handle the independent self-discipline they are supposed to have...I see kids trying to use Alternative High School as an escape from reality. They don't like what is going on here so as a result when they begin to get themselves in hot water, the first thing they cry out is Alternative High School. I really try to counsel against that reason for going.

Similarly an East High Counselor observes,

> I think the one thing that is hard is that the kid who ordinarily cuts that mold (alienated) for us is also rather undirected and at least isn't self-directed at all and that then becomes my dilemma when I consider Alternative High School. I always point this out to them; that although it is an alternative and a completely different kind of setting and maybe what they are looking for, that it is a place, as I understand it, where you have to be pretty self-directed. And unless they can do that then that wouldn't work either. That is probably my biggest concern about whether or not that will fit that student. That's why I feel we need another alternative, because even with this one, every kid doesn't fit that alternative.

Summary of Findings

In the fall of 1970 many people in Bridgeport believed that the drop-out problem necessitated the creation of an

Alternative School for drop-outs. In the succeeding period the program was seen as a resource for students enrolled in the traditional schools who were experiencing difficulty. No theory of instruction or curriculum was imposed on the school. The Head-teacher was delegated the responsibility for establishing the style of the school. The first Head-teacher believed that a therapy model was more appropriate for his students than an educational model. There has been a mixed reaction to the Alternative School with opinion divided on whether it has met the goals for which it was created. No apparent mechanism has existed to hold the program accountable to district goals.

Final Note to Chapter 3

An effort has been made not to draw conclusions from the information presented in this chapter. Due to the fact that the author was a participant in this program it is no doubt impossible for him to be totally unbiased. Every effort has been made to use representative quotations in this chapter. Transcripts of the entire interviews are in appendix I for the reader's reference and evaluation. It is unfortunate that voice inflection and emotion are often lost in the transcription.

The researcher will present his personal experiences at and evaluation of the Bridgeport Alternative School in the conclusions chapter.

CHAPTER V

THE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL FROM THE STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

This chapter presents the findings obtained from questionnaires presented to the Alternative School students. Other data on student achievement is also presented where it is deemed appropriate. Discussion of these findings will be kept at a minimum in this chapter, as a major discussion of these findings and their implications will be presented in the concluding chapter of this study.

This chapter is divided into five sub-sections based upon the focus of the material being presented. These sections are:

1. Student Achievement. In this section data on the rate of credit achievement and subject distribution of that achievement are presented.
2. Biographical Information. In this section student self-reports on their reasons for entering the Alternative School are presented. The students' future goals and aspirations are also discussed here.

3. Student Evaluation of the Program. At this point data on what the students liked the most, liked the least, and found most interesting is presented. Data on how the students rate the Alternative School in relation to the regular schools is also presented here.

4. Four Goals of Education. In this section data on how well the school is measuring up to the four goals of education is presented. The four goals briefly restated are; helping students achieve competence in the arenas of work, culture, politics and inter- and intrapersonal affairs.

5. Feelings About the Alternative School. In this section data is presented on how the students feel their parents perceive the program. Students also report on whether or not they have been put down for participating in the program and whether they would tell their siblings to try the program.

6. Summary. This is a listing of the major findings presented in this chapter.

The Alternative School's records indicated that seventy-seven (77) students participated in the program in

1973-74. Unfortunately the school records are incomplete for four of these students, and therefore these students are only included in the statistics for which the researcher had access to duplicate records. Another seven students, who the records report to have participated in the Alternative program, participated in less than five hours of school activity. Since five hours of school activity is the equivalent of one full day at school, it was selected as the arbitrary cutoff as to what constitutes enrollment. By this standard anyone who participated in more than one full day of activity at the Alternative School was included in the statistics as a student, while the seven individuals who participated less than one full day were excluded. Therefore, the statistics compiled based on the entire student body will vary from N=66 to N=70.

A considerable amount of the data reported in this chapter was obtained from questionnaires mailed to these sixty-six (66) students. A total of 32 questionnaires were returned to the researcher.

Table I is a comparison of the group which responded, the group which didn't respond, and the total group.

Table I

	ALL STUDENTS N=68	RESPONDENTS N=32	NO RESPONSE N=36
SEX:			
Male	39- 59%	16- 50%	23- 64%
Female	29- 43%	16- 50%	13- 36%
ENROLLMENT STATUS:			
Presently enrolled	35- 51%	20- 62%	15- 41%
Graduated	12- 18%	6- 19%	6- 17%
Dropped-out	14- 21%	5- 16%	9- 25%
Waiting list	3- 4%	1- 3%	2- 6%
Other	4- 6%	0- 0%	4- 11%
Totals	66-100%	32-100%	36-100%
YEARS IN PROGRAM:			
1973-74 lst year	40- 59%	19- 59%	21- 58%
Enrolled in '72-'73	28- 41%	13- 41%	15- 42%
Totals	68-100%	32-100%	36-100%
# QUARTERS ENROLLED:	2.2	2.4	2.0
CREDITS/QUARTER:	1.8	2.0	1.6
% ACADEMIC WORK:	55%	54%	55%
TOTAL POINTS* EARNED	392	490	309

*90 points = 1 credit

There were numerous reasons for non-responses. As many of the students were not enrolled at the time of the mailings some of the addresses in the files were out of date. Since the questionnaires were sent out over the summer several students were away on vacation. Unfortunately, the researcher can only guess at the reasons for each non-response and therefore, the need was seen for contrasting the responders and non-

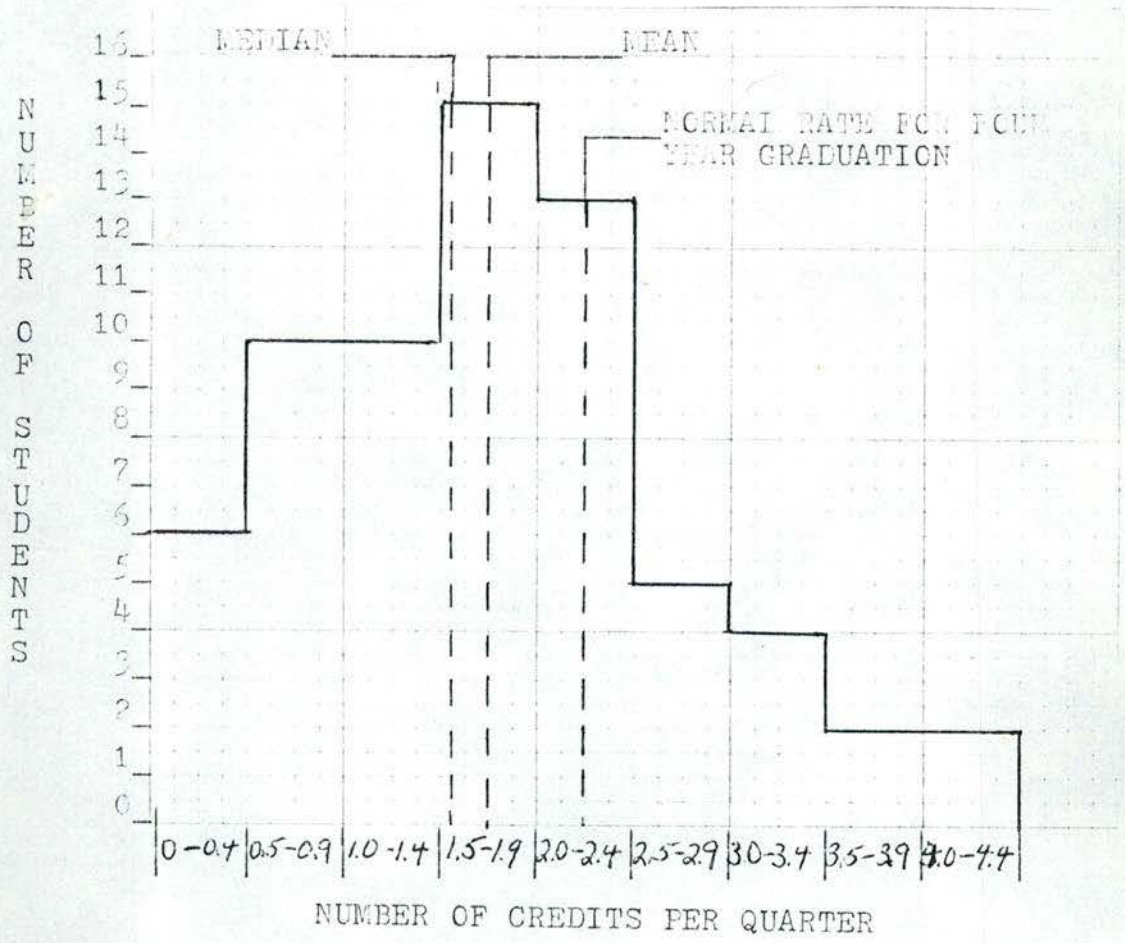
responders on several critical dimensions. Table I reveals that the response group has a higher percent of women, program graduates, and a larger percentage of first year students than either of the other two groups. It should also be noted that the response group was enrolled, on the average, eight percent (8%) longer than the average for the entire school, and fifteen percent (15%) longer than the non-responders, The respondents earned credit at a rate ten percent (10%) greater than the entire school and twenty percent (20%) greater than the non-response group. As a result of their longer enrollment and faster credit production the response group earned twenty percent (20%) more points than the school average and thirty-seven percent (37%) more points than the students who failed to answer the questionnaire. A rather high percentage of the respondents were students who were still enrolled at the end of the 1973-74 school year. Also, a higher percentage of the non-responders were drop-outs than was the case among the respondents. A possible explanation for this phenomenon is that the students currently enrolled were the easiest to find and had the highest stake in the school; therefore, they were likely to respond. Program drop-outs, were more likely to have moved and may well

feel alienated from the program, thus producing a low response rate. It can be concluded from the evidence presented in table I that the students who responded to the questionnaire were more representative of the students who had succeeded in the Alternative Program, than they were of the total group. Graphs in appendix two show the distribution of these two groups on the dimensions of amount and rate of achievement.

Figure I

This is a histogram showing the distribution of rate of credits earned per quarter for the entire student body at the Alternative School.

Figure I

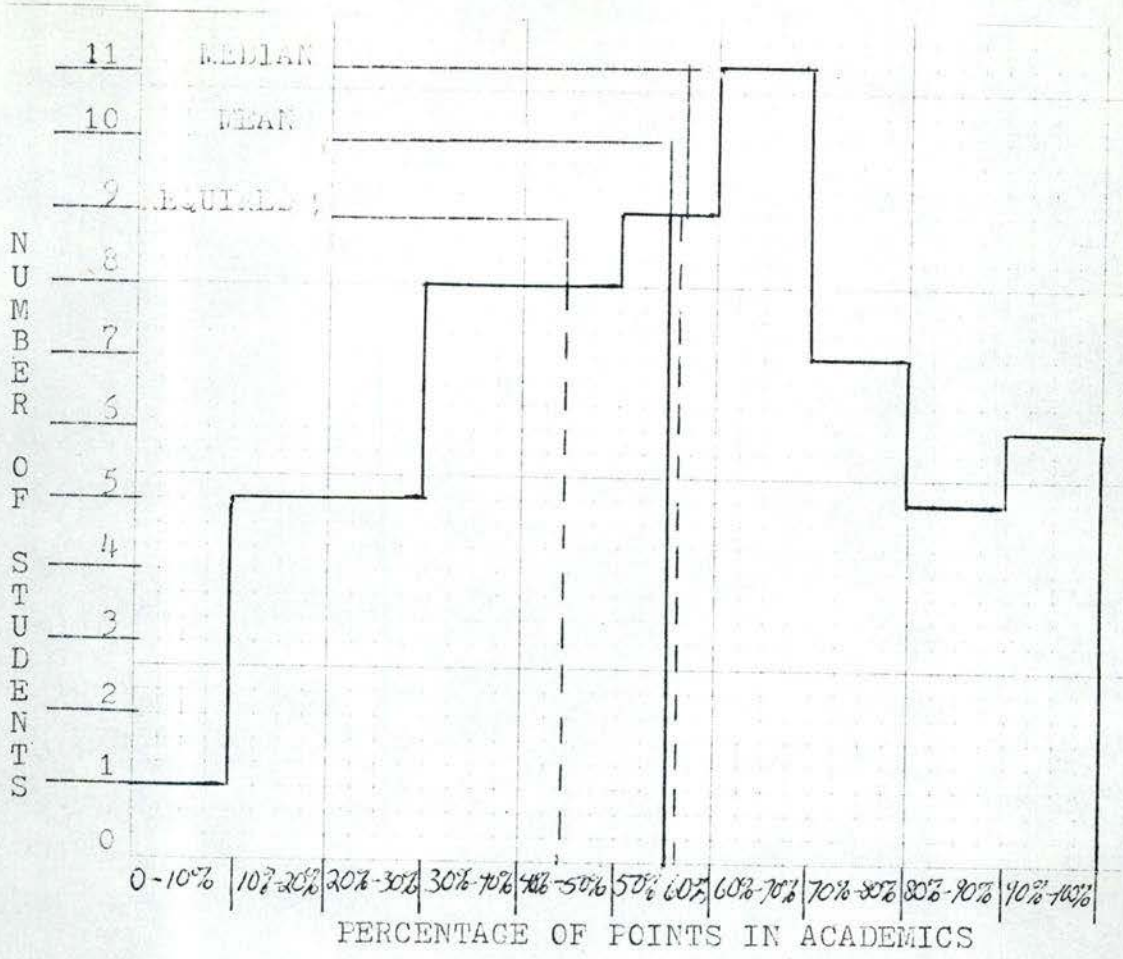


A grouped mean and a median were computed and are shown on the graph. A line has been marked on the graph showing the rate needed to achieve high school graduation (36 credits) in the standard four years. The rate shown as needed for four year high school graduation, 2.25 credits per quarter, applies to all Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors, while all Freshmen and future students will have to make 2.38 credits per quarter to meet the new requirement of thirty-eight (38)

credits for graduation. Clearly, both the mean and median rate for Alternative School students fall below that of the norm. It should be noted that the two students who achieved at the highest rate, four to four and a half credits per quarter, will achieve graduation in approximately two years. That is a rate far in excess of what a student is allowed to achieve in the regular program in Bridgeport. What is interesting in this is that Alternative School students are given the opportunity to progress faster, yet, a majority fail to take advantage of this opportunity.

Figure II

This is a histogram which illustrates the distribution of students according to the academic content of their work.



Students at the Alternative School are free to take whatever courses or work they like; academic or non-academic. It is the responsibility of the student to make sure that he completes the necessary requirements in order to graduate. It should be noted that the Alternative School students are taking a greater proportion of academic work than is required. This may be due to the academic deficiencies of these students when they enroll, rather than due to a "thirst for knowledge". Nonetheless, it is apparant that the Al-

ternative School students are, on the average, taking the courses and completing the work necessary for graduation.

Table II illustrates the responses to a multiple choice question presented to the students in the questionnaire, asking their reasons for enrolling.

Biographical Information

Table II

Reason for Enrolling:	# Giving Response	% of Sample
Get a high school diploma	30	93%
Relaxed rules	10	50%
My friends went there	3	9%
The classes sounded interesting	17	53%
Somebody made me	0	0%
Social life	4	12½%
Other	17	53%

The respondents were asked to check as many as applied. An extremely high percentage, ninety-three percent (93%), cited graduation as a major reason for enrolling. A check of contracts filled out by all the students in the school revealed that seventy-seven percent (77%) cited graduation as a major goal. The contracts, unlike the questionnaire, consisted of open-ended questions. Therefore, the fact that so many students cited it by their own initiative seems to suggest that it is in fact an extremely high pri-

ority. Clearly, the content of classes and the relaxed rules were important factors to the students, but they appear to be secondary in importance.

Table III shows the responses to a multiple choice question asking the student to describe the way he came to the Alternative School.

Table III

Best description of way you came to the Alternative School:	# giving response	% of sample
Dropped-out of regular school first and then decided to go to the Alternative School.	6	19%
Dropped-out of regular school in order to go to the Alternative School.	11	34%
Kicked-out of regular school and decided to go to Alternative School after being kicked-out.	2	6%
Kicked-out of regular school and my parents insisted I go to school somewhere.	5	16%
High School counselor suggested I go to the Alternative School.	4	12½%
Other:	11	34%

One-third of the students responding stated that they dropped-out of school expressly to go to the Alternative School. This is an interesting finding since, the reader will recall, that the program was originally created for students who were already out of school. It is quite possible that the students who stated that they dropped-out in order to come to the Alternative School might well have dropped-out even if the program didn't exist. Nonetheless, it is apparant that a sizable number of students perceive themselves moving into the Alternative program directly from the regular school, rather than from the streets.

Table IV shows the responses of the students to an inquiry as to their future educational plans.

Table IV

Do you plan to continue your education after high school?	# responding	% responding
Yes	18	56%
No	6	19%
Maybe	8	25%
Totals	32	100%

The fact that only one-fifth of the students responding were not planning to continue their education is an indication

that many of these students have not given up their aspirations as a result of their negative experiences in school. One-half of the students definitely planning to continue their education cited a college or university as the place they wanted to study.

Table V, similarly, indicates students perceptions of their futures. This table indicates the students responses to being asked what they wanted to be doing five years after graduation.

Table V

What do you want to be doing five years after high school?	# responding	% responding
Working	16	53%
Involved with a family	4	13%
Going to school	3	10%
Armed Services	2	7%
Travel	2	7%
Don't know	3	10%
Total	30	100%

Among the fifty-three percent (53%) who saw themselves working, the jobs they envisioned doing ranged from a lawyer and accountant to being a waitress or musician. What is interesting in the student responses to this question is the fact that the students envision themselves as going into mainstream occupations. Very few respondents cited future plans reminiscent of the counter-culture, for example working on a farm, joining a commune, etc. This may indicate that these students do not consider themselves to be cultural drop-outs.

Student Evaluation of the Program

The information contained in tables VI through X provide data on student perception and evaluation of the Alternative School Program. The data summarized in tables VI, VII, VIII, and IX were taken from student responses to open-ended questions. The researcher categorized these responses for the purpose of presentation. The only criteria for grouping responses was the similarity of answers. The full text of the responses may be found in Appendix II.

Table VI shows the students responses to an inquiry asking what they liked most about the Alternative School.

Table VI

What do you like the most about the Alternative School?		
Category	# Giving Response	% of Sample
Learning Environment	14	44%
Social Environment	9	28%
Teachers	7	22%
Students	6	15%
Power	3	9%
Field Trips	1	3%

Examples of the types of responses that were grouped under learning environment were "Freedom to do your work at your own speed", and "The classes are relaxing and you learn". Examples of answers which were grouped under social environment were, "The atmosphere and the friendly people", and

"The freedom in general". The revealling thing about the students' responses to this question is the fact that the atmosphere and the teachers are the factors they cite as their favorites, rather than anything specific about the content or curriculum at the Alternative School.

Table VII gave the respondents an opportunity to list the things they either enjoyed most or found most interesting at the school.

Table VII

List the things you did at the Alternative School that you either enjoyed most or found most interesting?		
Category	# responding	% of sample
Academic classes	16	50%
Field trips	12	37½%
Art classes	10	31%
Teachers	8	25%
Sports	5	16%
Home Economics	4	12½%
Students	4	12½%
Independent Study	2	6%
Meetings-system	2	6%
Work-study	1	3%
No response	1	3%

One-half of the students returning questionnaires cited the academic classes in this category. The top four areas cited by the students lie in the realm of the curriculum and instructional program.

The data in table VIII were obtained by asking the students in an open-ended question to cite what they liked least about the Alternative School.

Table VIII

What do you like least about the Alternative School?		
Category	# responding	% responding
Student behavior	9	28%
Facilities	6	19%
Jr. High Students	3	9%
Teachers	2	6%
Point System	2	6%
Rules	2	6%
Classes	2	6%
No Response	2	6%
Other	5	16%
Totals	32	100%

It appeared from these responses that a concensus did not exist about what was bad in the program.

The data in table IX supports the inference from the data from the preceding question. Here the students were asked what things they would change at the Alternative School.

Table IX

If you could change anything at the Alternative School what would you change?		
Category	# responding	% responding
Facilities	5	16 %
Student behavior	4	12½%
Junior High	4	12½%
Change teachers	2	6 %
Keep or increase teachers	2	6 %
Classes	2	6 %
Point system	2	6 %
Rules	2	6 %
Time	2	6 %
Lunches	2	6 %

Like the previous question, this one was open-ended. Again the results seem to show that there may be several individual complaints, but very few areas of general dissatisfaction.

The question reported in table X stated in the affirmative, certain facts about the Alternative School in relation to the regular schools. The students were then asked to check whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements.

Table X

	AGREE		DISAGREE		DON'T KNOW	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
1. Students can learn more at East or West	3	9	23	72	6	19
2. Students can learn more at the Alternative School	20	63	6	19	6	19
3. Teachers are more knowlegeable at regular schools	1	3	23	72	8	25
4. Things taught at the Alternative School will help on a job	22	69	2	6	8	25

The results reveal that a substantial number of students reject the notion that the education offered in the

traditional school is superior to the education offered at the Alternative School. Secondly, a large percentage of students feel that students can learn more at the Alternative School than at the traditional schools.

Interestingly, five respondents, or sixteen percent (16%) of the sample, disagreed with both assertions; rejecting the notion that if a student works hard they can learn more at either type of school. Those responses seem to indicate that how much a student learns is a function of the student, not the school. The third assertion in table X, that teachers in the regular school are more knowlegeable than teachers in the Alternative School, was asked to see if the students felt that the trappings of authority which are present in the traditional school gave more credence to the teachers there. Apparently, it did not. The students rejected the notion that regular school teachers were more knowledgeable than their Alternative School counterparts. A large number of respondents believe that the education they are receiving at the Alternative School will help them on a job.

The final question which was asked to produce student evaluation was a question addressed to the program's

drop-outs, it asked, "If you no longer attend the Alternative School, why did you leave?" This was another open-ended question and table XI presents the results.

Table XI

If you no longer go to the Alternative School why did you leave?		
FAMILY REASONS	THE SCHOOL	WORK
1	3	2

It is essential to point out that only one-third of the people in this category, drop-outs or people placed on the waiting list responded to the questionnaire. Therefore, it is possible that this is not a representative sample.

Four Goals of Education

The next series of tables presents student responses to questions designed to reveal how well the program was complying with the four goals of education used in this study. One goal of education, helping students to be able to excercise choice of a life career, has been touched on already. It has been shown (table IV) that a high percentage of the Alternative School students plan to pursue

a higher education. As it is getting increasingly difficult to get a good job in our credentialized society without the proper credential, the decision to pursue a higher degree can only help to increase someone's career options. We have seen (table V) that many of the Alternative School students describe work as being the primary thing they will be engaged in five years from now. Furthermore, the students reported (table X) that they felt the education they were receiving at the Alternative School would help them on a job.

A second goal of education is gaining, "the ability to make intelligent choice in cultural matters." The students were asked to list the things they most enjoyed doing in their spare time.

Table XII shows their responses.

Table XII

What things do you most enjoy in your spare time?		
Category	# giving response	% of sample
Athletic activity	17	53 %
Artistic Pursuits	13	41 %
Opposite sex	10	31 %
Being with friends	9	28 %
Cars and cycles	9	28 %
Reading	9	28 %
Music	8	25 %
Getting high	8	25 %
Partying	6	19 %
Domestic work	5	16 %
Outdoor activities	4	12½%
Pool	3	9 %
Academic work	2	6 %
Job	1	3 %

It is probably not surprising that athletic activity rates so high on the list. What is interesting is the high percentage of students who report artistic and musical pursuits as a major leisure activity. Student response to a follow-up question, page 305, shows that seventy percent (70%) of the students who listed artistic pursuits as a leisure activity, credited the school with having helped them with that activity. A check of the school records showed that fifty-three (53) students participated in art and music programs at the Alternative School, and twenty-five percent (25%) of their credit was in those activities. One question was constructed to reveal the student's appreciation for cultural pluralism. It is important to note here, that of the seventy-seven (77) persons who participated in the Alternative School in 1973-74, only two were Black; there were no full blooded Native Americans, although many students could trace their family tree and find an Indian ancester; and no Chicanos. There was one Phillipino student and an Asian American student. With only five percent (5%) non-White enrollment, it was clearly a culturally homogeneous environment which would be improved if it were more pluralistc. They were asked to respond

true or false to the following questions: The Alternative School would be a better school if we had more Blacks, Chicanos, Indian students, Freaks, or Straight students? If the students responded with true to the first three categories, they were scored as favoring a pluralistic school. A false to all three would obviously be a vote against pluralism, and a mixed answer would reveal an apparent prejudice.

Table XIII shows the students response to this question. It reveals that a majority of the students responding would favor a more pluralistic school.

Table XIII

The Alternative School would be a better school if we had more Black, Chicano, and Indian students.					
TRUE		FALSE		MIXED	
#	%	#	%	#	%
15	58%	7	27%	4	15%
6 - no response					

A third goal of education is the "ability to exercise intelligent choice in democratic decision making". Two questions were asked to get a student judgement on their behavior in the political arena. It should be point-

ed out that at the Alternative School, the students participate as equals with the staff and Head-teacher on such matters as budgeting, staffing, curriculum planning, and discipline. The students were asked if they thought that students were given too much power at the Alternative School.

Table XIV shows their responses.

Table XIV

Do you think students have too much power at the Alternative School?		
response	# giving response	% of sample
YES	6	19%
NO	26	81%

An overwhelming eighty-one percent (81%) answered no. It appears, therefore, that the students feel it is appropriate for them to participate in decision-making.

They were then asked, if they were to return to the traditional school, do they think that they could get more power for themselves or the other students (table XV).

Again, an overwhelming ninety-one percent (91%) responded no. Table XV shows the results.

Table XV

If you found yourself back at regular school do you think you could get more power for yourself and the other students?		
response	# giving response	% of sample
YES	2	6%
NO	29	91%

There are either of two possible explanations for that perception. One is that the students perceive the traditional school as so ultra-oppressive that they see no hope changing it; or the other explanation is that the mere participation in decision-making at the Alternative School does not necessarily prepare a student for the strategic process of gaining political power in other institutions.

There were no questions asked which address the fourth goal of education, "the ability to develop one's self and live harmoniously with one's neighbors", specifically. Since all classes are elective and attendance is

optional at all school functions, the extent to which someone participates is a function of their meeting personal goals. Referring back to graphs I and II the extent of student self-motivation can be seen. It would be very difficult to compare student development on this point with students in the traditional school. Where the students in the traditional school may be achieving more, that achievement may well be due to something other than self-motivation. The extent to which students cited teachers as a thing they liked about the Alternative School, is an indication of their ability to relate to adults. What remains unknown, and is one of the main problems in a program like this, is the ability to measure how "harmoniously" these students would be getting along in a more heterogeneous environment.

Feelings about the Alternative School

Three questions were asked of the respondents to get some sense of both the student's feeling about the Alternative School and the feelings of others as perceived by the students.

In table XVI, the results of the answers are shown to a question asking what the student thinks his parents feel about the program.

Table XVI

Parents perception of Alternative School:	# responding	% of respondents
The Alternative School is better than my old school.	7	24%
My old school was better than the Alternative School.	10	34%
The Alternative School is equal to my old school.	12	41%
Totals	29	99%

The data reveals that one-third of the students report that their parents feel the Alternative School is not as good as the school the student previously attended. One-fourth of the students report that their parents feel the Alternative School is superior. Referring back to table X, where the students reported that they perceived the Alternative School could provide a better education than the regular school, it is interesting to note that the students don't see their parents sharing that view.

The students were also asked to recall if they had ever been "put down" for attending the Alternative School, table XVII shows the results of that question.

Table XVII

Has anybody ever put you down for going to the Alternative School?	# responding	% responding
YES	23	72%
NO	8	25%
No response	1	3%
Totals	32	100%

Seventy-two percent (72%) report having been put down. One student reported that she had been put down by the principal of West Campus High School, while another student reported, "they think it's only a drop-out school for addicts, dope freaks, and hippies." A typical response was, "yes, (I've been put down) but I don't care, I learn more at the Alternative School."

The next question was asked to test the depth of the student's belief that the Alternative School was a better educational system. The students were asked it they would tell a younger sibling to transfer to the Alternative

School if that younger sibling was getting A's in the regular program.

Table XVIII shows their responses to that question.

Table XVIII

If your younger brother or sister were getting A's at regular school, would you tell them to transfer to the Alternative School?		
Answer	# giving response	% giving response
YES	3	9%
Yes with qualifications	2	6%
Total Yes	5	16%
NO	15	47%
No with qualifications	6	19%
Total no	21	66%
Other	4	13%
No response	2	6%
Total	32	100%

The responses of several students revealled a flaw in the question. Many students qualified their answers with "I wouldn't tell them, I would advise them". Even accounting for the qualification, two-thirds of the students responded

in the negative. Clearly, the majority sentiment is that if someone is doing well in the regular school, they are best served in staying in that program.

Summary of Findings

The following list is a summary of the major findings reported in this section.

1. Questionnaires were sent to the entire student body of the Alternative School. Forty-seven percent (47%) of the students responded. The response group was disproportionately made up of successful students.

2. The mean rate of achievement for the entire Alternative School student body was less than the rate needed for a normal high school completion. This was found, despite the opportunity for Alternative School students to achieve at a higher rate than their regular school counterparts.

3. The Alternative School students report that they have a high interest in graduation and their activity selection is consistent with that goal.

4. It was noted that students dropping-out in order to go to the Alternative School and transfers account for a greater percentage of students than does the out-of-school-already population.

5. Many Alternative School students aspire to higher education, and it was found that their future plans were traditional in nature.

6. Overwhelmingly, the students cite the educational aspects of the program as the things they like.

7. There appears to be no consensus on either the problems or the things which should be changed at the school.

8. The students report that they believe the Alternative School is superior, academically, to the regular schools.

9. The program has helped a large number of students develop creative pursuits.

10. The students want to hold on to their political power at the Alternative School, but do not feel that they would be able to maintain that power at the regular school.

11. A significant portion of the parents are reported to disagree with the high marks the students give the

program.

12. Most of the students responding report to have been "put down" for attending the Alternative School.

13. A majority of students said they would not tell a younger sibling to enroll if that sibling was doing well elsewhere.

CHAPTER VI

THE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL FROM THE STAFF PERSPECTIVE

This chapter presents excerpts from open-ended interviews with the staff at the Bridgeport Alternative School. The reader might want to read the full texts of these interviews which appear in appendix III, as they provide a rare and honest insight into the thoughts of the practitioners at an Alternative School. The entire staff of the Bridgeport Alternative School was interviewed with two exceptions. One teacher was responsible primarily for the Junior High School Program and had only a minimal involvement with the Alternative High School. The other teacher, who was not interviewed, was a part time woodshop teacher who was only at the school for six weeks.

The method for presenting information in this chapter will be by providing separate sections on each individual staff member. The scope of the information to be presented has been tailored to fit the focus of this study. Therefore, many of the concerns and daily problems which these people have discussed with the researcher, are not reported in this section. The only material presented is their insights into

the structure and effectiveness of the Alternative School Program. The three people who were at the school for the Peter and Sally years were asked to compare the changes that they have seen occur. In each of the presentations the expectations, prior to entering the program, of each staff member are expressed. In addition, the re-evaluations of those expectations are presented. Information is presented on what the staff members found most rewarding as well as most frustrating. Perceptions on other pertinent issues, such as the stigmatizing of the Alternative School students, and the goals of the Alternative Program, are explored.

The reader is asked to note that each of these separate presentations takes a slightly different form. It will become apparent that all of the people dealt with in this section differ greatly from one another. An effort has been made to let those differences show through. This chapter will conclude with a summary of the points of agreement and disagreement among the staff on the critical issues involved in this study.

Marcy

Marcy was in her first year as a teacher aide at the Bridgeport Alternative School in 1973-74. Marcy brought an

interesting perspective to her job since she had just graduated from the Alternative School the previous June. She probably has one of the best historical perspectives on the Alternative School as she was among the first students ever to enroll. Marcy was responsible for co-ordinating the independent study program in English and math. This amounted to helping students select the appropriate programmed material and then to check it and see that it was correctly completed. In addition, she was responsible for supervising the student secretaries and seeing to it that the office work was accomplished.

The researcher asked Marcy how the students had responded to the Alternative program in previous years. She recalled that,

> Last year, on an average day, there were no more than ten students there. Out of the ten who were there, they would either play games (the school had some good educational games)...for points, or else play volleyball or else go in one room where (the independent study teacher) had all her independent study stuff. There would be people in there doing it and most of the other time people just came and messed around. I think the Alternative School, before, was just a place where everybody would meet and hang out...

Marcy was asked how she managed to get her credits for graduation if the school "was just a place to mess around". She recalled:

> We would set up the classes--the students and the teachers--but the teachers couldn't do nothing, because none of the other students would show up. So the only thing I could do was independent study. If it wasn't for (one of the teachers) I don't think I could have gotten through. Because she was the one for independent study. All the graduates from last year...were from independent study.

The researcher asked Marcy what she expected her job as a teacher at the Alternative School would entail. She said,

> (I expected it would be) the same thing as last year. I figured it was going to be real hard and no matter what you did they would still say 'yea sure,' and act like they were real excited and then slack off. I expected to have to put up with just what the teachers last year put up with.

Did she find that her expectations were met or was she wrong. To this she replied,

> The students respond to the staff this year a lot better than they did last year. They have more respect...Now usually when they say they are going to participate in something, usually they do. It seems like there is a lot more interest in the school and I think that has a lot to do with it being more organized this year than it was last year.

Even with the many changes that occured between 1972-'74, Marcy found it difficult to assume the new role of teacher, after having so recently been a student. She reflects,

> Okay, last year I was a student. Everybody related to me as a student. This year I'm part of the staff, and it's just really hard for them to relate to me as part of the staff. Like I notice in Algebra class...if you're not going to be there, I'll have maybe one student...It's really hard--when you've been one of the students for two and a half years--it's really hard to relate to them as being a teacher

the next year.

Since Marcy had been critical of the Alternative Program in its early, less structured period, she was asked if perhaps that wasn't a necessary stage for the program to go through. She was emphatic in her reply:

> No, I don't. Because the Alternative School now is so completely different from a regular school, it really is, its whole philosophy is completely different. If Peter (the first head teacher) would have started it off the way it is now...it would have been a lot easier. I know a lot of students bitch, 'We got to do this last year,' and all that... but if Peter would have started it like that there wouldn't have been any of that bitching going on. I think they got used to that slackness and wanted it to stay slack. But even now, it's a lot looser than any public school.

As if to add emphasis to the fact that she views the Alternative School as being far different from a regular school, she asserted that it would be much easier to assume the role of teacher in a traditional classroom. She felt,

> If I taught in a (regular) classroom, I think I could do it. I think if there were students sitting in front of me at desks and weren't allowed to say anything and if they did want to say something, they would raise their hand...I think I could do that. It's just real scary...where if they want to cut you down, they can cut you down.

Marcy thinks that sometimes the students take too much advantage of the looseness of the Alternative School, and is afraid that that can cause problems. She cited an

example of a student who declined to take a turn at the blackboard in math class by just saying, 'Look I don't want to do it". She felt he was using the atmosphere of the Alternative School as a crutch. She feels,

> They should be prepared for life and there are times in life when they are going to have to do something whether they like it or not. You can't say, look I went to the Alternative School so that means I don't have to do it unless I want to...That's what I mean...(its) totally different from a regular school. I think its too loose in a lot of ways.

Marcy took a hard line when advocating that the school should tighten up on the students who don't want to take school seriously. When asked if that wouldn't turn off some students she responded,

> Probably, but the one's you would turn off are the ones who when they decided they wanted their diploma they would be back. Because the one's who are going to screw off, no matter what you do, they're going to screw off. But the one's who want to learn, they are going to be there to learn. Last year (one particular student) didn't come at all. (He) said, 'this school is so screwed up; you come in here to go to classes and there are no classes...(The teachers) can't have one student (in class) when they have to watch the rest of the building because people are riding motorcycles down the hall. He just said, 'forget it'.

Marcy proceeded to discuss a few students, whom she claimed, only came to school to gossip. She mentioned that one of them,

> grabbed a bunch of books. In a week she came back

> with about six or seven credits. If you asked her right now what she learned, she couldn't tell you.

Marcy had a few words to say about the apparent stigma attached to participation in the Alternative School. She remembers last year when she was a student,

> We had East and West students who would come over to talk to us and see how our school was... They would come in there and act like gods. They would just throw questions at us like...just giving us the third degree, like we were some tourist attraction or something.

Marcy was asked how she would feel about moving the Alternative School into a facility containing the regular school program. She did not like the idea of the School-Within-A-School. She felt certain that it would increase the put-down on Alternative School students.

Marcy can be a staunch defender of her alma mater and she feels that it has done a great deal for her. When talking about what she got out of the program she said,

> I realized it was helping me because when I started going to the Alternative School my whole crime thing just went down. Because Peter and Sally were good people to talk to if you had a problem... They had good feelings for other people and they were just really good. They talked me out of doing a lot of stuff. They would just come out and say you know that was really stupid. I'd go, Oh yeah, is it? and they'd tell me why. It wasn't because the law said so. They'd just give me a real good explanation. They really helped me a lot. I think as far as running a school, they were too into psychology instead of trying to really organize it.

Marcy concluded her interview by asserting,

> If it wasn't for the Alternative School I wouldn't have got my diploma. I would have said screw it. Maybe I would have got a G.E.D., maybe, but I think I'd just be really downhill, it it wasn't for the Alternative School.

Jenny

Jenny was in her second year as a teacher aide in 1973-74. For both of those years she worked at the low teacher's aide salary even though she was a certified teacher. She had been the victim of a cut-back in a neighboring school district and was willing to come to the Alternative School, as its art teacher, only because of her excitement for the program. Her aide's salary was far below teacher scale. Jenny told the researcher that the financial issue was a greater concern the previous year, as the aides worked far less hours in 1972-73.

Jenny was asked to recall what her expectations were when she first came to the Alternative School.

> I had a lot to compare it to. I'd just come out of a public school and expected everybody to be running around busily working, getting so much done. That's what I expected... It took me just about the whole year to get over that. This year I think I've been a bit more...going along with the flow.

The researcher asked how she felt about what she found.

> I didn't feel good about it at all. The main con-

> flict between the staff and Peter was that Peter developed the school--the basic concepts of the school. He'd been working with it almost a year when I came. (Another teacher) and I were rather frustrated because we weren't setting goals, we weren't setting classes, we weren't setting any structure at all. That was our main conflict with Peter. He wanted things to come and go. He wanted the complete freedom of the student with no hassles for the student. It was awful...I summed it up in a way...we felt like we were part of one of his experiments.

Jenny was asked to compare the 1973-74 program with the 1972-73 program.

> It was a one hundred percent (100%) change for the better as far as goal setting and instructions. We expected something out of the kids...Last year we were probably closer to the students, because we were always listeners. If there was any kind of problem, <u>that</u> came first. If there was just anything, we'd talk about it. We had meetings, in fact it was called psychology, encounter, or something like that. Peter taught it in the mornings. It took all morning. We all lay down on the floor and Peter would talk to us and we'd visualize, and fanticize all these things. We did some weird things...just trying to find people socially, and give to the personal part of their person, instead of trying to teach them anything.

Jenny feels that one of the Alternative School's problems can be laid on the doorstep of the Bridgeport School District Administration. She claims,

> I think we could have more quality--quality everything, if we have contracted teachers. Teachers aren't paid what they deserve.

She addresses herself to the school district administrators

again when she recalled,

> The kids are never taken into consideration. The kids and the people here. That is where it is so bad. I think Peter felt that very deeply. His dream school was never taken seriously down there. (School District) the way he envisioned it and the way he wanted it...
>
> It was mostly the money end of it. Boy, you just don't realize how big a deal that is when you are trying---people have to be rewarded. They have to feel they are important enough that they will be paid.

Jenny was asked what she recalled as the lowest moments of the 1973-74 school year. Her recollection was of a series of rip-offs. The prevailing opinion was that someone at the school was responsible for the theft of two cameras, and some jewelry making equipment. The failure of the students and staff to come up with a means to retrieve these items was an indication to Jenny of something lacking in our sense of community.

When Jenny was asked to recall the high points of her experience with the Alternative School she had no difficulty in responding,

> Well I've always enjoyed group things. I think when we get together as a group, all of us...not necessarily our meetings, but times we have a lot of fun. I can think of a couple of things, like the pot-luck (dinners with parents) and when we had the school board here; that was really unity, with the kids and the people and everything.

Jenny had a few comments to make about her central area of conern--the Alternative School art program. She states "we have more in our art program than at least ten (10) other schools". She applauds the fact that from the beginning art has been seen as an integral and essential part of the Alternative School curriculum. She explained the changes that occured in the art area in the 1973-74 school year,

> I think we've accomplished more this year academically...mainly because we had the structure and we're forced to present something everyday...I've seen with the photo lab...the interest build and build where I'm working with more and more people.

When Jenny was telling the researcher about the fact that the Alternative School is able to attract a large number of very talented and certificated teachers, who are willing to work at teacher aide pay, she commented, "It's really neat, but, it's not fair".

Don

Don, like Jenny, was in his second year as a teacher's aide at the Alternative School. In his second year he assumed the responsibility of English and writing teacher. He also taught music and drama when those classes were in demand. In the course of the 1973-74 school year Don experienced several shifts in his beliefs regarding policy at the Altern-

ative School. When the year began he concurred with both Jenny's and Marcy's assessments of the previous year's shortcomings. He confessed to the researcher that in the previous year he "was never quite sure what his role was supposed to be". When the new year began he spent considerable time preparing classes that he felt would be both fun to teach, and interesting for the students.

At one point, early in the year, he strongly questioned the need for student contracts. However, shortly afterward, he changed his mind and began believing that the contracts would help the students to set realistic goals. When the students formed a basketball team he voluntarily served as it's coach. At some point later in the year, Don found that he could no longer perform his duties as a student advisor. He reported he did not believe in the role of counselor, since, he felt, it was the student's sole responsiblity to decide what they wanted to do without any staff interference. By the end of the year when this interview was conducted, Don had developed an educational philosophy radically different from the one he paid lip service to at earlier stages in the year. He found himself in major disagreement with the goals and strategies of the Head-teacher and the staff at the Alternative School.

Don was asked to compare the Alternative School of 1973-74 to 1972-73. He concluded,

> Last year it was probably more of an alternative, but there was probably less education going on. We were trying to make it a completely open situation. We didn't have the personalities to stick by that and certain staff always felt as if they were still responsible to do everything. Even though Peter would say, 'you are not responsible to students'...everyone would try it and nothing would happen so we would go back to the practical idea.

Don continued to suggest changes which should still be made,

> The things (needed) to make it better would be really, really radical things that would change the style of the Alternative School competely from a building...that's closely related to the school district, to one which is more of a live-in situation and more of a country setting, and more of a slow pace. That...would enable the scheduling to be much more relaxed instead of having it be there at 10:00 and schedule classes. It would give you more freedom to have spontaneous classes because the staff would be there; other people would be there.

In the past Don had suggested that the present Alternative School program was harmful for the students enrolled. He was asked why:

> What's bad for kids is the way I am...and what happens to teachers in that situation...I think just the lack of stimulation that a building like that and that kind of location offers is a lack of stimulation. The effort to get things going has to be really terrific to combat the setting. Myself, I just don't have the energy to do what I feel I can do, in that type of setting.

The researcher pursued the question of goals and

expectations in the following exchange.

> Researcher: Is there any place for requirements?
>
> Don: Not where I'd be involved. I'd prefer to be involved completely wide open--artistic.
>
> Researcher: Do you have any kind of expectations? Would there be any way of evaluation? Do you think a program should have outcome goals?
>
> Don: Well, a vague outcome goal for me would be that the student would know more about himself. That would be my most important goal through art, because I feel you discover yourself through art. That has to be vague.
>
> Researcher: Beyond that?
>
> Don: Beyond that? Well, beyond that it is my belief that it's taken care of. If you become aware of who you are, somebody wants to study art that way, then choices are obvious. I don't feel there's any need to go beyond that, as far as planning.

The researcher presented what he felt were the goals of the Alternative School in the following exchange, and Don responded to those goals.

> Researcher: Our goals should be to get somebody the competencies they need so they can choose... (for their future). I don't want to use an educational system that would preclude options. At the end (of such a system) if they decided they wanted to choose something else, it would be too late.
>
> Don: So you figure what you are doing is sort of gearing; giving them tools to choose, and you are implying that what I'm doing--trying to do--doesn't give too much of an option.

Researcher: Remove a child at the age of three from the miriad of things going on--from the hub of it, the rat race, and he is going to have fewer choices.

Don: Maybe, maybe. But that is pure choices in your world... I see my world as being a complete world in which choices like you are talking about are irrelevant. So I don't feel the responsibility of preparing them for your world.

The researcher pursued a discussion of basic skills with Don. Don concurred that reading and writing were very important skills and that people are best served by being adept with them. At that point he declared,

> I'm not talking about (elementary school). It seems to me as an Alternative School we shouldn't be a remedial school...But we are a remedial school, and that's too bad because that doesn't give us as many alternatives at all.

The final thing discussed with Don was the role of teacher. He was asked what he does when students ask him to take advantage of his experience in a particular area and teach them something. He responded,

> That's tough. I'm kind of going through that now. I don't quite know what to do right now. It seems that as soon as they ask me to teach, that's when I start teaching and there is a lot of interest... But, somewhere along the line I take over and it stops. That takes a real sophistication that I lack right now...To really give them what I have to offer and leave it at that.

Laura

Laura was in her first year as a Home Economics

teacher at the Alternative School. Her salary was provided by a special state vocational grant, and as such, she was the only other staff person, aside from the Head-teacher, to be paid on a regular teacher scale. Laura was the most traditional teacher at the Alternative School. She expressed to the researcher her lack of experience in working in this type of program,

> When I came I had very limited experience with this type of kid...I had no idea what rotten homes they could come from. I had no idea that they would have parents like these. I had never worked with kids that had been in jail and had had this many problems, so I was unprepared.

The effect that inexperience had for Laura was that her idealized expectations were not met. She recalled the things which she had anticipated;

> When I came I thought the kids would come to class easier. I didn't think there would be a big hassle. I thought the kids would go on field trips easier. I thought they would be very happy to do that. I thought the kids would stick with the Alternative School better. I didn't think we would have people... that would come one day or two days and then you wouldn't see them again.

Laura's surprises weren't all negative. She recalled one of the positive things that she had not anticipated,

> There is a better rapport with students than I expected. I didn't think they would be this close to me, and that I would be this good a friend with them; that I would really care about them as I do. I was surprosed that there was so much respect on both sides. I think the students respected the staff, and I think the staff

> respects the students. Its not a divided area where they do all the dirty work and we sit and direct the show.

On the negative side she found herself quite surprised at...

> how the kids will flip-out and I feel that some of them are...I don't know that much about mental illness or about emotional problems but I feel some of them are schitzo. I can not believe how they will react...one morning and then, they can be a completely different person in the afternoon. I've been surprised about the kids absolute defiance.

Laura was asked what she felt the goals of a good secondary educational program would be. She responded,

> I feel that students should learn to get some expectations for themselves that they have to carry through, take responsibility, and if not necessarily reach the goal...be at least able to have a track to go on...I feel the second goal of a good secondary program would be to give them some career orientation and definite career objectives.

She was asked if she felt that a mainstream school would have a better chance of meeting those goals. She said that she didn't feel that the mainstream schools could do as good a job as the Alternative School in helping students set personal goals. She felt the mainstream schools are just too big to give the type of individual attention that she feels is needed. She was then asked if she felt that students in the Alternative School were getting "a better or worse deal" than the students in the mainstream school. She

responded,

> Well, personally I have been swayed to believe that the Alternative School is a better way...I feel that the kids could get a better deal in the Alternative School, but it takes a lot from each child to do it...A kid can be really slack and he will not accept the responsibility...It's not easy to accept all this responsibility at this age...So I think a lot of them do not (accept the responsibility)...I think that any kid that goes through the Alternative School program can get more than the East or West Campus kids...Some of them, even from the osmosis, can get more.

Laura was asked what she felt the role of the teacher should be at the Alternative School. She asserted that there should be a definite leadership role assumed by the staff. She felt that,

> The kids should be able to look up to us for leadership as well as academic or curriculum in-put. I think we should still have a friendly rapport with the students...and throw as many decisions on the students as we can. We have to set those situations up.

She was asked about situations like the case with Don and the advising, where a staff member does not want to do an activity or after beginning an activity loses interest in continuing to supervise that activity.

> Well, at first impression, I'd say, this could all be cleared up in a job description. If I knew exactly what the things were that I was supposed to teach this year, it would be real easy. I'd know, and I'd do them. But somehow, it doesn't work that way, and things come up. Now I still feel that if somebody starts something, they should fin-

> ish it as long as there is student interest...even though they really don't want to do it. I feel that if we don't carry through on our projects, how can we expect kids to follow through?

When asked what her high and low points were for the school year, Laura recalled an incident where she had been somewhat indiscrete in talking to the mother of one of our student's girl friends. She felt it was quite unprofessional behavior and considered it a very low point. She considered one of the high points to be the way the student involved, refused to hold a grudge and even publicly defended Laura in a subsequent school meeting.

Laura was very disappointed in the lack of support she felt the Alternative School received from the school district administration.

The researcher asked Laura how hypothetically, would she respond to the suggestion that the school district should begin an Alternative School-Within-A-School, rather than a separate school. (like Bridgeport). She felt that, "there were some definite advantages to being a completely separate school. But...(thought) it would be a better experience if we could be integrated into the schools so we could at least have some common resources..."

In discussing the possibility that students were be-

ing stigmatized by the Alternative Program, Laura disagreed. She felt that the students were "liberated from" the put-downs. However, she didn't think the parents were as liberated. She recalled,

> One parent told her daughter, 'You're smarter than to go to the Alternative School. You don't need to lower yourself to do that'. Other parents have not wanted to come up, and one student didn't want to visit his employer and tell he was from the Alternative School. Now I don't think the student was ashamed to come here...but he didn't want to tell his employer, so in a way he was ashamed.

Laura's biggest criticism of the Alternative School is its academic slackness. She was disappointed that she could not get students who were taking her Home Economic classes involved in academic work. She cites an example of the problem:

> Kids can go through here like (one particular student) and not really know the parts of speech, not really know what plural and singular is. But, he is going down to take a G.E.D. test...did the Alternative School really help him with any basic academic skill? I think we're at fault if we haven't; I think we are putting out an inferior product.

Nora

Nora joined the Alternative School halfway through the school year of 1973-74. Like Jenny, she held a teaching certificate and was working as a teacher's aide. Also like Jenny, Nora was an art teacher. The funding which

enabled the school to add Nora came from the special Junior High Program, which was initiated in January, at the Alternative School. With Nora on the staff Jenny was freed from some of her art assignments, so she used that time to work with the Junior High students on basic skills. Nora specialized in ceramics and other art mediums, but also taught several academic classes.

The procedure used in hiring Nora involved a great number of Alternative School students. The interviews were open to any student who was interested in participating. The final decision on the candidates was made at an all school meeting. Since the students felt the need to have two series of interviews, the finalists, of which Nora was one, had the opportunity to spend a certain amount of time with the Alternative School students prior to actually being hired. As a result, Nora felt that she had a good idea of what to expect when she started. She remembered,

> I had expected them to be free flowing like I found them when I went through the interview...I hoped they'd be really interested in some new programs... So I had a high expectation as far as hopefully high interest levels.

Nora was asked if she found her expectations to be accurate, in light of the reality of teaching in the Alternative School. She answered,

> Perhaps, like many other people in the public schools, I expected them to have greater ability in reading than they did.

After finding out that she misjudged their skill level, she modified her approach so she could then help students acquire those skills. She concluded that,

> Since people had had a lot of discouragement in school (previously) you have to provide a lot of beginning things. They are frustrated by that, because...they see themselves as high school students...So it is up to us--to me--to develop programs that don't look like elementary programs, that are really just as exciting as anything else they have had...just really reinforce beginning skills.

Nora was asked what she considered to be the greatest positives in the time she was at the school. She recalled a debate that she had organized, where teams of students debated a current issue with the audience which was made up of students and staff. The participation exceeded her wildest expectations. She also mentioned the election of a vice-president at the school. Because of a pecular constitutional provision, providing for a three fourths vote, including the vice-president, the election became defaulted and took several weeks. This process involved much debate and frustration. However, in the end, Nora believed the students learned a lot about the political processes. She recalled that the students "felt a real sense of accomp-

lishment". Another high point she recalled was the work done by one student in art.

> The accomplishment that he felt, that I could see in his face, was really neat. I really felt good about that.

When asked to compare the Alternative School to the regular schools, Nora asserted that the Alternative School was superior. She felt that the amount of individual time a teacher could spend with a student is very limited in the traditional school.

Later in the interview, Nora mentioned she had to deal with a conflict in terms of how much personal encouragement she should use. She stated it like this;

> Whether I should really go out and be gung ho, and sort of pull students into my classes, or whether I should just set up a good program and encourage people who come in. Not push them so much that they get turned off. You have kind of a duality and you have to draw a line between those two things.

She finally concluded that different students will respond to the different approaches, and therefore both should be used as appropriate.

In response to the question of what were the most frustrating thing which happened at the Alternative School, Nora said,

> It's really hard when you are really excited about something, and you don't find many people who are

> also excited. Or they are excited,...for a short time. If you come up with the idea that they should have to do something to make the class go... You talk to them about maybe reading some articles or doing some independent work, then they just fall on their face, because they are not used to that kind of push. They are not used to some teacher handing over some of the responsibility to them. It is a combination of frustration and just amazement.

Nora was asked what she thought about the idea of having Alternative Schools for Drop-outs. She responded that the best program would be a set of several alternatives within a larger facility. She said that,

> By separating them...from the regular school and their friends, it makes it even harder for them in a lot of ways...They've already experienced a lot of failure and the Alternative School at this point...community wide...is looked on as more of a drop-out center. It had negative connotations.

Nora told the researcher that she felt the goals of a program like the Alternative School should be to help the students take responsibiltity for their own education; to help them learn how and where to get information. Another goal, she felt, should be to become sensitive to yourself and to others. She felt that our one primary goal should be to help the students develop personal goals for themselves. She said particular subjects, like art or social studies, can be a useful aid in getting students involved and motivated. Concern was also expressed over the problems

created for the Alternative School by the school district. Specifically, Nora felt that the uncertainty over what facilities and which staff would be retained, as a function of the district levy failure is always felt greater at the Alternative School due to its relative size.

Finally, she suggested that next year the top priority should be reorganizing the counseling program.

Doug

Doug came to the Alternative School at the same time Nora arrived. He was doing a student internship, in which he worked as a teacher at the Alternative School Tuesdays thru Fridays, and spent Mondays at his college. Evergreen State College, where Doug was a student, is an experimental college. Doug was a model for the Alternative School students of someone making the most out of an independent study project. Although he received no pay for his work, he assumed the same responsibilities as the other paid staff; he even continued working beyond the end of his college term. Doug's younger brother was a student at the Alternative School for the past two and a half years.

Doug was asked what he expected when he began working at the Alternative School. He said he expected it to be

A.S. Neill's Summerhill. He knew from observing his brother's approach to education that students probably didn't attend regularly and he figured that would dictate how a teacher would have to approach teaching a class. He was asked what he expected he would be doing as a teacher. His response,

> I assumed that I would be there to help students learn...where they could locate certain material. I had assumed that most of the students were probably motivated. Rather than go into a class and listen to somebody lecture, I thought perhaps that was where they were least at. I thought they would each depend on their own resources get together to some kind of material and to learn from that. But, this isn't exactly what I found.

In fact, Doug reports, that what he found was a situation that necessitated "pulling the wool over the students eyes and tricking them into coming to class". He said that he assumed that there would be considerably more reading and writing going on. He concluded that the staff had to be more aggressive than the students. He described the way he felt the staff should approach classes:

> They are going to have to depend more on lectures, and structure the lectures so the student can come to question the lecturer or the material...to get some sort of interaction; otherwise, if it's what they want to hear...they'll just lay back and listen.

Doug was asked what he thought accounted for the

students' low motivation. He listed several reasons. Among them, the fact that as a result of their continued failure in school, these students have come to see education as something negative. Second, he felt that in moving from the highly structured regular school into the highly unstructured Alternative School, students needed time for adjustment. Thirdly, he suggested that perhaps, since their parents did not regard education very highly, the students were identifying with their parents. He observed that the students often complain about the staff being disorganized, and suggest that perhaps that might turn some students off.

The researcher asked Doug the same two questions regarding his best and most frustrating experiences as he had asked the other staff members.

Doug cited three things as his most rewarding experiences. First, was the Wednesday (all school) decision making meetings. Second, was a case heard by a student court where Doug challenged the constitutionality of the Alternative School Judiciary Committee. Thirdy, he cited some of his own individual classroom experiences, where things that were prepared worked out in a fashion that wasn't anticipated and thereby worked out even better.

Doug recalled that among the most frustrating things was the inefficient procedure used to record student credit.

Doug felt a great many students were hurt by this poor administrative function. Doug found independent study to be one major area of weakness in the Alternative School program. He observed,

> I really haven't seen Marcy in action. I guess she is in charge of that...(one student) brought in a wad of papers and I don't know if she ever went over those papers or not, but she said 'well that was worth a credit'...Maybe (the student) got the idea you just crank something out and hand it to her, and if she thinks you are a good Joe then she won't go over the stuff.

The reader will recall that Marcy had some criticisms of her own about independent study. Doug told the researcher that a good independent study system would have individual projects which were oriented to the classes.

Doug concluded from his experience that teachers in the Alternative School definitly need to be qualified. However, he asserted that the qualification have nothing to do with academic degrees. He felt that every staff person should have at least minimal training in teaching reading and math.

He suggested that in 1974-75 the Alternative School should experiment with new contracts--since he felt the old ones were thoroughly ineffective. He also urged experimenting with mini-classes, and using students as teachers, as a strategy for increasing motivation.

He echoed the sentiments of many others on the staff, in expressing a distinct distrust for the district administration. He even went so far as to say that a goal should be to become totally financially independent of the Bridgeport School District.

Summary

In summarizing the five preceding presentations, seven major points have been identified as having major relevance to the main thrust of this study. These seven points are:

1. The change within the Alternative School from extremely loose to a more structured model.
2. The problem of student motivation.
3. The quality of independent study.
4. The adequacy of basic skills instruction.
5. The relations with the school district.
6. The goals of education as perceived by the staff.
7. The existance of stigma in Alternative School students.

Number 1. It is the opinion of all the staff people who were involved in the program prior to 1973-74 that the addition of more organization into the program has had pos-

itive educational results. They agree that it has produced greater student participation in academic activities. Several staff members categorized the change as making the program more of a "school". The one concern raised about the change in the organization of the school was that some of the old students would be lost. The data on the thirty-two students who were involved in the program over the two years of the change reveals that thirty-four percent (34%) graduated, twenty-five percent (25%) are still enrolled, sixteen percent (16%) have moved, six percent (6%) have been placed upon the waiting list for not meeting minimum requirements, and sixteen percent (16%) dropped-out. It is apparant that a mass exodus did not occur, although the full effects of the change cannot be determined from this data.

Number 2. Four of the five staff members reported that the level of motivation of the students was a major problem. The one staff person who did not cite this as a problem was Don, who seemed to feel that the motivation of the students should not be the staff's concern. Motivation is a relative problem. Whereas several members of the staff have pointed out improvements in motivation, as a result of changes in the program, no one is willing to claim that the students are highly motivated.

Number 3. Several staff members reported reservations about the educational validity of the present independent study program. Marcy pointed out that in the past, independent study has been the primary route to graduation. If independent study has been educationaly deficient and if that has been the mechanism used to graduate students, then a question must be raised as to whether some students have not received the education that their diploma indicates.

Number 4. All the staff members surveyed agreed that major deficiencies in basic skills existed among the Alternative School students. Furthermore, every one of the staff members felt this was a major problem which was not being adequately attacked.

Number 5. Among the members of the staff, feelings regarding the administration of the Bridgeport School District varied from feeling estranged, to accusing the district of benign neglect, to assuming the district is outright hostile towards this program.

Number 6. The members of the staff appeared to have no common set of goals for the Alternative Program. Most of the staff had goals which related to the students developing personal goals and self-discipline. It should be noted that not a single member of the staff felt that their goals were

being adequately met at this time.

Number 7. Most members of the staff seem aware of a negative set of connotations placed on a student from the Alternative program. Several staff members believe that this negative identity may add to these student's problems. However, several staff members report the feeling that, by and large, the students are liberated from the stigma.

The reader has now been given insights into the Bridgeport Alternative School from three separate directions. The administrators and founders perceptions, which largely come from outside the program; the perceptions of the participants--reported in chapter V; and now, the perceptions from the practitioners in the program. Up until now the researcher has attempted to avoid drawing conclusions. This study will now proceed to consolidate the findings of the last three chapters and apply them to the reform, or retreat from reform, question.

CHAPTER VII

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was asking the general question; Are Alternative Schools designed specifically for drop-outs legitimate reform or were they instead retreats from meaningful reform. To respond to that general question, one such school has been examined and the findings from that examination will now be discussed.

Restatement of Major Findings

Chapter IV, Administrators and founders.

1. The school was initially formed in response to the high incidence of dropping-out and kicking-out in the Bridgeport School District.

2. Soon afterwards it became a resource for the mis-fits from the two traditional high schools in Bridgeport.

3. There was no theory of instruction proposed or imposed upon the Alternative School.

4. The first Head-teacher decided that a therapy model was more appropriate for his students than any of the available educational models.

5. No mechanism was established for the purposes of holding the program accountable to district goals.

Chapter V, Data from the students.

6. The students cited graduation as their primary goal.

7. Although they had the opportunity to progress faster and graduate sooner, they achieved credits at a slower rate than necessary for a four year diploma.

8. The students felt that the Alternative School was superior academically to the regular schools that they had previously attended.

9. Even though they regarded the program as superior, they were reluctant to suggest enrolling to an already successful sibling.

10. The students report that their parents do not share the same positive evaluation of the program, in relation to their previous schools.

11. The future goals expressed by the Alternative School students are more like the goals of the mainstream

than the counter-culture.

12. Most of the Alternative School students who responded to the questionnaire reported having been "put down" for attending the Alternative School.

Chapter VI, Staff at the Alternative School 1973-74.

13. The staff noticed that when the school changed from the looser therapy model to a more organized educational model, the amount of student participation increased.

14. The staff noted that the students were deficient in the basic skills and that the Alternative School was not adequately remediating that deficiency.

15. The independent study program was seen as not having sufficient educational value.

16. The staff held hostile feelings towards the administrators of the Brigeport School District.

17. The members of the staff were aware that the students were experiencing some stigma from participation in the program.

The contradictions in the above findings raise several questions which will have to be addressed if the program is to be judged as either a reform or a retreat. Those contradictions are:

1. If the students are enthusiastic about the program, and if they cite the educational aspects of the program as the part they like the best, then why does the staff perceive them as unmotivated and how come their level of achievement isn't higher?

2. If the students are often put down for attending the Alternative School, why do they enroll and participate voluntarily?

3. What accounts for the Alternative School's unusual relationship with the Bridgeport School District? Why doesn't the district hold the program to some standard of accountability and why does the staff at the Alternative School distrust the district administration?

Why are these enthusiastic students not academically motivated?

Within the scope of this study it is impossible to declare with certainty why, in their academic pursuits, the students at the Alternative School display relatively low motivation. Nonetheless, this research has uncovered several pertinent hypotheses, which are worth discussing. One pertains to the effects of special segregation programs, and the other relates to the unique nature of the "free school".

For several years special educators have been debating the merits and problems of special class placement as opposed to leaving students in the mainstream. Kirk (1962) reviewed the pertinent literature and concluded that children left in the regular grades are generally superior academically to the students assigned to special classes. Dunn (1968) took the argument one step further and called for the abolition of special classes for the mildly retarded.

In a study done on tracking in two comprehensive high schools Shafer and Olexa (1971) found that the students in the lower tracks, "experienced lower academic achievement, greater decline and less improvement in achievement, less participation in extra-curricular activities, greater missconduct in school, a greater tendency to drop-out, and greater delinquency". (page 50) Why is it that students in special classes or in low ability tracks do worse than their counterparts in regular school programs? One possibility is that the students in the special classes are aware that the path they are on isn't leading to any future rewards. Therefore, they see little reason to exert themselves. In discussing this type of phenomena Polk and Kobrin (1972) observe,

Those who are most successful in their school careers

> are those for whom the future looks very good indeed. To be sure, they are willing to make "sacrifices" (i.e., to defer other gratifications) in order to achieve that promised future.

Another explanation for the poor performance of students in special programs is the phenomena of self-fullfilling prophecy. Shafer and Olexa consider, "that it is likely that non-college prep students are low in motivation...partly because teachers, counselors, and others expected them to be that way". (p. 54) Another study seemed to indicate that by simply presenting teachers with test scores, a researcher could alter the teacher's expectations of, and behavior towards, particular students (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968). The crux of the self-fullfilling prophecy notion is that, if students come into class prejudged as failures, they have already lost a good deal of their incentive to try. Furthermore, if a student is labelled as a failure, he may well find that the only way to achieve cognitive consistancy is by acting out the role of the failure. A great deal of dissonance is created for a student who wants to be a success and is unable to shake a failure label. One way to reduce that dissonance is to take on the attitude, "What do I care, school's a drag."

A study done at the California Youth Authority (McEachern, 1968) showed that the more involvement a youth

had with a probation counselor, the greater the chance that the youth would get into trouble again. A control group which had committed the same violations, yet, received less treatment had significantly fewer future referals to the juvenile authorities. Apparently, the more a young person becomes involved with programs designed to serve only people in trouble, the harder it is for that young person to avoid being seen as a troublemaker. Once the label has been attached, it becomes almost futile to resist the comparable role. This is called the, if you got the name, you might as well play the game, phenomena.

The same type of thing may well be at work at the Bridgeport Alternative School. These students have experienced failure throughout their careers in the traditional schools. They are known to all the teachers and counselors as "troublemakers" and are expected to remain failures. The interviews with the Principals and Counselors at East and West Campus High Schools revealled that these students were indeed seen as flawed individuals and had had labels attached to them. When these students get to the Alternative School they are faced with a "free school" atmosphere, where very little pressure to perform is applied. It is instead up to the students to challenge themselves. In this environ-

ment the students can find security in just plodding along. Their past histories have taught them that if they make an effort, they will probably fail anyway, and since no negative sanctions will be imposed for simply standing still, many students find laziness to be an acceptable strategy. In this pecular way the Alternative School can actually reinforce a student's decision to do nothing. Perhaps, the low motivation is due to the acceptability of doing nothing.

While at the Alternative School, these students are liberated from constant competition and direct daily comparison with the regular school students. The Alternative School students are thereby free to declare themselves better educated, and claim that their school is superior academically, even while the facts won't bear those assertions out.

Why do the students participate in the program voluntarily if they are put down for doing so?

This question is very closely related to the previous one. Goffman (1963) described a type of adaptation to a stigma called the "good adjustment".

> It requires that the stigmatized individual cheerfully and unselfconsciously accept himself as essentially the same as normals, while at the same time he voluntarily withhold himself from those situations in which normals would find it difficult to give lip service to their similar accept-

ance of him. (p. 121)

The Alternative School makes the "good adjustment" very easy for these former failures from the regular schools. As was mentioned in the previous discussion, the looseness and lack of accountability at the Alternative School provide the students with the opportunity to "withhold themselves" from the successful students and declare not only their equality, but their superiority. A good question for a future comparative study would be to determine if in a community similar to Bridgeport, students would be willing to attend an alternative School for drop-outs, carrying the same type of stigma, but not offering the same looseness.

Another feature of the student adjustment at the Alternative School is the creation of a sub-culture. One function of a sub-culture is to reject the rejectors, who in this case are those individuals, adults or students, who put down Alternative School students. The greatest insult that the students ever hurl is calling someone a "red-neck". This term is used to refer to anyone not in agreement with the Alternative School life style.

In the interview with Jim, the social worker and founder of the Alternative School, the question of stigma was discussed. He was of the impression that the Alternative

School students were much better able to "fight off" the put downs than were the Special Education students. Many of the students and a few staff members voiced the same perception of the students ability to "fight" it off. What may be the difference between the Alternative School students and the Special Education students is that the Alternative School students can claim that they chose their program, while the special education students were assigned. The ability to claim volition reinforces the sub-culture's rejection of the establishment. The large number of students who claimed that they dropped-out in order to attend the Alternative School may indicate a rationalization after the fact of being forced out of the mainstream. If the student admits to being eased-out or kicked-out he may be tacitly accepting that he was at fault. However, when he claims that he did the rejecting the traditional school becomes the party at fault.

There is still the question of how deep is the students' belief that their school is really better than the traditional. The reader will recall that the Alternative School students were reluctant to recommend this program to their successful younger siblings (Table XVIII).

What accounts for the strange relationship between the School District and The Alternative School?

It has appeared that one of the primary reasons why the Bridgeport School District formed the Alternative School was to provide an escape valve for the students who were the victim of a rigid and traditional school system. The counselors and principals at both East and West Campus High Schools told the researcher that the regular schools were both traditional and resistant to change. Those same administrators cited the rigidity of the regular system as one of the prime reasons for keeping the Alternative School. The actions of the administrators at the two major schools and the backing they have received from the school district office, demonstrates the commitment to the perpetuation of the traditional secondary program. Why then did a conservative school district start a radical alternative school? If the reason is because they believed that the traditional approach wasn't adequate, then one would have expected to see some movement away from traditionalism in the regular school program. Since that movement was not taking place, one might conclude that the district was satisfied with the performance of the regular schools. One explanation for the creation of the Alternative School for drop-outs is Slater's

(1971) toilet assumption. The goal of the toilet assumption is to keep problems hidden from view, not necessarily to eradicate the cause of the problem. There is some evidence that suggests the administration in Bridgeport was more interested in getting the drop-outs off the streets and the alienated students out of the halls rather than try to seriously attack the cause of the problem. In chapter IV some of the members of the administration presented argument about the needs of this group of students. However, if the needs of this group of students were the primary motivation of these people, then why didn't they assert more leadership over how these students needs were to be met. The history has shown that the two Head-teachers were given Carte Blanche with the Alternative Program. One has to wonder if the administration doesn't believe that anything that goes on at the Alternative School is equally good, as long as it happens away from the traditional school premises. For two and a half years (if the recollection of the head-teacher is to be accepted) the program was not even committed to educational goals. During that time no effort was made by the administration, who had expressed their very deep concerns for the education of these young people, to hold the program accountable to a set of educational goals.

At various times in the past few years Bridgeport has had to face the prospect of laying off teachers due to levy failures. On each of those occasions the administration has been willing to lay off the entire Alternative School staff and replace them with whoever, in the regular school staffs, would take the job. For some programs, like special education, exceptions were made in the reduction in force policies so that specifically qualified people could be maintained. However, this was never done for the Alternative School. This can be taken as further evidence of the depth of the actual administrative commitment to meeting the needs of these alienated students. Jenny summed up the feelings of the staff, "the kids are never taken into consideration. The kids and the people here".

Midway through the 1973-74 school year, the Head-teacher at the Alternative School was called to a meeting about some behavior problems at the Bridgeport Junior High School. Within a month a Junior High Program was established at the Alternative School. Nobody concerned could have really believed that in one month a proper staff could be hired, materials purchased, and a program planned. Unfortunately, those matters were of secondary importance because the Junior High administration wanted those kids out

of the regular program. The creation of the Junior High program was a classic example of the "toilet assumption" played to perfection. The students were thrilled to get out of the restrictive atmosphere of the Junior High School, away from grades, hacks, and manditory attendance. The parents had been aware for quite some time that their children weren't getting much education out of the Junior High, since they were out on suspension as much as they were in class. The parents were sold a bill of goods about how good this new program would be and away it went. At this writing the program is going into its second year, it has yet to be evaluated, but is considered a success. The reason it can be considered a success is because it did what it was supposed to, namely let the pressure off the Junior High School.

Most Alternative Schools are by definition anti-establishment. The people who are attracted to work in a program which seeks to develop something as an alternative to the traditional method are usually people who aren't particularily in love with the established system. To a certain extent that accounts for part of the distrust which is characteristic of most alternative school people for educational administrators. This was no doubt true in Bridge-

port as well as elsewhere. However, it appeared that an even greater factor in the poor relationship in Bridgeport was the apparent disinterest of the school district administrators in the progress of the Alternative program.

How well does the Alternative School meet the four goals of education?

"The considered choice of a life career..."

The Alternative School students reported that they believed that the things they were learning at school were things they could use on a job (table). In chapter IV the Superintendent of Schools confessed that perhaps the Alternative School students weren't getting skills, but, nonetheless, they were getting diplomas. In chapter VI it was shown that the unanimous view of the staff was that the Alternative School students had major basic skill deficiencies, which were not being adequately remediated. The realities of the contemporary world of work are such, that, if the staff and Superintendent are right, meaning if the students are in fact skill deficient, they will be severly hampered in their range of career choice. The reader may recall the quotation from Kozol on page twenty-four (24) of this study, where he states that "learning how to attack" a tough

college entrance exam is a worthy goal for an Alternative School. Certainly, if Alternative School students graduate with reading levels such that they cannot successfully take an exam like the Scholastic Aptitude Test, their career options will be limited accordingly. Silberman (1970) pointed out,

> The insistance that the systematic and disciplined intellectual effort is a waste of time--the worship of uninhibited sensation and feeling that constitutes a newly fashionable anti-intellectualism of the intellectuals--at its best is sentimental foolishness. (page 8)

At issue here is not the dismissal of "intellectual effort" by the intellectuals for their own children's education, but, the use of those same notions on young people, who are not fortunate enough to have trust funds to fall back on.

The Bridgeport High Schools have extensive industrial arts and vocational education programs. While these programs might not constitute a fully adequate career program they do provide a certain measure of exposure and experience for the students who go to those schools. Unfortunately, the Alternative School students do not have the opportunity to take full advantage of these facilities.

It may be that the Alternative School students have been misled into believing that a high school diploma is a sufficient passport to a good choice of jobs. By being denied

access to vocational-educational programs and highly motivated students that misconception can proceed unchecked.

"The ability to exercise intelligent choice in democratic decision making..."

This has been one of the Alternative School's stronger points. By involving students in all decision making the students have gained experience in sifting through issues and making reasonable and equitable decisions. Unfortunately, the students have only had this power and been involved in these activities in a very sheltered and homogeneous environment. In the mainstream school or out in a larger community the divisions on the issues are often much greater, making the process more difficult.

At one point in the 1973-74 school year it appeared that the entire staff at the Alternative School would be laid off and replaced by teachers from East or West Campus who had more seniority. The researcher asked the students how they would respond if that should come to pass. The general reaction was, "I'll check it out, but, if they really want to change the Alternative School, I'll split." The students felt they would be incapable of preserving their own school and would have no choice but to quit. Laura, the home econom-

ics teacher recalled that period and she remembered,

> I think as much as we want the kids to take this over if we leave, I don't think its going to happen. I don't think the kids are that strong. They don't have it that together and as hard as we continue to try we aren't achieving that goal."

In Chapter 5 some data was reported which showed that the students felt they wouldn't be able to get any power if they were back at the regular schools. It appears that even though the Alternative School students attend a democratic school, they may still lack the necessary political skills to tackle some potential problems.

"The acumen to make intelligent choice in cultural matters..."

The students in the Alternative School are not involved on a regular basis, in a pluralistic community. As a result, they are deprived of the cultural richness which an integrated community would entail. Furthermore, since the school is limited to alienated students, there is not much opportunity to view competing life styles and values. In a homogeneous environment an anti-establishment subculture can be perpetuated and never have a cause to be re-examined.

A positive part of the cultural environment is the fact that the Alternative School students participate in a wide range of creative activities. The atmosphere at the

Alternative School is conducive to experimentation with artistic endeavors. The home economics program has provided many of the male students an opportunity to explore their creativity in the kitchen. The democratic atmosphere at the Alternative School has enabled sexist restraints on student interest to be minimized.

"The ability to develop one's self and live harmoniously with one's neighbors."

From one perspective the Alternative School is superior, in that it provides some unique opportunities to generate interpersonal competence. Decision making is a shared responsibility, and since students and staff work together in the operation of the school, the ability to work with others and enjoy productive personal relationships is enhanced. It has been mentioned that in the early years of the program, the school was almost exclusively concerned with the goal of intrapersonal competence. Most of the students have reported that the Alternative School has helped them "get their head together."

Once again, the major drawback in this arena is that the enforced homogeneity can produce an unrealistic approach to human relationships and breed intolerance through ignorance.

Conclusion and Suggestions for Change

The researcher has concluded that Alternative Schools for drop-outs are not in any meaningful sense a reform, but rather, they are a mechanism which militates against a reform. At the outset of this study meaningful reform was defined as changes in the schools which serve to increase opportunity for all students. Conversly, programs which serve to decrease the opportunities available to students must be seen as retreats. The factors which have led the researcher to conclude that Bridgeport's Alternative School falls in the latter category are the following:

1. The program is organized in such a matter as to insure a spoiled image for participants. This may produce stigma and negative self-fulfilling prohecies.

2. When "Free School" theories are applied to programs for alienated adolescents, they may serve to reinforce the already low motivation for those young people.

3. There is ample evidence to infer that the organization and methods of the traditional schools are contributing factors to the drop-out and kick-out problem.

4. There is insufficient evidence available to justify the assertion that the drop-outs themselves are the cause of the drop-out problem.

5. Establishing a program for an identifiable group of young people and then failing to hold that program accountable to any educational goals is irresponsible.

6. The students remaining in the traditional schools are denied the vitality which would be present in their schools, if those schools were less restrictive.

As a result of the findings from this study the researcher proposes the following changes be considered by the Bridgeport School District:

1. That the Bridgeport Alternative School be fully integrated and made an integral part of the school district. This would enable the program to recruit students who are known in the regular program for their successful accomplishment. The program would continue to serve alienated youth, but no longer exclusively.

2. That consideration be given to moving the new integrated Alternative School into one of the regular schools. This would be a stimulus to encourage further innovations in the regular program.

3. That defensible goals be established for the Alternative School. It should then follow that the staff must be held accountable to those goals.

4. That it be recognized that smaller schools cannot

be expected to duplicate the programs of the large comprehensive schools, and therefore, the Bridgeport Alternative School should have complete access to all district facilities.

5. That no further programs be organized exclusively for drop-outs or alienated students.

6. The staffs at the East and West Campus schools should be encouraged to experiment with programs within their schools which acknowledge the different learning styles and speeds of students within the same mainstream classroom.

Suggestions for Further Research

By using the participant-observer method this study was able to provide some insights in the Alternative School that a researcher from outside the school might not have gotten. However, it would be helpful if other researchers would explore Alternative Schools for drop-outs using more objective instruments. Specifically hard data on achievement, both in comparison with students in regular programs, and with Alternative School students in different types of Alternative Schools would be useful.

It would be useful to find out if other types of Alternative School strategies produce the same stigma and low motivation when applied to an alienated population. Com-

parative studies of Schools-Without-Walls, Schools-Within-A-School, Street Academies, and Continuation Schools would help further develop an understanding of educational innovation.

Many people in the Alternative School Movement have been reluctant to be evaluated and researched. While the fear of being held accountable to obsolete or indefensible goals is understandable, it has produced a serious problem for people working on school reform. This researcher has found that whenever Alternative School people get together they are amazed at the common problems that they have all experienced. With the enormous work ahead, if we are serious about school reform, it becomes counterproductive for hundreds of people to simultaneously re-invent the wheel.

A review of the Alternative School literature reveals a minimum of critical evaluation, rather one finds glossy "Life Magazine" type features espousing only the joys of the new type of school. The process of educational systems change will necessitate the education of educators. This must involve more rigorous debate among Alternative School reformers. This debate must occur publicly, so that the hundreds of school districts, comtemplating these programs can be made aware of both the negative and positive consequences of these innovations.

APPENDIX I

DFP=Director of Federal Projects

R=Researcher

R: Where did the impetus come from to start the program?

DFP: The impetus, as I saw it, came from two sources. It came from within the school district, I think it came from three sources. It came from a member of the school board, who was on the school board at the time, who was deeply concerned about the drop-out rates at West Campus High School. The West High administration at that time was not interested in even being told that they had drop-outs...they were not concerned. And I think the counseling staff at West Campus High was concerned. But, we had discussed in secondary principal's meetings, etc., possible alternatives. I was, at that time, director of secondary education, and I was deeply concerned about the kids. No so much the drop-outs, but the kick-outs, and I was really concerned about it, that we were kicking out...we weren't willing to offer them any alternative solutions. So what occurred was that, and I've forgotten what year this was, but in the fall of that

year the Bridgeport School District received approximately, as I recall, about $20,000, or more. We had not anticipated this from Title I funds, and it came after the school year started. One of the concerns that we had in the district was that people were not aware of Title I, so therefore, to encourage people to become aware of Title I, its guidelines, its purposes, etc., we had worked out with the State Department, SPI in the State Capitol, the fact that we could offer mini-grants. The parent advisory committee thought that was great, and those who are still on that committee think that we should put so much of it every year for that purpose. So we had applications then within the district. As a result, the vice-principal at that time, at East Campus High School, called me and said that he had been talking with Jim and others. The vice-principal was concerned about this and I said that I felt that...I really encouraged him to work with them, because I am the Director of Secondary Education and particularly because I was still in the role of Federal Projects, too. I didn't feel that I could submit a mini-grant but I certainly encouraged him. So, the vice-principal and Jim, a member of the school board, and myself met as a group and discussed the needs, objectives, goals, etc., and Jim and the other young man and the vice-principal wrote the grant.

Then the vice-principal and Jim came down and made a presentation to the committee. I chaired the committee and we had the man from SPI and we had representatives from the staff, etc. They set up the criteria, and as a result of that they awarded...they asked for more money than they got, but approximately they got $13,000 which was put aside to set up. At that time, we had a woman in the district in the city, and she was sympathetic with this cause. She picked it up and put banner headlines in the front and put 'Bridgeport School District will establish an Alternative High School.' We presented the idea to the board, and of course the board approved it...it had to have board approval, and we did have some vocal opposition. One member of the board was definitely against it, and we had vocal opposition from a certain segment of the community, against this. So we began to...that was in November, that we finally got board approval, and then we began the search for people. This article set it up because the parents of Sally, who at that time, her father was on the board of the junior college, read this and cut the newspaper article out and sent it to them. They were at that time both doing student teaching at another community so they immediately applied, called a meeting and I talked with their principal up there and they

were the school district's candidates. Then Jim came in with a non-certified person who had a background, you know, but had never taught. He was not an educator and we set up a screening committee and he was named as a teacher and Sally was named as an aide. Sally didn't quite accept that though, she felt that we had to name them as a team and they would be equal. The district didn't care how they operated it but as far as the district was concerned that was the role. We were not concerned with the husband-wife aspect because we really felt at that time that it would be good for these kids to see husband and wife work together and also, mostly, the kids had not seen harmonious marriage relations. That's how we hired them. They worked from the first of January until it opened the first of February; then they worked in March, and it opened at the old Central School. At that time it was the only spot available and I really felt that they did a fantastic job on getting it open, getting people there. The really-the two people--gave a tremendous amount of time and effort to that, and got the thing rolling.

R: You referred in there, the proposal, the goals, etc. What were both the written and non-written goals?

DFP: We can give you the written ones.

R: But the ones that remain in your minds...

DFP: The ones that remain in our minds are that we would reduce the drop-out rate. That was our main goal. And, by providing alternative methods. That was the whole idea; to provide an alternative schooling to these students, and create a method by which they could graduate. And that was the major goal. I feel we got into enough things--self-image and all of that--but the major goal was to provide an alternative educational program to the high school drop-outs, and to reduce the drop-out rate.

R: Was there much discussion, before the head-teachers were hired, as to what the nature of the program would be? Was it going to be a separate program that would give an alternative to dropping out or being kicked out?

DFP: We did discuss of course, before they came, with the secondary principals, because we didn't see the elementary principals involved in this, what the nature would be. And I've found that when you discuss with people things that they approve that they are very open and honest and tell you what they think, but when they discuss things that they disapprove--we, had no support from any of the schools except East Campus High. We had underground support from a couple of the counselors, three of the four counselors at West Campus High School gave us real support; we had support from the principal and the assistant principal at East Campus High School.

We had, in my opinion, no support from the other areas. I felt that the three administrators felt that they were threatened, the fear was that everybody will drop-out in order to attend this "school", and as a result of that, we tried to work with them and we did draw up some guidelines. But we did not really draw them up until after Peter arrived. So, we did draw up the guidelines and the district really forced upon--it was not left at the perogative of the West Campus High principal--we set it up that "they will" and "they shall". At that time I think that would be a very honest assessment. They were very fearful about it. As time has gone on we have support. I think we have support from West Campus High, and I think that has been a mark of the success. One, of evaluation; that after a period you can come up and say "that's good." The fact that the program has lasted. I had fears that after a while we would not be able to survive, but we did.

R: When and who made the decisions like it would be a Summer-hill type of school, behavior mod type school, etc.--what the educational pattern would be?

DFP: I'm a firm believer that we can say what you are going to do, but the people who are working with it are the people who really determine the method and so we gave Peter really

a free hand. But "we" I would say, I did. He reported directly to me. I'm a firm believer in...if I had said, "Peter, you will have to do these things" then I think I was always, there for advice. I don't think that would work, to say "you have to do this". I don't know how Peter feels about it, but my philosophy is that you must let them carry on no matter what you have written down on paper. That is the person that makes the difference. I think that the thing we had to do was establish a trust level in that school setting, that would attract kids to come to it. I think that that is the thing I tried to tell Peter. You can say that this is going to be...and I think the thing that has happened there is that there has been an evolution that has evolved, and they found that some things would not work while others did work. They did a lot of things by trial and error.

R: But no theoretical notion was...

DFP: No. My theory was that we have to have a strong person, and the persons must be attractive; they must be able to establish rapport, and if you can establish a rapport with kids you can carry on most any kind of methods. I may be... that has always been my theory in teaching too, and I felt that I had to work with some kids some way and other kids

others, and I felt that was the important thing and then they had to develop with each student the best way to work with that particular student. That is a tough job. I realize that is very idealistic sometimes.

R: Was anything set up as...what was the system for program accountability?

DFP: To begin with was the meeting the goals, which was to reduce the drop-outs. And it worked. And that was the only accountability. And as far as...they set up a very elaborate point system, as I recall, that worked like "if you do this you get so many points, and if you do that you get so many points" and it was...you had to earn this many points then you will get this many credits. I don't know how they made the determinations. They did have an accountability system. I think its not as firm and not as structured as the accountability system that you have now.

R: My question was more of the district holding the program accountable.

DFP: The district held the program accountable in the fact that they did submit an evaluation report and those evaluation reports we have. These reports are always subject to suspect as long as the person who is running the program writes an evaluation report. Let's face it, you're going

to write yourself up as a success and in that event we have been highly successful. I realize that saying these things just now...I would really love to see us able to, wouldn't it be nice if we could go back now and do a followup of Alternative High School; we really ought to spend some money to do a follow up.

R: Do you think the program is still needed?

DFP: I think the (Yes I do feel it is needed) schools are always going to need an alternative. I'm notsure that it is as needed now to be away from the setting; I'm still convinced that we need alternative for schooling because I think that we still give lip service to individualized instruction, but we don't behave that way. We give lip service to it at the elementary level and we even behave that way at times, the kids are not a threat to us at the elementary level. They can't call us four lettered words. Until they can really communicate with us we are threatened by that and are not ready to accept their communication.

R: I'm interested in comparing the alternatives. Do you think with your experience at this time, you can say that the Alternative High School students will be interpersonally competent? As well as a student would be succeeding at East or West?

DFP: I really feel that the strongest point of Alternative

High School is the interpersonal relationship. I think the weakest point that we would be very foolish to think that the students who have gone through Alternative High School could probably have the same academic achievements. But let's face it, if he has the interpersonal relationships could be more personal and much more important than the academic achievement. And I think that's where we fail in our, what I would call, normal or regular school. The alternative, or the greatest need is that right there. You can always learn the academics later if you can understand yourself and if you have confidence in yourself and you know where to go to get that training. The problem that we have at the regular school is the...we graduate many students who are highly skilled academically, but they're not highly skilled in living together in an interpersonal relationship. One of the problems and many times the reason the kids in Alternative High School have been kicked out of school is because they don't understand interpersonal relations. Or, they don't understand it and then they fight against it, they are playing that silly game. The kids who have the academic skills, they have learned to work the system. They don't mind being hypocrites at times if it's beneficial to them, and these kids are basically pretty honest kids.

R: Comparing East and West, how about students gaining an awareness and the ability to be politically active and politically potent?

DFP: I think that, and feel that--I saw evidence last year that Alternative High School students were very politically potent. In fact, they expressed the year before last, and were the most articulate students I have seen, or are as articulate as any students I have ever seen, that come before the board. So articulate that the board would never touch Alternative High School and get away with it. At this point. So I would say that those students are politically aware. I would also say though that the East Campus High students demonstrated this year very much political astuteness. I think it was the student body that kept East Campus High School open. If you were comparing the entire student body at Alternative High School to the entire student body at East or West, I would say that the entire student body at Alternative High School becomes more politically astute than the entire student body at West. But I would say that there are individuals at West and individuals at East who are as astute or more astute politically than...I don't think that, basically when you have issues, that you deal with the issues more in the curriculum there.

R: How about comparing them in terms of expertise and knowledge of leisure activities?

DFP: I think the major leisure activities at the present time would be, if you are measuring student's use of leisure time then Alternative High School would be...because, but if you are talking about the use of leisure activities in future, as adults, I would say that if a student really wanted to prepare for that--I don't think that the students at East or West are cognizant or made cognizant that that is one of the goals and things they should be looking for; to prepare themselves for leisure activities. We would have many more students enrolled in shop, the industrial arts, and we would have a much greater demand for photography and things of that nature. And I think we probably do a better job at Alternative High School at even making the kids aware that that is one of the things they should be doing.

R: If we were doing a better job at both places, who would be delivering the better program?

DFP: Alternative High School couldn't compete with East and West because of it's facilities. The facilities are there, in the other schools.

R: What about students being able to gain an appreciation of cultural pluralism?

DFP: When you start talking about what you are talking about diversity of interpersonal relationships as far as race, things of this nature. I think in Bridgeport it is very difficult to have this type of experience because we are basically a white middle class, a WASP comminity. This is my opinion. And, Bridgeport is pretty highly bigoted. Therefore, as long as we are in a community like that it is difficult for any groups. With field trips etc. that Alternative High School students have had over and many of them have senstized the students, and made them become aware of differences. They have become aware of it, but you can't understand it until you actually live it. I think as long as you are living in a WASP community and you have to go visit, it is like going to visit the zoo. In a way that is what the ghettos are to these kids; us going over to look at the animals in a cage.

R: What about the qualities of the programs at the different types of schools as far as giving the students a chance and the ability to choose from a range of options in the work world?

DFP: I think that decision-making, and looking at different alternatives and options, probably is one of the most critical areas that we are looking at in schools. That is what pro-

ject Future is all about. I'm not sure that we spend enough time, in fact I would assume that most kids of East and West are even taking courses because mom and dad have said "this is what you are going to take". And because older brother and sister have said "take this" and "take that". Of course the Alternative High School students are into decision-making and I would feel that more than likely the students who have gone through the Alternative High School would have a look at things, with different options differently. I don't think our curriculum at the high schools, with exception of the Project Future classes, have had any insights into a real decision-making.

R: Would you assume then that a graduate of Alternative High School (typical), if they could make a decision would have the same range of options? Their skill levels would be...

DFP: I would assume that Alternative High School probably doesn't have the skills on the whole. That is if you would take the typical Alternative High School student and the typical East and West student, the typical East and West student have had more skill advantages than the typical Alternative High School student. I would assume that the Alternative High School student, if he had the same skills, then he

would be in a superior position. I think the weakness of the Alternative High School program is because they haven't been able to give them the same skill background in the academic world as East and West. Maybe more in art and those areas they have been particularly interested in, but those areas they are interested in now may not be the skill areas that they will have to make a living with. Those are the things I would be concerned about. I would feel that those students that don't have the academic skills would be stronger in the interpersonal skills.

J=Jim, Community Social Worker

R=Researcher

R: Where did the impetus for the Alternative School come from?

J: Where was the beginning need for an alternative high school? Speaking for myself; I arrived in this county in October of 1968 and during that year and during '69 and part of '70 we began to experience a great number of families where one of the problems was that one of their sons or daughters had been kicked out of school. Sometimes they were kicked out, sometimes they were suspended for a balance of the semester, which meant they lost their credits and sometimes I feel they were sort of eased out and sometimes the students quit. We found that as these children were out in this way they were a great risk in terms of law enforcement, etc.

R: Where did the idea come from to start the alternative school?

J: I think there were a lot of people in the community who had the idea of an alternative school. Speaking for myself, (doctor's name), who is with the mental health center, and myself met. Then we attended a meeting of the County Mental

Health Association and we announced then that we were interested in applying for a law and justice grant. We thought possibly we would fund the Alternative School from the law and justice grant. At that meeting we heard of the mini-grant program which was funded through Title I. We then contacted the vice-principal of the East High School and we met with the (member of the school board) who was also very interested in alternative schools, and there was a gentleman from the employment security office and some Neighborhood Youth Corp people involved, then we met with the Director of Federal Project, who was then head of federal grants, and we got their thinking and their input; then myself and (doctor's name), etc. sat down and put together a proposal. We submitted that through the Title I committee and the proposal was approved. Then we met early in January after Christmas and interviewed some people who had applied for the job and we elected two, Peter and his wife. Peter was the teacher and his wife Sally was his aid, although they were both certified teachers. So the school started in the Old Central School, in downtown Bridgeport.

R: One thing which I am interested in getting a handle on is: At the point when the Head-teacher was hired, how developed was the alternative school program? Did you have a model

in mind? Did you have a set of goals?

J: One of the organizing principles was parent participation. We saw a necessity for really involving the parents from the very beginning. In the decision-making of how the school should be run the parents were included, to provide them with a great deal of feedback as to what was going on; we shared concerns with them and likewise heard their concerns. We saw the need for regular meetings with parents. In the evening is when we had the visits since some of the parents worked and we just pulled together and just talked about the school. We felt the school was small enough to use the democratic model. There would only be (hopefully) one main system of communication that was in the group. Consequently when someone called me and said they didn't like the way the school was being run by so and so a teacher or so and so an aid, I could say "hey, don't tell me. Come to the group meeting, then we can do something". That was one of the organizing principles. I guess I have already named a second, and that is group process. We saw that as being very important. We also saw as being important the opportunity for students to be involved in the decision-making. Particularly in the aspects of the school that in the regular system had been disappointing to them. Such as attendance, curriculum, trouble with

authority figures and so on. We saw the students having their group meetings during the on-going school day and also attending the parents meetings in the evenings, which they did. I think those two organizing principles seem to come through to me, just off the top of my head, as the most important factors.

R: Was there much or any discussion given to the theory of education there would be or was that assumed it would come from the Head-teacher?

J: Every Head-teacher has to give the school their own style--we saw that. We saw some as being a changing, dynamic, and moving school, that would be changing as to different kinds of problems that arose in the community and also under different leadership. But the organizing principles that we propose about parent and teacher participation in a democratic confinement is very essential. As far as the type of thing that you spoke about, i.e. what kind of model for working with students, we saw two things. One thing we saw was behavior management. There was a lot of misunderstanding and a lot of different ideas about behavior management. What we wanted was reinforcing and supporting the positive things, nurturing those things and not giving so much attention to negative behavior. This is academically as well as personally. And the other thing we saw was

modeling, that we expected the teachers and aids to model the behavior that they expect from their students. If they don't think students should holler and yell then they shouldn't. And if they don't approve of students who smoke then they shouldn't smoke. Model what you expect from other people. And also model that behavior with parents. The behavior management and model were the two major kinds of responses to behavior that we felt would be very important.

F: Was a differences between academic and affective goals, ever made in the minds of the founders?

J: I think it was. If you read the grant, making anything, socialization was one of the goals. So that the kids would get along at home, in the community--in other words to internalize some of the value systems so that those values and behaviors become part of their automatic responses. We helped them build on socialization and we saw the group process being helpful in that as well as behavior management and modeling. The second goal was the academic goal. To help people make significant improvement in reading, mathematics, spelling and so on, but we hoped to measure these things by the achievement tests. I think that there was some measurements of the academic performance...we put in quite a research design but it was never implemented. I think something should be done in that area.

R: How did it go that first half school year?

J: It was highly experimental, a number of things were tried, it was an opportunity for Peter and Sally to get acquainted with the community, with the social agencies of the community, to get acquainted with their students, and the school system in general. They had a chance to put together some curriculum process that they wanted to try out. So it was a time of learning for all of us. During the period of learning our agency arranged for us to see a consulting psychiatrist, to meet with the teacher and his wife and the aides once a week or so. They talked about different types of behavior and responses to feelings. It was a period of a great deal of experimentation. I think that one reason they didn't was because Peter was not sold on the idea and I think that he...probably one reason he wasn't was because he had so much to do just getting the school started, that he didn't feel he had the time or energy to spend on the parents group.

R: He felt that the first six months was best...

J: Yes, he did things that couldn't be done once a ritual was set in and goals were absolutely set. I think another thing about the first six months is that there were fewer students; we never did hit the fifty (50) students. I don't

think there was any more than maybe thirty (30) students, so you had more of a family, an intimacy.

R: The first full year of operation...what were the high points, the low points of that first year?

J: I think it was a year of consolidation. I really didn't have very much to do with the school that year. I don't think the parents group was as active that year.

R: Why don't we skip to 1972-73...

J: 1972-73, the school moved to West Park. They got out of the downtown area. I saw this as a great advantage. It was a chance to isolate the students from the excitement of the downtown area. There was much less running around. It was a year of a great deal of parent activity. We gained a school psychologist. She was very helpful in arranging meetings, etc. I think there was also a swing towards a more academic program, a tighter kind of academic program, I didn't like a great deal of structure, I didn't want it to be a dictatorship, but on the other hand I didn't want it to be a laissez-faire headless type either. I felt that we had to find that middle ground which I like to call a democratic school.

R: Was there a conflict between a laissez-faire philosophy or more rigid philosophy?

J: I know that the staff had some differences but I really wasn't that much tuned into the staff and another thing I really can't respond to is the kinds of pressures and kinds of relationships that Peter had with the administration. I don't know what kinds of pressures they were putting on him and he didn't talk much about this. One of the things, feelings, I got from Peter was that he didn't really get support from the administration. I think he felt that he was getting double messages, as to whether he was getting support or not, and I could see this kind of pressure. When we talked very early about funding, the original intention was to fund this school outside of school funds. But we realized it was going to be very difficult to get support from a small district and decided to apply to Title I to get some funds--anything to get the program going. So we tried to get the feeling across that the school belonged to the students and the parents and they would go before the school administration and the school board...and they would justify it.

R: How did the students respond to that kind of change, from laisseze-faire to a more solid academic sort of program?

J: I felt the student response was pretty good. Mind you, it wasn't highly structured--it was rather loose academically.

And I don't think that we have a lot of students who left that year.

R: That you were aware of, were there any goals that the school district imposed on the program?

J: I didn't see any directives, but I wasn't aware of any written directive. But then I heard there were some covert goals that I really don't understand. Peter communicated that kind of feeling to me though he wasn't specific. And I had some of those feelings too, but was never able to deal with those people directly. I might say that during the parents meeting we had on several occasions we had repeatedly asked members of the administration to come to the parent's meetings--we wanted to get a dialogue with them--and they always agreed to come and then at the last minute they had something to do; a school board meeting or another kind of meeting, but the upshot was that they never came. We had regular monthly meetings that were attended by twenty-five to thirty people and we never had a school administrator show up. I thought that would be the time to show up, but they never did. I was going to bring up the fact that we were concerned with what their troubles were and their goals were, or directives, and what are some of the things you like or dislike about Alternative High School, and what are your concerns? (to the administrators) I wanted

to bring that out in the open and discuss it. But I never had the opportunity.

R: What did you perceive as the goals of the program? Student outcome goals.

J: Basically to improve their socialization skills, help them to attain an education and a school diploma, an education they could use in making a living, in making an adjustment to community living, their family lives and so on. To provide them with some social skills and some academic skills. Another goal, and this was very much in mind when the original document was written, was to train teachers to work with alienated students. It would be to train these teachers and to also demonstrate to the community what the alternatives could be and that a need for an alternative school existed. So that there could be a different kind of funding; so that the school could be independent of Title I funding.

R: Do you feel that teacher training model materialized?

J: I think that I saw Peter and Sally change. I saw changes in the others. I think the only people who didn't change were those who can't change. I think though, that the entire staff did change; they found a lot of things about themselves, the students. They tried out some things that worked and some that didn't work. I don't know whether it has really been

a model for change of East or West high schools though. I'm not sure about that. You'd have to ask the staff.

R: Who held Alternative High School accountable and to what?

J: I suppose that the parents held Alternative High School accountable for providing their children with an education. I think Title I holds the school district accountable for the funds. I suppose the immediate supervisor of the staff holds the staff responsible, like any school holding the staff responsible. I don't know whether that answers your question...I was never satisfied with the research part of it. I wanted a much more rigorous type of research. But I could never get Peter interested in it. I don't mean to discredit Peter at all, but that wasn't his thing. I told him I wanted him to write it up, have the parents be involved. I don't want somebody sitting over in the state capitol or up over in the administration office deciding how tax payers and the students and the parents are going to be evaluated. They are a part of it in a moving force. You can't do that in a big school.

R: Is the program still needed?

J: Yes, I feel that it is. I feel that there is still a significant number of students in the community who for one reason or another are not able to adjust to the traditional

large school system. They need the kind of intimacy, closeness and one to one kind of tutoring that has been a part of the Alternative School process. There is also a need for the Junior High School now, because of the shortages of staff, because of the amalgamation of the two Junior High Schools into one, that I think the need for an alternative junior high school has been pretty well demonstrated and that there is a--I think you should look at the possibility of enlarging slightly the student body. By the way, I was over at (another town) not too long ago attending a meeting with school administrators and they had spoken about the Alternative High School--they had heard about it. They wanted a copy of the proposal. I sent for the draft proposal we are involved in writing and I also told them to tune in with you, and I told them that the parents would be delighted to come over and meet with them and present the proposal to them. They were thinking of starting an alternative junior high school.

R: Could you please expand on why you felt better having the junior high alternative school being separate from the regular junior high facilities?

J: Knowing the feelings of the parents, the negative feelings about the junior high school, knowing some of the young

people involved and their feelings and the kinds of feelings the junior high school activates when they go there and knowing that the need for these students to have a separatness from that school, a chance to be together in a small group, and to become a family, a chance for the parents to meet together, I felt that probably--very strongly--that the Alternative High School should be separate. I feel that something new and exciting could happen in the junior high school; a lot of different things have been tried out that might have been helpful. But I didn't see it happening, and I don't see it happening this year because of the staff shortages, and because of some strong convictions on the part of the staff about how the junior high school should be run--there is a great deal of criticism of the junior high school from the general public.

R: Has stigma been a factor at the Alternative High School?

J: We used to talk about that at great lengths; at the parents meetings. The parents talked about that, as did the students. And we and they felt, that there wasn't such a negative stigma. They developed a real pride about Alternative High School and a real identity around the Alternative High School. I felt that working with students at the old Special Education School in a separate building, and these

children were in special education, I felt the stigma there was very strong. Those students felt they were second class citizens and I heard other students call them Lincoln Specials--a very hositle and demanding thing to say to a student. But I didn't pick up that kind of thing with the Alternative High School students. I also felt that the Alternative High School students were able to stick up for themselves, to hold their own in a kind of give and take kind of battle of wits, but the Special Education students weren't able to do that. One student's parents never came to any of the parent's meetings, they have always maintained a separateness from the school. I think there was a stigma for them. Although one student's mother did teach at Alternative High School originally. She did try.

R: Are the students at Alternative High School getting a second class education?

J: My feeling is that a student going to East Campus High School has a greater opportunity to chose the kind of educational program he would like to have; there is a greater range of academic subjects, sciences, language arts, history, also a greater range in vocational kinds of opportunities; auto shop, metal shop, and so on. I think from the standpoint of having a chance to select a mix of academic

and vocational and kinds of opportunities, the student at East Campus High School is ahead. Now if you look at it in terms of quality; you take an English class that is at Alternative High School and compare it with an English class where they are reading novels or something like that at East Campus High School, I think the qulaity at Alternative High School is good and probably better than is at East. So quantity wise there isn't the opportunity, but quality seems to be a shade finer; I would think it's finer. I... the students are now allowed to take auto shop at East; Peter negotiated that. At the beginning they weren't allowed to do that. I cannot understand why they can't go to East and take an academic course there. The students (contradictory) can take courses at East but the problem is transportation back and forth, and getting the opportunity and the right time to get into the class etc.

P=Peter, S=Sally

R=Researcher

R: Where is the alternative school when you first came on the scene? What do you think could have been planned out?

P: We pretty much got together a plan for some sort of alternative school. We looked everywhere for funding. We had gotten some other people in the community interested to find funding elsewhere and so we finally went to the school districts and they knew some of their Title I funds to essentially support this grant and support this proposal. But it was basically very open, open-ended questions, the open end of the proposal. We pretty much set down wanting that it was going to be a...We didn't have a building yet when we got there. We were up in (another community) and we had written a proposal for an alternative high school for that community. We were fortunate and then we realized that there wasn't any chance for it being accepted there and all of us later heard from Sally's folks who lived down south of Bridgeport, that Bridgeport was thinking about something similar, so we applied. We came on campus to look at the building. It got pretty complicated right there, that's what the whole thing with our role together in the region. We agreed to take the job...

R: O.K. you were saying, when you got to Bridgeport campus-ing the buildings...

P: Well, actually when we applied we tried to make it pretty explicit that we were coming as a team. There was a director position open and later there was going to be a teacher, it was called teacher assistant, or assistant teacher or something like that. We got a position open and we said that we were applying for the two together but neither of us could take one or the other. We understood that we'd taken the thing under those provisions. Apparently the Director of Federal Projects and the rest of the people involved thought that they had hired me and they couldn't consider what to do with Sally when we got there and wanted me to interview for the position in which point I think we should have left. But we didn't. We shopped around and found an old building that had been condemned. The district could let us use. We were funded at $13,000. I think, is what the first year...but most of that ended up going into salaries, heat, lights, stuff like that. The Director of Federal Projects wanted us to sit down and order things and plan out school. She set us down with a couple of catalogs. We played that game for about a week, looking through catalogs and going to supermarkets and talking with the West Campus

Principal and decided that was being a snowhorse so we wrote letters to the people who dropped out of school in the past year and asked..you know, told what we were thinking about, very open endedly, just starting a new school, and asked them to come. We meet on the bare floors and talked about what we were going to do and our hope was that they could help us decide what was necessary to get what was needed and also to give us a chance to meet them so that we could have some idea of who we were talking about. In talking to people in the community at one end of the spectrum there was the West Campus principal who decided that they should all be jailed for life. At the other end of the spectrum was Jim. After a while I came to accept Jim. I think when the kids came there was kind of one group that was in and out a lot, the kind of people who had been...who were heavy into dope and especially heavier stuff, who kind of came to check us out. For a while there was a rumor going around that we were new NARC's in town. It was kind of a checking out thing. They didn't really trust us. They thought it was some kind of...What do remember about that time? (to wife) The first month when we opened the school, when we had the meeting on the floor? Walked through the snowstorm?

S: I thought that the contrast between that year and the next year was really incredible, the beginning of the year, because when we started that school had nothing. We had an empty room. We had no chalk, and those are things you don't think about, until you have nothing. We had no telephone which meant every time we had to contact the school to get something we had to go by car. There's not even a pay phone in the area. I think that really created a lot more dependence on each other. We had to hustle around and pick loads of stuff up for the school, people would volunteer things. I think that...it was never the same after that first year, the first six months, we started in January and I think when we were all working together to make the school happen, frustrating as it was, because there was no organization. What I was thinking about, and I don't know what you were talking about because I wasn't here but if there was some way of continuing that kind of cooperation that went on, which I'm not sure how to do that, I never figured that out, that was just one of my afterthoughts, that it never was quite the same because after a while it got into some things that...things where the teachers took over ordering. The students would tell us what they wanted or we'd ask what their opinions on things but there was never the

same equal...we were all in sort of the same situation where no one had anything, you know, the teachers didn't have anything, the students didn't have anything. We were all in the same boat. It wasn't like the teachers had all the knowledge, all the goods, all the forms, all the phones, all the materials, and to me that was the best time in that school.

R: Let me ask a question, which kind of goes back to that in 20-20 hind sight. What was your motivation? Why did you want to start an alternative school?

S: Philosophically or personally?

R: Philosophically. Personally.

S: Peter is the philosopher. I'm the personaler. Well, for me mostly it was because my own education seemed so limited and that I had to overcome a whole lot of limitations, that seemed important to me that other people didn't have to repeat that. One of the ways, which I saw in a very limited perspective then but still, I think valid, was, well,...it's so hard for me to remember how I was thinking them. That's so tied up with the way I'm thinking now. I was channeled, and controlled and told what to read and when to read it and how many pages to read and what questions to answer about what I read. Then I was evaluated on the basis of memory

and didn't really learn what learning was until the last course I took after I'd gone through college and dropped out of education because I was so bored. At the height of my boredom, I took a course in teaching...methods of teaching English. It was the last course I had to take and just suddenly the teacher refused to teach us...it was the whole responsibility was placed on the student, to do the learning, to seek out books, to go to visit schools on our own...It was entirely our responsibility to do any learning and, of course, I did a complete flip-flop. It was the first class I'd ever had like that...To me it was the real turning point in my own education, the point at which I began to teach myself things. Education became more valuable to me. I became a more valuable person in my own self-concept and that's continued to go, to the point now where I see also my education as a woman, that what was going on through the schools was also the education of men and there was very little relevancy to women. I see that now as another limiting basis. At that time I was at Alternative High School though I didn't realize it but the second year I was beginning to realize that. But so when I went to Alternative High School I went with the idea that education could be fulfilling if you were allowed to make...to be able to select

your own interest areas, to be responsible for your own education and not just the learning process itself that are traditionally defined as learning processes, like English, History, Math, but to make them applicable processes to something that's important in your life...I think my goal was to provide a variety of experiences that hopefully some of those experiences would be applicable to someones interests. That someone would find, have the freedom to pursue that interest there. That I could facilitate that interest and that someone would go through the discovery of learning how to learn and the importance of learning. My idea of that is a good class, or acceptable.

R: Peter, the question there was, what were the...philosophically, why did you want to get involved in an alternative school program?

P: Well, we were pretty heavily influenced by the alternative school movement that was just kind of getting started or had been going for about a year at that time. We'd intentionally gotten our teaching certificates and started working so that we could have an alternative school of our own, hopefully separate from the public school.

R: Are there any particular models, when you talk about alternative school movement, either the people who were

writing or...?

S: We read everything. I don't think there was a book we didn't read.

P: I think we were turned on by all them, even though there is a cumulative range of different things, but I think basically what we were responding to was just looking at students as human beings, feeling that the educational system was an oppressive representation of the existing power structure, which was just continuing to oppress individuals. We had hopes for an alternative society, as well as an alternative school...and I think this was largely my trip. Having been in Viet Nam, I was very concerned about power, power structures, oppressive power, people getting ground up in...I think, partly, well, we were rampant idealists at the time.

S: But, on one hand, I don't think we had any illusions, though, that what we were doing was going to be a panacea. Because we thought of just one, I mean there were many, many alternatives that could've been formed, not just one. What we were providing was limited by our own perceptions and by what two people could do and I don't think we had any illusions about that...that was going to make a big splash in altering education in any drastic form. That was really one small, small step. I'm talking about just in Bridgeport.

P: A lot of what we are responding to in the whole thing is that...people are basically good. The more we study about the school system's operations where traditional schools, where we saw kids in the school where we were getting chewed out, that they were immediately confronted with suspiscion that they were doing something wrong and there were a lot of provisions to keep them from doing wrong. There were very few provisions that encouraged them to do right or say, "Oh, you made a mistake", or something like that, but especially among the lower socio-economic groups they were under a lot of pressure from the beginning and it seems to have been very difficult to escape from that once you were identified as a drop-out or drop-out prone, or a potential drop-out or some sort of label like that--anti-social. Well, if you want to cheerlead around.....I think you began having some of the problems. So what we were hoping to provide...I think when we went out there was some sort of community where people could pretty much start exploring themselves together and know what's going on. We were just hoping for the right kind of big, broad, holding it together, the money, the organization, help them do whatever they wanted to do but mostly we wanted to help them identify their neurosis...mostly we wanted to try to help

them identify what it was that they wanted and that's what really got stronger later because the more we got to know the kids there were there...Now let me go back, again to that scene with those kids. We really wanted to have an open structure that could change itself into whatever it wanted to be. I guess an organic thing that just by all the different people who were involved, students, staff, administrators, community, everything and by all the different wants and needs and stuff like that. To the thing which we could provide some sort of petri dish in which all of this could start growing. The thing that we started realizing more and more as we got to know the people, especially since we were at the school, is that kids with most of the famous experiences, had very limited self-concept. And especially had difficulty in decision-making and/or making choices or seeing that they had the right responsibility to do those. Usually they felt they could either do what everybody else wanted them to do or they could do what they wanted to do. They wanted to do what usually meant responding angrily from some gut level frustration that you've got to bust out of it and it happened. They got busted and so they got angry. Dropping back, when we began the first group of people that were there, I think sixty-eight percent (68%) had some sort

of police contact during the three months before the school started. I think practically all of them had some sort of police conflict. They were...pretty much what we were running...So what became clearer and clearer was that we hadn't come there to run a school, necessarily. We'd come there with some sort of commitment to communitizing education and seeing education as broader things than school which normally is, traditionally, I guess, consists of rote. At some levels there's a body of information that you have to master and once you master that body of information...We were coming from a place that you can master any body of information or any skill, yourself, pretty much if you decide that you want to do it and if you decide that you want to work on it. You can find people who will work on it with you or resources that are available, but there are a lot of things to learn about yourself around the edges of all those skills and things and about other people. But especially there are the techniques to learn about how you decide what it is you want to do, how to manage yourself to learn those things, whether they're worth learning.

R: What do you feel are the legitimate goals of an educational program? I mean, you can interpret education as you said and that could be education in a sense. What were the goals of what's typically an educational program?

P: I guess, that information needs to be available. I don't know, I think I said a lot of them before.

R: Right, I think...

P: I don't want to go back and redo it all over.

R: O.K.

P: You know, I'd say I gave you the answer when you asked the question. I think what we ended up going towards, because of where we started at, because of the needs of the students that we ran into because of the expressed desire of the students, because of our response to what we saw going in those, became more of a therapy model, than an educational model. That...the place at which those people were coming to that school, you know, they'd been through some really heavy trip and they had a lot of things to work out for themselves before learning about multiplication because they are going to be tellers in the Albertson's for the rest of their life, was not very meaningful. A lot of other stuff was going on. To some of them I think, it seemed much more likely that they'd be in jail the rest of their life or something like that and as much as they were looking for survival skills they were looking for survival skills in those areas. Anything else was kind of meaningless. So,...and also most of them I...well, the word back then was alienated.

whatever the word is now is what those people were.

R: It's a good word; all the other ones are much more offensive.

P: They had no group, they had no community; they didn't have a family, they didn't participate in school, they didn't really have a peer group as much as there was a peer group, you really had to watch your back...pretty often.

S: Most of them had no friends, I was really struck by that. They were very, very lonely. I mean they didn't have the close friend. Most people I knew, you know, they would have one or...

P: I think they all came, I kind of fantasized, sometimes, that they all, each of them, had been in a different class in a school and each of them had been a little kid in the back of the room when nobody knew him. He probably got quite a bit of harrassment the first couple of years, and pulled out at some point along the way to where they weren't really there.

R: The only place I'd modify that is living in Bridgeport, they have one kid in the front of the room who's harrassed in the back.

P: Ya, there were, I don't know, I think later on we found some of the people who were sitting a little closer to the front, at the beginning. So, pretty much what we began to

to do, well, out of necessity partly was, you know, like Sally was saying, we all had to work together in order to make anything happen. In a way that was the model that we started out with, too, but by building a school we learned what a...we learned a lot of things. We tried to involve people in purchasing everything, we even had somebody who was involved in the budgeting, working with us in that, getting evaluation on working out the rules of the school, working out the credit system, it was only... was out of necessity, in a way it was because that's what the kids wanted or that's what we wanted for them. In a way, that was the only way they could be in a school because every place that they'd ever been before, every organization or whatever had...they were powerless. Everybody was making decisions about them and they felt it was screwing them over... that they were making payment for everybody elses roller coaster. So, the only way that anything could be there is really literally for them to have it open, you know, 'cause they couldn't trust us or anybody else to give them an education. So anyway that's the way we started out. I think it was probably the best deal. Sure was a lot of work.

R: And that was, just for me to get my own bearings, that was the year you were in Central. Was that the first building you

were in or was that another...

P: Yeah, Central.

R: And just how many years were there? Next year did you go to West Park or were you in Central for a full year, then?

P: Yeah, it had been a full year. We were there from January to June the first year and then we started the next fall in Central School.

R: And then you did one other whole year at West Park?

P: Right. When we were saying the first year, we mean...

R: That first six months.

S: That we thought, instead of hiring, well, we had this idea that if we hired people, who seemed to be good people, good communicators, who cared about other people that they would be the people to work in the school and then we thought that, for all the students to like, there were a lot of kids in the school who were interested in art and all other different ways and so we thought that maybe a way we could educate the students, make their education relevant and also they were always all drunk; they never had any money; was to start a store, in which...and to have a large art program or a lot of things that they could do. We were going to have people, we were looking for people that were, that had accomplished, that have all of those qualities, but

also that a lot of skills in art areas.

P: Part of the elements to the problem was worked out in the first year with all the stuff that we had, was usually in the midst of contact or a way of making initial contact with someone who is alienated, like somebody could get in and play around with stuff and have some success doing something. And we could share their success with them and they could feel good about that and then we could begin encouraging them to do more and have more successes in that area and then after they got a little bit of a firm base there, we could encourage them to go try something that was a lot more risky, like reading, like math or like anything else and so it was kind of a motivational tool to try to get people really involved. Well, for one thing the people are fantastically expressive, too. They really grew a lot in very few weeks and so it provided an outlet for that, gave some motivation that we could use to help them start looking at some other things. Another thing that we were constantly going back and forth about, but decided for the second year, was to get more organized, because the whole organic growth bit, and that was largely mine. I think. Sally is a much more organized person than I am. She's fantastically efficient. Having been in the army and had a gross distrust of efficiency, any-

time I see things working efficiently, I become aware that they're keeping... We tried to keep things pretty flexible and they got really frustrated with others around there.

S: Especially the second year...Oh, the instructors just didn't know what to do with you, because Peter is a very non-directive person and they were extremely frustrated. They had more trouble with it than the students because they were already much more set in their patterns. The students seemed to welcome the responsibility much more than the instructors; the instructors, when they had to do their own thing and weren't told what to do by someone else...were going crazy.

P: And that is what the second year was about, too, and during the first year,..after we had worked through the bit that Sally was going to be the other person, although she was called the teacher-aid and I was the director, and I was upset about that. More and more I was the person people would call. She would pick up the phone and people would ask to speak to me. I was the one who went to the meetings and stuff, partly at that point I was more tactful. So the second year we were bringing in new staff and I think in a way...

R: You were saying, how you tried to institutionalize some

of the things that first six months. What was the program like? What was an average day like at the Alternative High School?

S: One of the things I tried to do was work a lot on reading because I realize that one of the problems...I decided that what I would work on was, there were several people there who went on and on talking about their experiences in public, regular schools; we would talk about the embarrassment about not being able to read and that is the reason a lot of people became deviant, or whatever you want to call them, because they felt embarrassed, or, and no one had taken the time with them to work on their reading. Either their classes were too large or they were too shy to admit what was going on, so that was one of my goals for the year, to work on reading. It was like nine years since some of these people had begun to learn to read and it was a very painful thing to work on. They had to want to do it. That year I remember feeling very good at having raised the reading level of...one person was raised five grades in less than a year and I felt really good about that. And there were several other people who I raised three (3) or four (4). But for me, a day at the Alternative High School would be spent working on a one-to-one basis for several hours with one person. Really highly individualized, very little group

work. And I really wanted to, before I had tried group projects, but I felt that individualized was better. It seemed that I was always trying to find one thing that would work for everything, and of course was continually frustrated because one thing that would work for someone wouldn't work for the next and it was really exhausting to try to keep providing alternatives for people. I would go in and we had a really small closet for a room; I would go in with one student for a couple of hours and we would read to each other and do some exercises, and talk and spend a lot of intense time with one student. In the art room, which was the largest room we had, in the meantime, which had (last years art teachers) in it, and one other person who for after about five weeks was asked to quit. He worked for about five weeks and came in only about three, or less...anyway, they were going through the throws of being their first year in an alternative school and were wondering what to do, so there...Jim was doing all kinds of weird things; people stayed away from him. He would corner them and they didn't like it. (Last years art teacher) was kind of sensible in a weird way; she was straightforward, but visible...like there were no secrets. Part of it was that she dealt with objects; she made things. She showed them how to make

things which wasn't tricky, that they could see, so she worked pretty well, although she had a lot of trouble with the atmosphere at the school. She would work with one student but that one student would batik, for example, she would start one student on the batiking and soon there would be three or four because they could see the product right away. There was usually some activity in the art room because of her. At some point during the day Peter would teach them basic skills in other areas. We also had students from (name of town).

R: We had two interns this year, one from (name of town), which was not a success. We had an excellent intern from Evergreen.

S: Oh, Evergreen, right.

R: Excellent.

S: Is that the kind of thing you want to know? Is that what you're asking, or am I sort of rambling on and on? I could go on...

R: What major changes happened in the program? I'm trying to get a picture of the program.

S: Okay. The first year we tried more...okay, the second year we tried to keep up the things that had functioned naturally the first year, like community and organization or

disorganization. But there was a communication system going on, whereas the second year, we tried to continue to have meetings but since there was no real survival need going on, I mean the school existed...it was there...it had chalk, it had telephones; it didn't work and the students finally decided that they didn't want to have meetings anymore. They voted. Because several kids would always leave the meetings crying and they were very emotional meetings. God...remember those meetings we had? Wooh...they decided they didn't want to have meetings. They voted that they would make them voluntary, only.

P: They were real therapy sessions ( ).

S: Oh God...remember the alternative therapy room?

R: What sort of stuff would you do at meetings?

S: We changed so much. Every week we changed. That's why it's hard for me to tell you what was going on. I can't remember. There was no (role set). I think mostly the best way to describe it that we experimented week from week, again and again and again. And that, I think maybe was the process. That's what was going on, was just change again and again. Experimenting; trying things out maybe one person would get hooked on and then going on, finding some other things for other people. This continuously...

R: Would you do like encounter or sensitivity exercises in your groups?

P: At a pretty low level.

S: Yeah.

P: We were using that constantly in the classes.

S: We did some.

P: Not really very heavy.

S: We did some, well, I guess they're the sensory awareness class I had was really popular for awhile. That was the big thing. It seemed to me that the most important thing in their lives, or one of the most important things in their lives was one of the things that had been repressed in their lives forever and ever. So anything that had to do with touching or exploring sexuality or anything was really vital, and very relieving to have tremendous myth about sexuality.

P: I think that what the meetings were pretty tense about was that in a way it was the first...it was the point which people were really exploring a lot of their feelings. It was...some ways it was their first contact with society... their contact with society. Society had contacted them with the boot and they were starting to participate in society, and really learning from scratch how you interact

with other people and how...what you want doesn't happen sometimes, and how other people may do what they want and won't do what you want. How you have to help other people out sometimes if you want them to help you out.

S: How if you help someone, many times they'll kick you in the ass anyway.

P: Just learning a whole lot of things about that and about the big world. Because we'd start talking about the times... came to school and then we'd find out what the limits were on the school. But institutionally...What our reasons... Then we start making our rules and policing ourselves. Well that started really early...Counsel about why...What are we doing...besides in writing and how we'd grown important to each other. Different people would be coming in for awareness for those things were at different times and different ways and we were fluid enough then that if we could keep encountering in different ways and experiencing in different ways...

S: We also went through a stage...it seemed that the whole style of the school changed drastically on us. I mean really drastically about once a month.

P: Pretty much by the nature of the kids who were there at the time.

S: Yeah, right. And that was a big factor, too. I remember at one point where we were...where they decided they didn't oh that's one thing...the responsibility balls to throw back and forth. It was this constant struggle to find a balance between who had control and it would go, like for example, I remember at one time we published a little, every week we'd publish a little schedule of what was going to be taught when. Everyone was supposed to contribute, like the teachers were supposed to say, well I know about this so I'll teach this class at two o'clock (2:00) and the students were supposed to say, well, I'd like a class in this, will you teach it? Or, I'll teach a class in this. So we'd publish this little sort of agenda of activities. Well that went on for awhile. Then they decided they didn't want...they wanted the teachers to make up all the classes. They didn't want to make up any. So we'd make them up for a week. Then the next meeting they would have hated all the classes that we made up so they're going to make them all up.

P: One thing that happened, I don't remember where it happened, but the thing that blew it completely was towards the end of that year in Central...the last year...they decided that we weren't going to have any classes. Everything was going to happen spontaneously. We said it's not going to work but if you really want to try it, go ahead and try it.

S: That's right. I forgot about that.

P: So we did. It took one week and everybody was just so frustrated.

S: Nobody even came, remember?

P: Yeah.

S: Less and less. Pretty soon the school was just empty all day. And it was...really unnerving because here you are, supposed to be responsible for educating these kids and they aren't even coming and what's going to happen and oh my God.

P: I really think that they learned a lot, though.

R: There's still a person involved in Alternative High School who still wants to try that.

S: I think it was a tremendous learning experience. I really recommend it.

R: Don wants to do it all the time. He doesn't think there should ever be classes.

S: If you do it...I think there's some value in that. I mean, but you have to be willing to carry it through and the school system probably would not support you. I mean it may be months before it will begin to work. It may be years. I really was a firm believer in that.

P: The way we did it was a short-term thing that we picked

up again and in short-term people learned a lot about how much, you know. It was really a good test for a lot of people I think because they'd always say we don't want any rules, we don't want anybody telling us what to do and stuff like that. And one day it all went away. Nobody was there and it blew their minds. They started seeing.

S: I think that was the probably the largest experience that we had.

R: How many students were regularly attending?

S: On Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday?

P: That was really frustrating. There was always a core group of people that were there.

S: Every day.

P: It might be from day to day or from week to week. Or more than likely month to month, but there was always a core of fifteen (15) to thirty-five (35). I think we started out, we started out with twenty (20) or twenty-five (25) students when we first started the school and we were up to sixty (60) ...wow...we were way over sixty (60) at one point. But I think at our highest point we had fifty (50) people who were actually coming so other people usually...We had some days where maybe five (5) or six (6) people would be in and out. I think that was...

S: Or the great thing was that if no one was there, someone would come and no one would be there. Remember that?

P: Yeah.

S: So they didn't want to be there by themselves so they'd leave. Pretty soon all these heads bopping in and out of the door and no one there.

P: Then you'd walk downtown; there would be a dozen people from the school standing on the same street corner having the same rap as they normally would only...

S: It was really...

p: Up at school.

S: Yeah.

R: What changes took place, or how did the school evolve, when you went up to (name of town)?

S: The kids thought that it would be good because they knew it was very hard for them to stay in school. They wanted to go down in (name of town). So they were excited about moving there, for two (2) reasons, one because they thought it would force them to stay, they'd be dropped off there and they couldn't leave and, two, because they wanted a gym and we didn't have a gym and we were going to get one. Those are the two reasons that I remember that they were thinking about.

P: We were thinking about the space and have the plaster

falling on our heads.

S: And the light in the rooms...we were in the basement.

P: Some ways I think it was in terms before it started out ...be willing to stop that here...started becoming a school.

R: What do you mean by that?

S: No, because for me it was, that year was a completely dependent experience from...Peter and I were doing very separate things that year. For me...you go ahead and say what you think and...

P: What did you say?

R: Well, you had said it started to be more like a school that year and I'd like you to develop that a little more.

P: I think originally it was more than a school. It was a community, a learning center maybe. Maybe a socialization center, maybe a therapy center. In terms of what traditional education is all about; a still building, imparting traditional knowledge. That was happening before but it wasn't...it was happening because...success for it and everything else. You go ahead and do it...that was...

S: Also the school increased in size. We had more staff people. Peter began to, not for his choice, but because there were more staff peole, they looked at him as a director and not as a teacher. No sort of teacher quality which was

he hoped to have coming.

R: For me to get a picture of that, that year they were talking about Peter being on the staff, you being on the staff.

S: I wasn't on the staff. I mean I came but I quit because I just had had it.

R: That would be... What did that role of director imply?

P: I think that a lot of ways it started becoming principal. People would start coming to me with conflicts that they had expected me to resolve, or tattling on each other or we need this, or what are you going to do about this or just not doing anything because they thought someone was supposed to tell them to do it. Or because they thought somebody else would do it or tell somebody to do it if it needed to be done. It demanded responsibility.

S: I think there was a lot more paper work for you to do that year, for some reason. And because of that there was an assumption that because there's a man in there in that office doing all that work, there's a patriarchal figure here, you know, there's an authority figure.

P: I don't know what came first but I think that might be it, because pretty much of it was a political thing that I think the Director of Federal Projects was starting to think

about dumping us.

R: Dumping you personally or the school?

P: No, the school. Early in that year she started dropping hints that we might not get Title I funding for the following year. And that the school might be...that they might need (the building) for something else and tense things like that. So I started getting paranoid and started working on brushing things up so that they would look good. I think that was part of the education that was going on. So it became necessary, politically, to have a sort of sales job in order to keep the thing going. It looked okay before, but it had to look pretty damn good. Then I started trying to make a lot of community contacts, which I pretty much avoided before. I was starting to get involved in getting kids jobs. I was out making a lot of those kinds of contacts. Then towards the latter part of that fall, the Director of Federal Projects started sounding like more and more we weren't going to get it. So I started finding out as much as I could about different grants and started writing.

R: So, you're being frightened by the Director of Federal Projects about the possibilities for next year, and getting involved in some grantsmanship.

P: It also started, the Director of Federal Projects wanted

me that year attending the administrative council meetings for principals and all that. So I was starting to do that.

S: Following threats by threats, too.

P: Yeah.

S: That money was tight. I mean, she was threatening a lot.

P: So, she thought it was important that I build the case for the school. And so I started to try to do that, spending time on certain things and in a way I think it was what the Director of Federal Projects had hoped that I would have been doing that more all along, in ways that was needed.

S: Except...we had. It would have been like the first year it was taught. It was a big mess.

P: And at the same time, since we had a licensed staff, I tend to make all my efforts to try to get a community building. We hired some people from the Head Start Department to come over and do some staff building, communication skills. They kind of got into in-group process stuff and did a shitty job of it. It just blew the staff all over the wall. It was incredible. That kind of thing was destroying the unity a lot of the staff working together, as any kind of mutual support group; almost all of the people were looking for some kind of direction in the first place. And Al was kind of reluctant to give up, or he was reluctantly giving what they demanded. There just wasn't much working together to do it.

S: I think that something that also contributed to that was that Peter was very, very tired. From the moment we started we thought we were fighting that whole system and it really effected, well it had a tremendous effect on our relationship, on our personal life, on our...up until that point we hadn't been...specifically someone hadn't said to Peter you are the head of the family and you are, and in that school all day that's the way people treated us. It had a tremendous effect on our relationship; we were constantly having to struggle with that, which really tires you. Constantly having to struggle with the school, and I think that we were reaching an effectiveness because of that. But it was stupid. After awhile things the year before you had fought for...you just let them slip by because you...I know, I tried long before you did, but I think that had a really big effect, too. It was really just getting worn down.

P: The only reason I came back that last year...I remember saying to you, don't get in a rut...I was sure that if one student was pulled through that would be kind of, it would be a long time before those kids had another chance...Partly because it was really personalized (with us) so I felt some time had to be spent making some kind of system that would hold up. For another thing, politics on the whole were kind

of shakey. It needed some base of support and we ended getting parents pretty well organized as base of support. We went to a lot of school board meetings, we felt that helped. But anyway, that last year of mine was kind of--my heart wasn't in it as much. I was trying to institutionalize it and keep it going and in a lot of ways that was all I could give anymore. That personally I wasn't there as much. Also, like especially compared to when we began, we were putting in fourteen to sixteen hours a day, working weekends, picking up, doing the whole smear. Then by the end I was down to a regular eight hour day. which wasn't really as much into it. Also a lot less personal contact; going around visiting the kids, talking to their folks and getting them out of frustrations.

R: What was Jim's relationship with the school?

P: I don't know if he had a relationship with the school directly. Jim had a relationship with the school in terms that he had very strong feelings about, because he started it and because he knew alot of the kids there and had worked with them before and things like that. I guess he had a relationship with the school--the school didn't necessarily have a relationship with him. It depends in a sense you mean relationship. He came and taught a mini-course fairly

regularly there. Pretty much discussion stuff. Sometimes he'd play tapes and sometimes give tests. Some sort of alternative equivalant to high school psychology. He was, like I said, involved with a lot of the kids outside the school and kind of was, most everybody knew him. I felt like I had a relationship with Jim. I liked him a lot and Sally did too. He's weird sometimes, so is everybody else. I think, well what we started out the first year with a community advisory committee which he was one and the Chief of Police was another and they were several shades in between. He was probably the most on our side and on the kid's side of anybody. I think sometimes Jim's feelings got hurt really easily because he invested a lot into the school and stuff like that. For the most part (I've got a good feeling of him).

R: What was your relationship with the other public school people; principals at other schools, counselors at other schools? Did you feel like you were part of the system or outside?

P: Pretty much outside. Completely outside. There were a few people, I think there was one person who felt like I had a pretty close relationship. That was the counselor at West. I felt a sympathetic relationship with another counselor and I never figured out the relationship with the

Director of Federal Projects. I never felt I could trust her and I don't think she ever felt she could trust me.

R: Was she your only central administration contact?

P: Yeah. Over time I developed others, kind of, in groups. And I think that's where some of the distrust came, because we got some bad information and stuff like that. I don't know how much was her fault but...

R: That may be a portion that may be different between this year and that, switching jobs. In kind of a philosophical, but also a practical sense, what do you see as the role of the teacher in an alternative school?

P: It depends on what level. Ideally, there shouldn't be anybody on the staff called a teacher at an alternative school, in my definition of alternative school. A teacher, to me, means somebody who has something that he pours into the students who are the best and there's--a teacher doesn't interact very much. The teacher teaches and students learn, I guess. Staff person, I guess, somehow makes contact with students. Wait a minute--it depends on what you're talking about, again. Like if you're talking about an alternative school or you're talking about a drop-out school, or you're talking about a drop-out alternative school or what...

R: Drop-out alternative school; Alternative High School.

P: I guess, since the role of teacher and a lot of less structure type teacher models than the one I was originally talking about, exist already in the public school, that haven't met the needs for the kids who drop out. Something different entirely, it seems to me, is being used in an alternative drop-out school. They either get people back on their feet so they can get back into a traditional school or provide them that other thing that they need that wasn't being provided in a regular school because they're going to go off and be somebody else anyway and not holding everybody in society so, they need some ammunition to do that. I think mostly it's somebody who can make contact with those people; who can be the first friend. Most of them haven't had a friend. Somebody who can make them start or help them start to like themselves in relation to life. Who can make them feel like they can have success and do some things right; can help them start taking some responsibility themselves. And then once over that, they can start taking some responsibility for some other things, for other people.

R: How does the staff facilitate that?

P: I think that's really hard to get at, and I think it's in a lot of different ways. One of the reasons that, theoretically I still believe in the neccesity for diversity of staff,

is that I think it's necessary to have a lot available points of contact with students so that a relationship can start. A lot of different possible ways that encourage students. I found it really hard to pull off. I think mostly it's by being human, I guess, but you can be that anywhere. I guess it's being human. Or as I saw it, or one way of doing it is to be a human without any power expectations on accepting where they're at. I guess I'm talking about therapy which to me is the most meaningful education. That's where education begins. Not therapy in traditional Freudian sense but therapy in terms of working with someone who has some fairly obvious problems about adjustment. Alienated people, and how to get up over the alienated people. Is that what therapy is about? It seems that you have to reach him personally. I think they're a lot of shortcuts. You can--we found out.

R: Ideally then, do you think there would be two schools?

P: I do. I think there should be a whole shit-load of schools. There's a project here in...what's the name of that district? There's a high school and it's just converting to a program with six different types. They've got--well the kind of a school I've been talking about. A career emphasis school, a traditional--kind of like it was last years school,

hard rock pre-art school, some sort of learning skills to go for kind of a point system sort of thing where it's not the community at hand. A whole lot of different options for people and I think that would solve some of the problems.

R: Do you think in the one school, Alternative High School in Bridgeport, you could adequately meet both the cognitive and affective needs?

P: It didn't seem so. It depends on the individual, of course, how well they work. I think we were trying to concentrate more on the people whose needs we saw being the greatest. At the same time, peoples whose chances for change probably would be smaller. Part of the reason for that is that the other people were being picked up by other institutions like, they could maybe get back into school. They could make it in the Neighborhood Youth Corps Program. They could go the Junior College route and stuff like that. They had some other options open to them. The other group had none.

R: Did you do anything at the school to make the person more politically potent?

P: I don't know, that's a category that in a way is a little foreign to me. I don't know exactly what you mean but I think I do.

R: Were there any things going on at school which expressely

focused on the student's feelings of no power over their lives or community?

P: Yeah, when you define it that broadly I guess. Starting with attempts to validate it, personally, would attempting to give them success experiences. In the classes we spend a lot of time, well the social studies classes that I ran, we spent a lot of time discussing the ways in which power operated. How people felt about power and what is happening and what possibilities were open. It seemed letter writing stuff to people, went on several marches, visited. We went to a City Council meeting every year. Went to School Board every year. Usually when we did those, especially the school board and City Council, we had six to seven people out of fifty people. I think really it was, that last step was kind of pushing it, where they were at, in terms of alienation. I guess if you define it as powerlessness, which I...I think I would.

R: I think that's a part of it.

P: It seems to me that the alien, which come first. Maybe the reason they're alienated is because they're powerless. Maybe the reason they're powerless is because they're alienated. They're both, I guess.

R: What program, if any, did the school have to foster someones being able to excercise choice in the world of work?

P: I remember all those educational catch phrases. I mean exercise choice in the world of work were things that just went puff.

R: (explains phrase)

P: I think a lot of it was, alot of our time in that area was spent trying to develop some sort of work contact program for the school. It never really got off. I feel like they wrote a grant for it but it sounds like they didn't, it didn't get through to them. In a way...the home economic thing...

R: You did though, the state crossed it out.

P: Oh

R: The state said there is no money available to pay students.

P: In a way we were going in that direction. We set up several work experience projects for people, most of which bottomed out pretty quick because of the initial concept between student and employer, or mostly employer couldn't stand the kids. They, it didn't work out real successful. And pretty often the kids couldn't handle the employer and it was neither. The thing wasn't making a whole lot of step towards the other person. We had a fairly close relationship with NYC that several of our kids involved in that worked

with several of their kids. Some vocational experience was spending a fair amount of time talking about different sorts of vocations and then they would search them. It never got really far.

S: Some people really got into it. Especailly people who were teaching others. That was the really big thing. Remember they got into that big thing of tutoring. That was neat.

P: I think, well, back there when you talk about choice, choice operates kind of (?)

R: And programs that would foster a recognition of other cultures.

P: I don't know for sure. We had a nonculturally, pluralistic student body. We had a couple blacks who made , (Native Americans) Chicanos cruise in and out.

S: I say that seriously. He definitely needs it.

P: And...there was a lot of cultures there too. There were pretty upper middle kids who for very different reasons than third generation of welfare kids. There were a lot of cultures there and understanding of those different sorts of people and all those sorts of people understanding the weird people that were on the staff, was an exercise in cultural centers, we...social studies class was mostly about that.

You probably ended up with all the AEP booklets that we were using...

R: I want you to rank the five areas in terms of the importance in the context of the Alternative High School that you saw them in: Political arena, world of work, leisure, cultural, interpersonal and intrapersonal. Which would be number one in your list of Alternative High School goals?

P: Even given that definition of politics per se, it's kind of unique. That's not my definition of politics. Those categories really seem--kind of--don't we have another set of categories.

R: Eliminate any of those categories not really having to do with any of the central business of the school if you see it, that's fine too.

P: I guess it's just that I can see...

DSE=Director of Secondary Education

R=Researcher

R: What do you see as the function of the alternative school?

DSE: As it is presently constituted we have declared it an alternative for students who for one reason or another have become disenfracized with our regular school program. I suppose that this is the direction we are going and I am not sure that we are doing everything we would like to at the present time. I guess that I can revert back to the old cliches; schools for an alternative school. However, I'm not sure that we are doing the things that we want to be done yet.

R: What is the importance of providing that alternative?

DSE: #1 and most importantly, and we don't have all the answers in the regular school program. Many of these kids that are dropping out for one reason or another, but let's just talk about the kid who is a "drop-out". In many cases that individual is not dropping out because he can't provide the intelligence, fortitude and everything else to get thru the regular school program but in many cases he is dropping out because of these school programs and the fact that it can't provide for him. I think this is a chance for us

to at least attempt to provide for that kid who is disenfranchized and really, through no fault of his own. Maybe that's the reason. That takes care of one child. Some kids simply don't have time to become involved in the regular school program for one reason or another; other things are more important to them. Maybe taking care of that baby at home is more important to them than sitting in a formalized high school structure for six hours a day and this is an attempt to provide alternatives for those kids.

R: Do you see any tasks that the schools can provide for the district or for the other institutions in the district.

DSE: I don't think that those are functions that we are providing for the kids themselves. I see those as functional, that we are providing functions for the districts as well as the students when we are doing those things. Beyond that I see us in the school, eventually, trying to make more determination and trying to define more concisely why students do drop out, why they become disenchanted, why they are just not really interested in that traditional high school program, maybe used as a sort of test tube place, where we can transport ideas that you develop at that school and the kids develop at that school into a regular school program and eventually as you have said, point towards not having

the drop-outs to begin with and eventually, rather than making a kingdom out of the Alternative High School or whatever we want to call it, eventually where they don't have any clients for that school, and it just disappears. That, I think would be the ideal situation although I am not sure that there are and the parents that are involved there right now don't see that but ideally I suppose that is the way we should be pointing towards.

R: How do you think the alternative high school could be evaluated, both in the short and long range?

DSE: How do we evaluate any of them really, I'm not really to sure how we can evaluate any program. I suppose if it could be evaluated you would have to evaluate it by student attitudes, by parental attitude, by community attitudies, if those things are measurable and I'm not an evaluator and my guess is that they are not. My student success in job placement and self value, self-concepts. I recognize that in most things things that I have talked about are pretty ambiguous sorts of things and pretty tough to evaluate but I guess those would be some areas that I start in. Beyond that I have nothing concrete other than we could do the traditional testing, academic testing, attitude testing, run those batteries which are popular in the regular school program, I don't know what your evaluation is going to be.

R: In terms of that other goal, that alternative schools being providing possibly some answers to the other schools.

DSE: That would be a good evaluation instrument on how many of those we did were exported into the other school programs. If we have something going on at the Alternative High School that we see as a real good thing and we become successful at it, transporting it into the other secondary schools, that to me would be an evaluative instrument which would be kind of valid.

AS=Assistant Superintendent

R=Researcher

R: What do you see as the function of the Alternative High School?

AS: I see it as a means by which kids who, for one reason or another, can't cope with, or feel that they can't cope with the environment in a regular high school, be it because of home problems, learning problems, personality problems, etc. They just can't seem to grasp what they feel they need and what the institution feels that they need, for a formal education. I see the alternative school providing, number one the environment in which these kids can cope, but, number two, a program whereby they can get some of the basic skills that they need in order to cope with society. Skills being personality, as well as academic skills. Personal needs and academic needs. I don't see it as a place where kids can run away and hide.

R: What is the importance of that function of providing that environment?

AS: That may be a couple of things. Number one, the importance of the environment is to continue with an academic skill. I think that it's important that we do identify those things that kids need to have in order to cope with society; to get a job, communicate with people. I see importance that the

school has that. I think another importance of the environment is probably to provide a time and a place where these kids can find themselves. I think maybe one of the problems of these kids is that they don't, they can't see their role in the broad spectrum of the world. They don't see how they can fit in. Consequently, they decide to, for one reason or another, to go against what society and what the school district has offered them.

R: Do you see any importance of that alternative school meeting the needs institutionally for the district?

AS: Yeah, I think one of the purposes of public education is something that has been brought out by House Bill 90, but certainly should have been brought out many years ago, and that is that every kid should receive some type of education. One advantage that we have here in Bridgeport is that what we don't have, where I see some in southern Oregon, is a wide range of educational opportunities for special education kids. Those kids also need some form of education. It may not be calculus and geometry but it's learning how to tie your shoes or communicate or learning your address, telephone # and these kinds of things. What I think that alternative school does is to provide the institution as a whole as another means of doing just that--setting up education for all.

I think without the alternative school, the institution is just going three-fourths of the way. I think this provides them to go the four-fourths of the way saying all right, we can educate any kid within our branch. We can do it for regular elementary schools, we can do it for special education, we can do it for regular high schools, we can do it through prevoc program and now we can meet those kids that we weren't meeting otherwise in an alternative school. To me it broadens the whole scope of the education program.

R: Is there any function you can figure alternative school serving in terms of carry over into the other institutions?

AS: How they should be related?

R: Right. The relationships between Alternative High School and East Campus and West Campus, junior high and elementary school.

AS: I think they should be very closely related. In fact, and I'm not sure whether or not they have the relationship now, but I feel they should. I think that there are particular things that the high school has that are good for kids, good for kids generally. I think those kinds of things are good for kids, whether they are at the high school or whether they are at the alternative school, the particular skills there. I think that a close alliance between the alternative school

and the regular high school so that in fact if a kid wants to take a particular type of course at the high school but can't cope in that environment, that course in some way can be allowed at the alternative school. Art 501 at West Campus High School has some objectives. It could be that that student who attends the Alternative High School wants those objectives but doesn't want to find those objectives at West Campus High School. I think he should be able to say, I'd like the course over there. Can you offer it to me but in a different environment? And we then offer it to him.

R: Are there ways you can see the Alternative High School program making contributions to East and West Campus High School?

AS: Sure, and maybe this relates, in fact let me use East Campus High's prevocational for an example. East Campus High prevocational has a program where, I can't think of the name of it right now, where kids are looking at job opportunity. East Campus High's regular program may not have something set up where kids can go into a room that have job opportunity pamphlets, they even get machines that you can plug into. I can see that it may be there are opportunities at the Alternative School for some kids at the high school. The biggest I see that would have to be overcome is the stigma that the majority of kids that go on to regular high school would have

toward the Alternative High School program, an alternative high school. Some kids would say, I don't want to go over there to that place. It's too bad that we can't set up an environment whereby kids could say, I like that program over there. I'm going to go over. It's just like East and West. We do have a few courses in which these kids could go to West, some of the shop courses. But why not have more where East kids could go to West, West kids could go to East and why not make this a three ring circus, as you will. But some kids who see something offered at the Alternative School that is not offered at either one can in fact enroll in that course. It's actually making the person much broader than it is now, much more opportunity.

R: In terms of a long-range goal in the district what you would look for is having schools that meet specialized needs with sharing of programs.

AS: Yeah. I could see where we could talk about a high school program, where kids could select to enroll in courses, period, regardless of where they are. I want to attend this course, this course, this course. I think it may save the difference in personnel problems. We've got some courses with ten (10) and twelve (12) kids here and the same course, a similar course in another school with ten (10) or twelve (12).

I think the biggest problem we run into is transportation. But if these were blocked in such a way that we could actually transport kids to the location, that may handle that. I know in Eugene, at one of their high schools, they have a big auto shuttle. And if I recall, there are few of the high schools in Eugene that have this particular type of shop. Periodically through the day they transport kids over to that shop for their auto shop. That would certainly save on facilities, too. You wouldn't have to have the same shop facilities at East and West and the Alternative High School. Here's the problem with the Alternative High School. A district doesn't pour a per pupil dollar into the Alternative High School, yet they do in East and West. This may equalize it.

R: If you could move toward that idealized situation of being able to share facilities like that, what would be the benefit of having a principle enrollment in any one of the specific schools? Or might that diminish with time?

AS: Excuse me, ...

R: Okay, (explains question)

AS: No, I think under those kinds of situations a kid may be registered as a Bridgeport Senior High student and in fact receive, when he receives his diploma, would receive a diploma from the Bridgeport School District rather than East Campus.

R: For the here and now, what goals would you set for the Alternative High School?

AS: Knowing little about it and little about what I know from last year, and just in walking through it periodically, and I haven't done that in great detail. But, it appears to me that there has been a lot of looseness. There's a lot of...and I'm not suggesting that's the way it is now, that's the way I've seen it in the past anyway...been a playhouse kind of situation. Kids come and go as they wish. Kids get credits that are questionable by people at different high schools...Questionable by administrators...questionable in the fact that kids were actually doing very little and meeting virtually no standards at all and still receiving credit. I'm not quite sure if I see that as the role of the Alternative High School. I think to me that one of the goals that should be set for the Alternative High School is to put enough structure into the program where the kids still have some standards to meet but still remain flexible enough that the people who have chosen to get away from an extremely structured high school could still cope with the situation. What that is and where that is, I'm not quite sure but to me a goal would be to set it up as an educational program with possibly

more flexibility than the regular high school but certainly still some standards. I think kids need to know that whether we like it or not, society sets standards on all of us. It sets standards on you, sets standards on me. Possibly one of the reasons why they've chosen this alternative is because they don't want to come up to the standards. I think that some standards that all of us need to be aware of to cope with society...

R: How do you think we could best evaluate this program?

AS: Number one, I guess if we were to evaluate in terms of academic, I guess we could measure with a pretest, post-test type thing, if that's appropriate for this situation. Where kids are when they come in and where kids are when they leave, In terms of not standardized tests that are imposed on kids, but in terms of where they are in light of what they're going to be dealing with, this is one of the hang ups I have about standardized tests. We give people the comprehensive test of basic skills and say I'll find out where you are in terms of these objectives but in fact, we don't even know if we're teaching what comprehensive tests the basic skills test. We have to look at some type of basic instrument, maybe even devise our own, some type of instrument that would in fact evaluate them at the end of the year or periodically in terms

of what kinds of things they have been doing in the Alternative School.

R: So you're looking at it as measures on the growth on the student?

AS: Yeah. Academically there's one way. There are, and I certainly don't have in my grasp, there are things like personality tests, instruments, that could be administered. Of course we do have a policy on that...get permission from parents. Possibly with, I guess kids under eighteen (18), we will still have to repeat at the Alternative School. Attitude, there are all kinds of instruments dealing with attitude. We have even, in some cases, administered to a small degree some attitude testing the difference. How do you feel about school? That again, I think if you take a look at the kids as they come in to determine how they feel about different things related to education, to live in general. We could then sit down and work with them and say, okay, in light of your feelings here, what kinds of things would you like to have and how can you go about changing that kind of attitude or behavior. Then have some type of a measure. I think then there are some things that aren't measurable by instruments. Then I guess it would be the role of yourself and other staff members, that is an antidotal record on behavior. How did

that kid behave when he came in? What kind of things?... Did he walk around, moping around, going around kicking the wall? Did he break windows because he was frustrated? How did the antidotal or records show his behavioral change over time?...Things that no instrument...it's just visual contact with him. That may be one.

R: Then what we're looking at is to see if the Alternative High School is succeeding in meeting the goals that were set up or seeing a change in our students, a change that is positive.

AS: Right.

R: Then we wouldn't be looking for changes in other school arenas?

AS: Okay. No, that's it.

F=Superintendent of Schools

R=Researcher

R: What do you see as the function of the Alternative School program?

F: The general function of the Alternative School program would be to provide some type of an educational program for students who would normally be...not be in school for one reason or another, to hopefully give them a chance to pursue an interest and also to complete a high school diploma.

R: What is the importance of that function?

F: As I understand it, in society, speaking to people from the business sector where employment takes place that it considers first a high school diploma to be very important. Secondly, the training although they say if they have got a high school diploma, which is an indication that they can learn or they have the abilities to learn, they'll train them to fit their needs in some cases. In fact there are a number of large employers, not the smaller but the large employers, that put on training programs to train their own people in their own ways for their own specific assignments.

R: Why is it that you think the Alternative School has a better chance of getting those students those skills and that degree than the two major high schools?

F: It is possible that the Alternative School may not provide the skill, but they will provide the opportunity to complete a diploma, because these kids generally, but not in every case, will turn the institution off and consequently they're through with what we call our educational institution program and they have to have something other than the institutional program to make it possible to complete the program.

R: Do you see other than the purpose of the program and meeting the needs of these students and getting them through high school and getting that credential, do you see purpose, a function of the Alternative School for the other institutions in the district?

F: Well one of the functions of the Alternative School, I think would really consider quite a purpose is to help these students adjust more to society, you can tackle because you have lower ratio of teacher to student or student to teacher to where you can actually take more time or interest in some of these specific areas of societal problems and not have to be so course oriented. Now in looking at the program itself, I'm not so sure that you have in the, or we get in the Alternative School the broad spectrum curriculum. Now if we were to, for example, take some of the students from the Alternative School and try to integrate them into the institution

for only pieces of the program and then make it possible for some of those students from the regular institution to piecemeal into the Alternative School, we may do more to keep students in school than be out of the regular institution to try to get into the Alternative School. But this is something that is going to take some time. It is going to take a great deal of understanding of the staff in the regular institution because they are the ones that are going to beat it before the kids will beat it, if there is a beating of something. So consequently it is going to take some time of getting to people in the regular institution who understand what the whole thing is all about.

R: So you do see, you can envision the Alternative School serving a preventative function as well.

F: Corrective as well as the preventative, it is possible. We are not doing it at the present time. Nor do I see that we will be doing it this year, but it is a possibility into the future. Especially when we start getting serious about some of our building's needs, and we go into a building program, so that we try to determine what type of building programs are going to be housed. So the Alternative School has more of a permanent home than the temporary home that it has been having for the last four years.

R: How would you evaluate the success of a program like this?

F: I don't know. That would be a hard one to measure I imagine. I would say right now from the experience we have had they have apparently been somewhat successful with it because there are a number of these students who normally would be out in society without a high school diploma that have attended the Alternative School, have met the requirements that were established by the Alternative School by whatever means were established, in some cases staff, in some cases students, so forth. So that it has met that part of the intent of our society as perhaps I see it and other educators see it. I believe it also has been of some help to these young people to realize that society hasn't rejected them nor have they rejected society.

R: Have you seen a preventative spin-off from the program yet.

F: Myself, personally not. I would have to say it that way but from the reports we have had that there have been some of the students that went into, or out of the institution into the alternative and back into the institution and through them, as I understand it, in our secondary schools which is largely the student body, they have helped to encourage others to stay in school and not drop out. I don't know any actual cases, only hearsay.

R: Would you look for change in the programs or curriculum

of East and West Campus High Schools as the result of successes at the Alternative High School?

F: Well, I believe we could make some changes provided that the staff understands what is being attempted at the Alternative School, and also the fact that we can get the staff and the administration of the Alternative School relating with the staff and the administration of the two high schools. Until we get to that point, no, because we are going to be doing it by directives and when you do it by directives you got a certain degree of failure built into it.

R: However, that would be something to work towards.

F: Right, but I think now as you are familiar being here in charge of the Alternative School, it takes time for you and you have a new staff basically to get your feet on the ground with the alternative program because I am quite sure you are just now beginning to get a feel of what that program is all about and what you can do for those students that come there. And then, after you get that rolling, then you have a relationship to build with the administration of the two high schools and hopefully through that, between your staff and those staffs, it may be only portions of their staff, and not the entire staff itself... in order to begin to marry-up some programs of what you could use for most programs and what they can use

of their programs. You're asking a theory, that's a theory. What actually takes place, here again, the way we work in our district would be dependent upon you and the administrators of those two schools.

R: What I'm looking at is something that would get to the root of the analysis of the drop-out and alienation problem that brought about the Alternative School and was it one that saw a need for a treatment center, a laboratory, or a mixture of both?

F: The thing that's interesting, the institution itself was part of the cause of the drop-outs, not the total cause, but part of the cause. It would be quite difficult at times, I think, to identify very clearly what the specific cause would be. There's a mixture when you're giving in to a personality situation. There's quite a mixture that you go through and I'm not sure anyone around this area has the capability to structure them out.

R: The other interesting thing about a program like that is they started to work with drop-outs and the ones who had different programs to a certain extent, creates drop-outs. By their being, their dropping out is a more attractive option.

F: I don't know. If that's true our drop-out rate, to the

best of my knowledge, has decreased not increased. Using your theory, basically our drop-out rate should have increased so they could get into your program. But that isn't true. Our drop-out rate in the last four years has actually decreased. We've had to do some overhauling of our own attitudes and views and disciplinary measures and so forth that have been somewhat effective to bring that about. Plus the fact that we're getting a better understanding that the student becomes more important than anything else rather than the institution becoming more important than anything else. This is a slow process. Some of this is beginning to come about but it's going to take a lot of work and perhaps more time than we want to recognize.

G=West Campus High Principal

R=Researcher

R: What was the function of the Alternative High School?

G: I felt the function of this school was basically, for students who were having a hard time adjusting to the school here. That could have been based on the problems he had at home, problems he had with the law, problems they had with faculty here, students that were say eighteen (18) years old and were put in with ninth (9th) graders; they just didn't really belong. They just didn't fit. They felt, I wouldn't say insecure, I think they felt embarrassed. The fact that here I am eighteen (18), or nineteen (19) years old and all of a sudden I decided I would like to get a high school education. For one reason or another, maybe they didn't want to go to junior college, then they come back to school and I say this is fine and I put them in and here they're running around with these kids that are thirteen (13) and fourteen (14) years old and many of them just didn't have, I don't know what I want to say, the word...character...they just take that. Then we also had, about the time our Alternative High was opened, we were just ending the period of revolution and rebellion yet many of these kids have been on the needle and various types of drugs and we knew them as pushers and users here at

school. They just didn't want to return here. I felt that this was basically the purpose of the Alternative High School. Girls that had gotten pregnant, girls that had had children and decided to come back to school...

R: The main purpose that you saw was that, from the position of the major high school, getting kids who weren't adjusting there out of the way, sorting them out so that you wouldn't have the pushers in the schools, students who weren't very comfortable in East or West.

G: They were out of school. Most of them were out of school by this time. They had separated themselves or some of them we separated. The law had taken some of them out of school and I don't think that I want to say that we separated them. I want to say that they were separated. Some out of their own volition, some of them by the law and some of them just wouldn't attend school.

R: What was the Alternative High School supposed to be doing for these kids?

G: They were supposed to be, I felt, were attempting to set up a curriculum where these students could work either in group or on an individual basis toward completing the material for an academic high school diploma.

R: Was it expected that that curriculum would pretty much

mirror what was offered up at the junior college within a different atmosphere or what?

G: I'm really not sure about that. I felt that there would be some alternative program offered to these students. I felt there should be some rigidity to it but maybe...I felt that the course contents would be covered, but under a different presentation than that was offered here at the school. That they didn't have to come to a class from 10:00 to 11:00 everyday to take social studies. They could take their social studies maybe 3:00 to 4:00 in the afternoon today and maybe tomorrow from 1:00 to 2:00 they'd work on social studies. I really can't say whether it was going to mirror our curriculum or the junior college curriculum because I'm just not that well acquainted with how the junior college prepares its program on that nature.

R: From your perspective do you feel that the Alternative High School met those goals?

G: No I don't. From what I feel, I felt it was a cop-out on a lot of these kids. For instance, the thing that concerned me mostly about the Alternative High School is that a kid would come to school here and his friends would to to the Alternative High School. I want you to understand that this is hearsay. I did not witness any of this. This is all hearsay now. The

kids would come back here to our school and want a smoking room. In fact, they want a smoking room where they can smoke pot. Because the kids, they told me, that the kids at Alternative High School were able to smoke pot. I want to emphasize again, this is hearsay. I didn't go down to Alternative High School and find these things out, because I had more to do than find them out. Under no condition was I going to give the kids a smoking room here. And they say, well you give the faculty a smoking room. And I said to the kids, well look...by law I'm allowed to give the faculty a smoking room and if the faculty is stupid enough to smoke, let them smoke. But I'm concerned with kids smoking. Another thing that they were concerned about was that the Alternative High School kids could come to school anytime they wanted to. They could bring their babies to school. They could bring their boyfriends to school, and etc., and they couldn't understand why I wouldn't allow them to bring them here. As a result of these things, we started losing kids here. If we can't do that here, we'll go to the Alternative High School and do it. So our kids wanted to drop-out of here and go to the Alternative High School. I'd like to parallel that to the same problem that we had with youngsters in the Special Education Program. I must admit young kids in school here. By law,

I cannot keep anyone out of school that has not reached the age of twenty-one (21). So a mother would come in and say I want my kid to go over here. She doesn't want him over there with those dummies and this is the expression that they would use. My son is no dummy. I know her son is no dummy, he's just a slow learner and he can't help it. And I want him to go to school here and I must take him in school. I must take him in school. So a lot of people are taken in school here at the expense of a program that's set up that could probably do ten times as much for this young kid. Our program here, well the kid would get hung up at home; they'd run away from home and he had a buddy at the Alternative High School or a guy would have a girl over here and she'd want to drop-out of here and go to the Alternative High School or a girl would have a guy over there and vice versa and this jazz here, and we had students that wanted to go to the Alternative High School. We had them all the way down to freshmen who wanted to go to the Alternative High School.

R: Of all the reasons that students have given you for going to the Alternative High School, were they ever related to academic benefits that they thought they would get at the Alternative High School or was it always those social benefits?

G: I felt that the majority of them were social benefits. Then as I look at the majority of students that wanted to go to the Alternative High School, I also find out that these youngsters had problems at home. They had problems relating to the students here, they were running around with an older and a faster crowd than what's here at school and they felt that their peer group was the type of kid that was going to the Alternative High School and I don't say that as a slant to the kids who go to the Alternative High School. These kids were just not getting along in our academic community.

R: A school that's working towards that purpose of providing a program for students who for one reason or another can't make it at the major high schools, do you think that there are any carry-overs from the Alternative School serving that purpose back into the major public high schools?

G: Well, you see, I really can't answer that because...I can't recall ever having kids come back.

R: Carry-over in that respect...I was referring to do you think there's anything that West Campus High School has to learn from a school like the Alternative High School?

G: Yes and no. We don't have enough faculty here to adjust our curriculum to...I'd like to track...group students on

ability. For instance, we take all of our kids and put them in a social studies class. Now this student here may read at the first grade level. This kid may read at the fourth grade level. This kid may read at the fourteenth grade level, and he's in the eleventh grade social studies. What we expect of all of these students is this here. Our school encourages mediocrity, and this bothers me. Then these kids who can't read and understand this stuff, then they get into trouble. I feel this is why many of them want to go to the Alternative High School. I think they see it as the way out. I think they think it's an easy way out. I don't care if it's an easy way out or if it's a hard way out or what, as long as we can teach this kid enough so that he can get along in society, that's better than not teaching him anything. You know what I'm trying to say. This is one of our responsibilities.

R: If the Alternative High School were able to demonstrate some methods that might help these kids make it through school and you had the fiscal means to be able to offer that to them here, would West Campus High School adapt some of those ideas?

G: I don't see why they couldn't. I think we could be a severe, radical... I don't think we'd make a radical change

in our program. For instance, now if a kid only wants to go to here only one hour a day, he can do it. If he wants to go two hours a day he can do it.

R: Why is it that the Alternative High School is such a radical alternative? Is it necessary, to accomplish it's goals, that it be that radically different?

G: I really don't think under your jurisdiction the Alternative High School is going to be that way. For instance, we had kids come into school here and say... again this is hearsay, I want you to understand that this is hearsay, because my relationship with the previous administration at the Alternative High School was not the best. I cooperated with them. When they wanted to borrow things I allowed them to borrow them. Anything else, but I stayed clear away from them.

R: The question was this...the necessity for the Alternative School be radically different...

G: For example, kids would come in here and say, out at the Alternative High School I walk to school so I get P.E. credit. So that every kid that rode the bus down here, they did ride the bus then, they would come in and say, look, we want a P.E. credit for walking to school. For instance, I had a mother here today, not an Alternative High School mother.

She thinks her kid is a genius. She drives me up a tree. She wants her kid excused from social studies because he watches television. This is like I want my kids excused from shop but also want him to have credit for shop because he fixed his flat tire on his bicycle. And I want my kid excused from home economics because when she is at home at night she does the dishes. This is the type of thing that killed us. I'm not saying this happened at the Alternative High School, but what did happen at the Alternative High School is that I think that we had one kid come over here who had twenty-two (22) credits. You see what happens to this here, then I got the other kid who comes here and wants to get out of school in the worst way. You see there is a little bit more to going to school than just picking up credits. That is what my hang-up is on that type of thing.

E=East Campus High Principal

R=Researcher

R: What do you see as the purpose of our alternative high school?

E: I see its main purpose to provide a particular type of student another opportunity within the school district to be in an environment that is different from the traditional sense of the school and being different is not--I am not talking about necessarily what they are doing, but that it doesn't necessarily have to have as many rules and regulations because it is not nearly as large, it can operate on a more informal basis, it is a school that doesn't have the necessary outward bounds or binding type things on individuals that are the result of having a community of eleven hundred and fifty to twelve hundred people having to co-exist and learn and do their thing in two or three acres of the building. It provides an alternative opportunity and the most significant thing I see it providing is a different environment.

R: Do you think that is needed?

E: Yes, I think it is needed. I find that there are people who in my experience just can't cope with the community of a school like for example East Campus High School and this isn't a large high school but for a person who has difficulty

dealing with mass type situations, East Campus High School becomes nothing but a massive place. The smallest group you can ever be lucky enough to become a part of in a formal sense would be maybe twenty to twenty-five people in the class at the very smallest. Generally he is going to be in lot larger situations he is going to become a part of a very large group and there are people that have not learned, by this stage of their lifes to be able to cope with the kinds of restrictions that are imposed upon us by systems that are the results of masses and, just for example, having to go to lunch at a particular time, having to have classes start at a particular time, having concerns about tardiness and about absense because you are dealing with such a large number of people. Then there are other kinds of behavior control that you think in terms of. There are some things you just have to be considering other people and what they want to do. So you become a real part of a mass, whether you like it or not and it's the easiest way to survive and, there are people who just haven't learned those techniques, nor have they learned to accept kind of having to give in to that situation. I see a certain amount of that happening in most of my high school experiences. The system or the situation bowls us. The alternative school presents you with a completely different

opportunity. It probably is a minutia of that but because of it being smaller 1) we don't have to formalize as many rules and regulations, you can informalize them, you can deal with some of the kinds of problems we face here, instead of on a massive, across the board kind of way, like policy or like rules and regulations, you can deal with them probably in more human kind of way. You may have to have them written down, cause that's the kind of society we live in, some people won't believe anything unless it is written down. It really doesn't become a rule but there are a lot of situations that you can handle on a one to one or one to two or three or four type basis. It also provides an opportunity for a different type of identity. I think the kids probably have an opportunity identifing with the adults they are working with. I am not familar with what happens in our alternative school but guessing what it should provide is an opportunity for them to get closer to an adult and identify with some of the things that that particular adult sees and does. It is more difficult here to do that, because each person who works in this building minimally faces and works with at least one hundred students and averages around one hundred and fifty and some as high as two hundred or more. The relationship those people develop is a very small few.

Lot of kids get left out.

R: It seems that is a good argument for doing away with the two big high schools and just having a whole system of mini-schools.

E: I won't argue for the removal, I think we live in a massive society. I was talking for the guy that just can't cope, and he's not coping with it. There are a sizeable number of people that can cope with this situation and are going to live in a massive kind of situation and I think we might be presenting them with, whether we like it or not, even though in some facits of our education we are improving it, we might give up something that is important. I don't know what it means to live in an apartment house but I have a feeling that it is kind of like living in a fairly big high school. I don't know what it means to work in a PSNS but I got a sneaking suspicion that some of the rudiments of being in that job are like the rudiments of being in a large public school. Same thing goes for Boeing, goes for practically any of the major kinds of occupiers or living styles that we see as common in our locale, probably anywhere in our country, other than some rural settings. Developing the mechanisms, even though you can look at them and say geez I wonder if that is really right or if that is what we really want, I think we

do have to recognize that there are some kinds of things we really want, I think we do have to recognize that there are some kinds of things that we do have to develop, and we better get em, we as people have to develop em in our teenage years, and that is a function we probably provide unknowingly. We don't sit down and cognate what in the heck it is we are doing when we have kids move around, for example, from room to room but there is something, people have to ride up and down elevators for example. It's a pain in your neck, but there is not alternative that is better at this point in time.

R: Accepting that the large comprehensive high schools is the optimum educational experience that we can offer and for those that can't meet all their goals there we have the alternative high school. We offer some kind of second class program, or second rate benefit to that student or don't you see it that way?

E: He misses some things if that's what you mean by second rate and maybe some of the things that that person misses could be important, down the trail. But I think it is the result of, it is better to have him gain something under some control, with some type of scheme behind it than to have nothing maybe that's why its partly the word alternative.

It is different experience or a different situation than a "traditional". And I am not saying traditional in terms of the class design, I am saying traditional in the terms of the fact that you have a building and a day and you have teachers and you have kids and some resources to work with, and work without, within that particular situation.

R: How would you measure the success of an alternative program?

E: First, I think a person need to assess the kind of characteristics or reasons why an individual is either placed in or selects the alternative school and if you can identify what those reasons are then hopefully those reasons can in turn become objectives which hopefully we'll be able to take a look at as we go and toward the end of the process for the individual. Like, for example, maybe the guy just flat can't get up in the morning. He can't make it to regular school because you just can't get out of the rack. He's going to have to meet some kind of a time deadline. I'm sure in the alternative school it might be a different one than this, but probably you can measure it, you could set up, here is the problem. This particular individual just can't get anywhere on time, you could measure the results of that, by seeing what kind of, if you can affect a change on that part-

icular person while he is in the school. You can even take a look at him later, if he returns to a regular school setting, or we could look at him after he left the school setting. Now that is long term, thats a long term evaluation. Some of the other kinds of things, part of what happened is working with the individual about how he sees himself and maybe how he sees others or the world in which he lives. I think maybe we could asses that, I think there are some ways that that could be assessed, upon an entry and then some assessment could be made at the time of exiting. if in fact that is one of the things that is happening, I am just guessing that that happends. But I just can't see how it couldn't happen, that you are not dealing with a person's self image, his feeling of or lack of self worth. Those are some of the things I think you can take a look at. I don't have any specific needs of tools on hand, but I know there has been some work done. You could maybe even construct some things of your own although, that would be a gargantuan task for you right now.

R: Can you see any benefit to East Campus High School from the existance of an Alternative School in the district.

E: My most honest answer would have to be, no comment because I really don't know. I can't tell you what pre-Alternative

High School is like, and obviously we are not in a situation where we can say post-Alternative High School and so I would just have to be saying to you, I don't know.

R: Could you envision a circumstance where there could be an alternative high school in the district which could serve a usefull purpose to East Campus High School?

E: I can envision a situation.

R: What sort of things could an alternative program provide?

E: Alternative High School could have a couple of types of programs going on, one would be purely alternative, it is a place for students who attempt to work in an area, and I would see some workings in some basic skills area, and accomplishing some basic skills, tasks and learnings, which maybe will come to bear for these students in their later life, occupationally or just as people living in our society. I am talking about improving their reading ability and working on their writing skills and working on their understanding skills of what they read, or their reading per se. When I say to reading to read is to understand as far as I am concerned, that is what the definition of reading is. That's an area that an alternative school might be able to get closer to those kinds of tasks of assumption. I think we are going to get away from that a little bit but we are go-

ing to stop assuming that they "have had this much already", and hit a little bit more through individualization, but we will never pick them all up, and there are going to be people who can not cope with doing that in this setting, and can't cope with it, maybe there are people just flat do not have to be in the custodial relationship for as many hours as we have students, a different time line, a different span, different opportunities. The second thing I see is the alternative school could provide an opportunity for some behavior change for students maybe to come back. Maybe it is an exit from the regular scene and kind of be true to yourself and go through a plan, a person says what I really want to do is: I really want to accomplish a couple of things; number one I am successful so "I can get back to the East Campus High School." But in reality what we are saying to this person is well we are going to work on punctuality, getting to class, some of his kind of human levels of approach with people so that some of these kinds of problems that he had had when he goes back to the scene, he will know how to cope with them. It isn't a matter he had the lack of skills and maybe his reading or spelling or that sort of thing; he lacks some human skills and nobody has really taken the time out and worked with him on it or identified some of these things or

identified some of these things or when they have been identified he gets the opportunity to continue to do what is unacceptable and then he get dinged for it and gets sent away from here, whereas, in a much smaller situation hopefully someone will be able to take him hand in hand and say hey look it, this is what we really are trying to accomplish. If your goal is to get back in that school, here are some things I think that you need to do and when I say I think a person could call upon some feed-in from the people in the East Campus High School setting, the counselor, the vice-principal maybe even a teacher or two outside of of the student.

R: Do you think the optimum way to deal with drop-out problems is through an alternative school?

E: No, that is one of the ways, but I think we have to deal with drop-outs. We are probably going to have to do, there are many things we are going to probably have to do to deal with drop-outs. People don't drop out for the same reasons. For example, I had a situation with a lad the other day that I'm running the gauntlet now. There are some people that are unhappy with me. They wanted me to kick him out for the semester. He was caught stealing. Then they said if you don't do that you got to cut him off from these particular things. The guys involved in athletics, and in talking with a

couple of his teachers, talking with his parents, the only reason they can ascertain he comes to school is because of athletics at this point. If I were to cut those off, based on what I discovered, he would drop-out. That's a particular kind of drop-out. My decision was to try and deal with the people with whom he had to deal with who felt he shouldn't be here and tell them what I saw and also ask them to participate in the chance we had to keep a guy going because there are some beneficial roll-offs of his being here. There is behavior change going on, it's not a great amount but the guy is not a bad guy either. And if he ever is going to learn not to steal or not be a thief he is going to have to accept some other responsiblity and to face temptation. That was my opinion. I think that we have to, in dealing with the problem of drop-outs, we have to analyze more why people drop-out. There are going to be some reason why people drop-out of school that are the result of factors over which we have no control and I don't think we can assume that we can keep all students from dropping out of high school or dropping out of any school because there you know, there is no way, shape or form that I feel that a school or school systems is going to undo in five to six hours a day, a hundred-eighty a week what it has taken that individual, and

whoever else he has dealt with the other eighteen hours and three hundred and sixty-five (365) days a year to create and so what I am saying is that there are factors that we can't exercise any control over. If his mother is sleeping with his next door neighbor and it's driving him nuts and he doesn't like himself as a result of it, he doesn't like his mother and the next door neighbor and people in general, school becomes a place where he can take out some of those feelings. Unless we can change that outside environment you're dead. I'm picking up freaky situations but there are those kinds of problems which do exist.

R: In cases like that do you think the Alternative High School would have any greater chance or would they also have the antiquated ties.

E: Might have on a personal kind of counseling level that the person might get close to somebody and they might eventually get some help or get the other agencies involved. Yes, I would say there are some of those kinds of life-type situations that an alternative school might have a better chance than a regular school. Just because it won't maybe miss as routinely as it could be missed here.

R: A main purpose of the Alternative High School would be that we meet the needs of a specific type of student whose

that student in accomplishing his own goals and overcoming his deficiencies.

E: They are not just his own, they are determined and I think that is where a real level of the adult is expertise has to come to play, they are co-determined that you are agreeing upon them. I haven't found very many self-motivated, initiated people in a wide enough way on enough things that they don't need to have some kinds of checks and balances. Somebody who is along the way is saying he does, The researhcer does such and such, how you doing, how you coming, where are we going. I could think of myself as maybe the person who is highly motivated but I would be very honest that I have to have some checks on them. There are times where I will really screw around, given the right kind of opportunity. There are phases of me that have to be, that people have to ride herd on because I have my priorities and there are some things that may not be as important to me but they may be important to the total picture, that I just might push them into never, never land, and never deal with them or never even examine them, or cope with them. I see that happening with individuals in the learning process, that they need to be accountable not only to the objective but to somebody. That's a level of humanness that needs to exist in education. It's pretty tough to be thinking of terms of your

learning and that your learning is really the results of your desire to get to this point in something, which will accomplish this task. I have a feeling that is going to be pretty cold for most people in a broad sense. Sure there are people that read history because they like to read history, people that work on math problems casue they like to play with numbers. But when we are talking about the big picture, I think when you are talking about all other kinds of things that happen in school, there are a lot of them, somebody has to check on it once in a while. And at the time they are checking it, tell us whether we are making it or not, it's kind of nice to have someone say hay you really did a good job on this. It feels good all over, I like that and the kids like it even more. They are very open and honest, they express it very outwardly to you. If they don't express it to you they will ask it, did you see me doing such and such the other day or were you at such and such thing that happened. They want feed back, they like to be told, they don't want to be seen out of school. They want to be, ya I was there, that was terrific you know, gee that was great, I saw you do such and such that was really neat, what made you decide to do that. That's a level of humanness in terms of you sit down and you agree on some

things you are also going to accomplish and the adults and the teacher's role is to keep them working in that direction and have check points, check with them, see how they are going.

R: Are there any other institutional functions that the alternative school can provide?

E: I really don't know. I guess I am just either naive or haven't had the experience.

R: You don't know that East Campus High School is crying out to have some needs met by the Alternative High School students.

E: If the crying out is occuring, I am not hearing it. That's very possible, I have only been here two months and it's possible that I haven't heard it yet. I have not seen it or haven't gotten to meet it yet, if it has to come to me for it to happen, it may not even have to come to me for it to happen.

F=Female, West High Counselor

M=Male, West High Counselor

R=Researcher

R: From your perspective here, at West High, do you think there's a need for an alternative school?

F: Yes.

M: Definitely. I definitely think there is. We have kids that we can't provide the service for just as (counselor's name) said; for various reasons. Just things as anxiety levels, possibly. The way we're set up, I think some of the kids I see more successful in Alternative High School are the bright kids that are being slowed down by the program, who are turned off by it. I could see sending him there to help him. A kid that is maybe losing interest in a traditional school. Then a kid that for whatever reason can't fit his lifestyle into our traditional lifestyle. I think there's a need for him--service for him. It's obvious to me that we're not or we can't change much.

F: I think just by structure; the size of us is overwhelming a lot of kids. They can't identify with the school. It has nothing for them so when they get into a smaller school and work more closely with an individual, they get rewarded, they feel more important, they produce more and they're happier.

R: Which are the students that you come in contact with who you think will benefit from the alternative school--who you might recommend the school to?

M: As I already said, the very capable student who is completely turned off by what they've experienced in the traditional school program. The kid who is extremely alienated for whatever reason, and I don't necessarily think the alternative school can magically cure him but they might be able to offer him something that we can't. Some kids are so alienated that even an alternative school can't reach him. I understand that. But at least it's another opportunity for them. I don't see it particularly as a dumping ground for the so called problem students...the person who is a trouble maker and stuff. I don't see it as a way out or hurriedly get him off our chest and ship him over there. Nor do I see it as a place for the student who has severe emotional or learning disabilities. I think we have the other system of school has a program for that. I see it primarily being the alienated kid.

F: The kid that wants an education, that really, and wants it badly enough that he will go to school, but he cannot come to school here. He wants an education.

R: Another strategy is to take a wing of West Campus High

School or East Campus High School and run an alternative program in a school within a school. Do you think that idea may work?

F: No. I think that there are just really stimuli about a building or a place or people that regardless of how well you're functioning, if the littlest thing just crept in on you, even though you've learned new behavior patterns, you're going to revert to the old ones. I don't like the idea.

M: A case in point, we had kids who leave here and go to Alternative High School and apparently get whatever they need there and come back here, and they're able to operate here. I don't think they could be here and move to a different part of the building. I understand in some ways why the socialization of other students would be of some value but I think part of the set up of the alienation has to do with... It's such an alienation that even the building identifies it.

F: The sounds, the smells, just everything. You don't really want to come through that door. I don't know that they even have identified too much with our athletic program, which is unusual.

F: This is something that the Special Education kids do have and have been able to identify with certain parts of our program. But these kids really, they don't want any part of the picture.

R: Do either of you think that an alternative set within this building would...

M: In my opinion, and that's all it is, my opinion, no. I think by setting an alternative school in a traditional school, maybe it's worked. But I can't see it working here. By setting it in this building I think that there would be too much conflict in values. I would see the advantage of having it...

R: My question was what the value might be to have the alternative school located within the traditional schools-- a wing at East or a wing at West.

M: I think that all the things that are distasteful to the students would still be there. I don't know if that was mentioned but if they are subject to the discipline of the building, which they probably would be. Couldn't have two sets of disciple in the same building. If you had a separate room all together, we're not set up that way. We can't really give you the science building. Except, that way it would be in effect a separate building.

F: Yeah, I think you lose some of your effectiveness too like, there would be a tendancy, while we've got a biology lab to use a biology lab, because it is probably the easiest route. But you kids come up with some beautiful solutions

to biology--and they're creative. I think you do away--if you haven't go something, you figure out a way to get it. I think you do away--if you haven't got something, you figure out a way to get it. I think you do away with a lot of the appeal of your program. I think you do.

R: From what you said, how do you feel about the alternative program. Do you think we're doing a good job? Are we meeting the goals that in your mind should be meet?

M: Well, I think that the answer probably is different for different students that you have or I'm sure that some of your students...it's the whole answering for them. For others, it's they can't handle the independent self-discipline they have to have. They just can't handle it. And I throw the question back to you. What do you do for kids that you get down there and they have too much freedom and they can't handle it, they're not mature enough to have self-interest. Because I know you have some real success stories, and we've had some come back with a parent that have just been wild.

F: Not this year.

M: I haven't had any this year, no. Another problem I see and I'm not sure it's anything that you could do anything about. But I see kids trying to use Alternative High School

as an escape from reality. They don't like what's going on here and in many instances, it's their own functioning that determines what goes on here and so as a result they begin to get themselves into hot water. The first thing he cries out is Alternative School. I would try to counsel against that reason for going.

East High Counselors

R=Researcher

R: From your counseling perspective at East Campus High School, do you think the alternative school is necessary?

Counselor: I'll say yes to that. In fact, I wish we had more alternatives. I think yes, we are a typical high school. Pretty much everybody has to fit into the system. I'm not saying that alternatives have to be outside of the school. I'm just saying that I wish we had more alternatives inside the school. In some cases it is desireable to have it outside the school. The student wouldn't have to spend all of his time there, but most of it.

R: When you say the school, are you saying the high school?

C-1: Yes, I'm speaking of the high school, East Campus High School.

C-2: I think there is a segment of our high school, and probably of every high school, at this point in time anyway, there is a segmnet of kids that just can't cope with this kind of a setting...and needs an entirely different kind of setting and yet he can't, even though he doesn't like it here but knows he needs some kind of formal education. I think the one thing that is hard is that the kid who ordinarily fits that mold for us is also rather undirected at least

not self directed at all and that becomes my dilemma when I consider Alternative High School. I always point this out to them; that although it is an alternative and completely different kind of setting and maybe what they are looking for, that it is a place, as I understand it, where you have to be pretty self-directed. And unless they can do that then that wouldn't work either. That is probably my big-best concern about whether or not that will fit that student. That is why I feel we need another alternative too because even with the one, every kid doesn't fit that alternative school either.

C-3: I think what I pretty well like over there at Alternative High School is their sentiments. I think there has to be something for the students who can't, somehow, fit the traditional mold of the high school. And we are assuming that everyone is of the same temperment and same pattern in our present high school. And that isn't so.

R: What is the type of young person that you do most often recommend to Alternative High School, or that you think would benefit the most?

C-1: I think it would be the one we recognize as having the capacity but not having the temperment--those are the ones I suggest it to.

C-2: I think it is the kid who is able, and that is when

I go back to my original statement of being self-directed. In fact, I find the hardest part is trying to decide and find whether he/she has that. If I can't decide that then the kid has to decide. But the kid who can do work, who has the capacity, I guess is the best way to put it, and yet is not coping with the situation...

C-1: Sometimes I think it is like other things in our lives; the kids that I give my endorsement to, that's virtually everyone because they have made some pretty important decisions, as has their family, for one reason or another they are getting out of here. They have poor attendance records, academic records, etc. And I think that sometimes it is like at one time in all of our lives, things get totally out of control and we just lose all perspective and things are all downhill. At this time an opportunity comes along and kind of straightens us out and I think the alternative schools provide that sometimes for some kids. They then get a new "shot" at it, a new perspective and it isn't going to help all. You aren't successful with all of your kids over there. Many times they are still flying off in many directions in their behavior for many reasons.

R: How do you feel about the idea of the alternative school being away from this high school, not connected?

C-1: I think it should be removed because it is a different concept and as such...I think it has to be removed, unless we were a campus type of operation; then we could operate in some corners, but (name of counselor) and I know from our first year in Title I summerschool that we had two hundred (200) of these kids here for six weeks and these are basically the same sort of kids we are talking about...

C-2: I think the kids too, have one way or another gotten themselves out of here. He doesn't want to be in this setting. I think he needs something new, when he is beginning something new.

R: Is our alternative school meeting the needs that you have pointed out?

C-1: I'll say yes to that, but there has always been something that has bothered me about it and that is that I rarely see any of the kids again that we send there. I have never seen any empirical data. I mean any data that is just very conventional and statistical; how many months did they stay, how did they average, and all other things like that. I suppose that in the long run would be better than our impressions. One will come back for one reason or another and when he comes back it is usually for a certain thing; he want something like a transcript and when I ask how things are going I have never had

one say "Oh, fine"...so I don't really know how they are getting along.

C-3: I can only assume it is working. What I think should be very much a part of the Alternative High School program which we in the traditional high school do not have and that is probably a little more of a follow up on your people to sort of serve as a verification in the sense of "is this program really doing what it is desiring to do?" And maybe more than our traditional set up...we do have some feedback, and I don't know if you do or not, and if you do we aren't aware of it at all. The group of kids you are dealing with are not easy to get data on after they leave. Man, I've done it and gotten nowhere. There are, as it were, in the data, straight statistical stuff--length of stay and whatnot.

C-2: I had a call yesterday from a girl who, it has been at least a month, was having real problems in school and she came in and said "what am I going to do" and I said "have you ever thought about Alternative High School" and she didn't know what I was talking about. So we talked about it for a while and she really got excited about it so I sent her to Alternative High School. The next day she called me and said, "I have been in a juvenile home and I am now in a foster home" and she filled me in on things I didn't know about before I sent

her to Alternative High School. She hasn't made it to Alternative High School and perhaps in the fall she would. That is what we are saying that we really don't know. Once we have recommended a kid we don't know whether or not they have gone unless they make some effort to come back to us. I think we have your classic case right now. A situation that is almost unbelieveable as far as I am concerned because I worked with her when she first came, she is a kid who could not cope with this kind of situation at all and then decided she had to prove to herself if she could and should come back here (after I sent her to Alternative School). She is not really happy here but she is proving to herself that she can manage here.

C-1: Should the alternative school provide young people with the kind of "straightening things out in their lives" and then reentering this school. I think that has some merit. Now in (girl's name) case she seemed to have in herself a driving motivation which I don't think most individuals at that age would have. Maybe it is the role, in this case, Alternative High School, to after a period of time, which will vary with each individual, get them back into the mainstream. Maybe it shouldn't be a permanent setting. For some kids I think it would have to be permanent, I don't question that, but I would guess that for more kids than not it is a temporary situation, six months, a year and a half, but in any event it

help get them back in the mainstream. Afterall they are going to have to live in the mainstream of a lot of things. Once they have developed confidence etc. it will wean them away from another situation where they should get back in and cope with it.

C-2: I think that is the real case. I don't think all of the kids want to come back to the place where they have failed before; that would be pretty unusual. But in her case it was interesting to me. As I say, she isn't real happy, but then she is trying.

C-1: I'm not trying to defend my argument because I think in terms of the alternatives that you mentioned for the kids who don't do very well in the high school at all, but we do need to articulate OC and other places. But I still wonder though if the fact that you've a student...when he leaves here he must see himself some sort of failure whether we have classified him that way or not, and if we never let him tough that and try it again he may always see himself as a failure. Some should never try to return because they would definitely fall on their face, but others should--and they would need encouragement.

R: What changes might you want to see in the alternative program?

C-1: You are talking about the current philosophy? I wouldn't

think there should be a change, just a little more of an emphasis on the young people that go there that it still is a real world. The fact that reality is going to face them when they leave. By that I mean that if a student feels...that all right I hate meeting a schedule of any kind, I think the alternative school shouldn't say O.K. you can live on your own schedule, and not make the student fact up to a schedule of any kind. I think the concept still should emphasize that there is a reality to learn to adjust to. I think that sometimes a student feels that the alternative here is removal from that kind of thing, no schedules...

C-2: I don't think that would last very long though becasue they soon would learn that they aren't going to get any credits if they don't stick to some schedules, no matter how informal the schedule is. You have to turn the work in, you have to meet some kind of deadline and schedule. Or, you don't succeed there either.

C-3: I don't have any criticism or altering. Each director naturally imposes his philosophy etc. but I think the intent of that alternative school continues to meet...My only wish is that we had more alternatives for those kids who find that this one isn't for them.

R: What other groups of student do you think would need an

alternative, that should be created?

C-3: I can think of some situations where we have kids, the gifted kids, kids that have a lot of manual skills, some that have skills in organizing and things like that. Everybody fits in the same basic requirements. But we offer only one kind of English, we don't even offer remedial English. And everybody is supposed to fit the same mold and some make it great and some fail and most do average.

R: Why do you think that high schools like East Campus High are in such a rigid pattern and if the kids can't hack it they fall by the wayside?

C-1: It is traditional. That is what is expected of them. I think that we are traditionals at practically anything. We don't provide the money to do it either, so we don't have the same motivation as we would if we were financing it ourselves. Alternative High School would never exist if it weren't for Title I funds and some of the other classes wouldn't either. Until some special funding comes along to encourage it. Those days are gone except in the areas of maybe, vocational. We'll probably get around sooner or later to financing some special alternative.

APPENDIX II

Cover Letter Accompanying Questionnaire

June 25, 1974

Dear Student or former Student,

I need your help. I am writing a Thesis for Graduate School and to do my research I need information from Alternative School students. The enclosed questionnaire has 20 short questions which should take only a short time to fill out. I would appreciate it if you would take the time to fill it out and send it right back to me in the enclosed envelope.

If you have something to add which isn't on the form please feel free to write it in. Try to answer all the questions as I need to know what you think about all these subjects.

Please do me a favor and fill it out and send it back before you forget about it. Have a good summer and thanks for the help.

Peace,

Dick Sagor

QUESTIONNAIRE

male_____ How many credits do you need to graduate?

Female_____ 1-9_____ 10-18_____

19-27_____ 27-38_____

1. When did you first come to the Alternative School?
   month_____ year_____

2. What was your reason for enrolling at Alternative School? (check as many as apply)
   _____Get a High School Diploma
   _____Relaxed rules
   _____My friends went to Alternative School
   _____The classes sounded interesting
   _____Somebody made me. If yes, who_____
   _____Social life
   Other:_____

3. Which of these best describes the way you came to Alternative School:

_____a) I dropped-out of regular school and <u>after</u> I was out for a while I decided to go to Alternative School.

_____b) I dropped-out of regular school in order to go to Alternative School.

_____c) I was kicked-out of regular school and decided to go to Alternative School

_____d) I was kicked-out of regular school and my parents, counselors, or others insisted I go to school somewhere.

_____e) My high school counselor suggested I go to Alternative School.

_____f) Other:_____

_____

4. What do you want to be doing 5 years after you graduate from high school?

5. What 5 things do you most enjoy doing in your spare time?
   a)_____
   b)_____
   c)_____
   d)_____
   e)_____

6. Which of the above activities has Alternative School helped you with and how has it helped?

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. Answer TRUE or FALSE
   Alternative School would be a better school if we had more...

		true	false
a)	Black Students	____	_____
b)	Chicano Students	____	_____
c)	Indian Students	____	_____
d)	Freaks	____	_____
e)	Straight Students	____	_____

8. Would you have answered question 7 differently before you came to Alternative School?

9. (a) Do you think students have too much power at Alternative School? _____

   (b) If you found yourself back at regular school do you think you could get more power for yourself and the other students? _____

10. Check the statements below that you agree with.
    _____ (a) I get along well with most people
    _____ (b) I get along well with a few people
    _____ (c) I don't get along well with most people
    _____ (d) I hardly get along well with anybody

11. What do you like the most about Alternative School (please try to think of something)?

12. What do like the least about Alternative School (please try to think of something)?

13. If you could change anything at Alternative School, what things would you change? (If you do not answer this question it means you like everything just the way it is)

_____
_____
_____
_____

14. Check whether you AGREE, DISAGREE, or DON'T KNOW

Agree	Disagree	Don't Know	
_____	_____	_____	1. If somebody really wants a good education and is willing to work hard, they can learn more at East or West than at Alternative School.
_____	_____	_____	2. If somebody really wants a good education and is willing to work hard, they can learn more at Alternative School than at East or West.
_____	_____	_____	3. Teachers at regular schools know more about their subjects than teachers at Alternative School.
_____	_____	_____	4. Things being taught at Alternative School will help me on a job.

15. Do you plan to continue your education after Alternative School? _____ If yes, where _____

16. If your younger brother or sister were getting "A"s at regular school would you tell them to transfer to Alternative School? _____

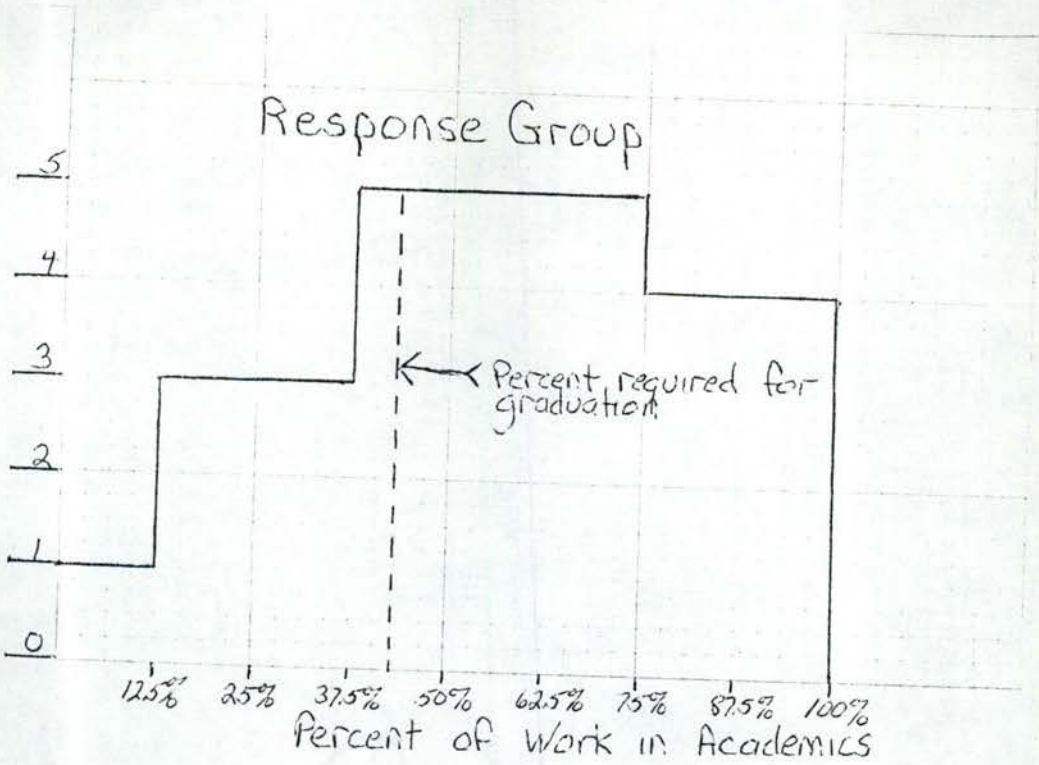
17. Has anybody (adult or student) ever put you down for going to Alternative School?

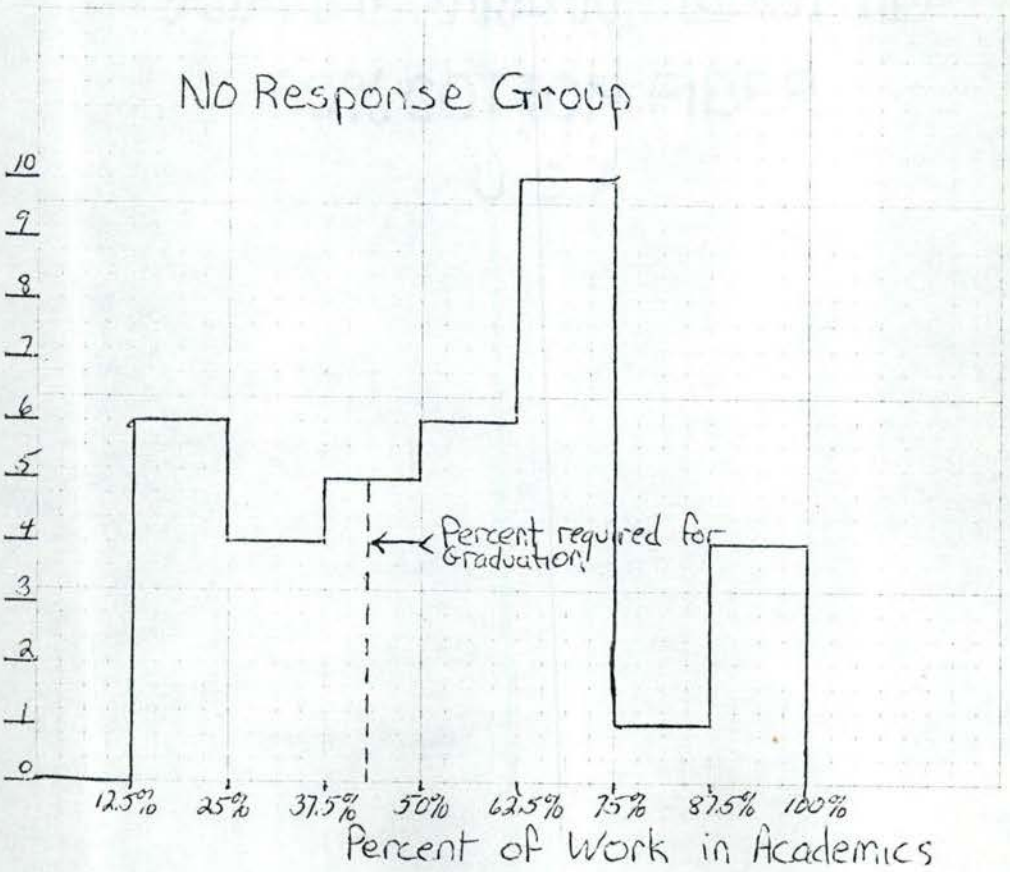
18. How much have you read this year?
_____a) occasional newspaper or magazine articles
_____b) one book or less
_____c) five books or less
_____d) more than 5 books
_____e) other: _____
Are you reading more now than you did in previous years? _____

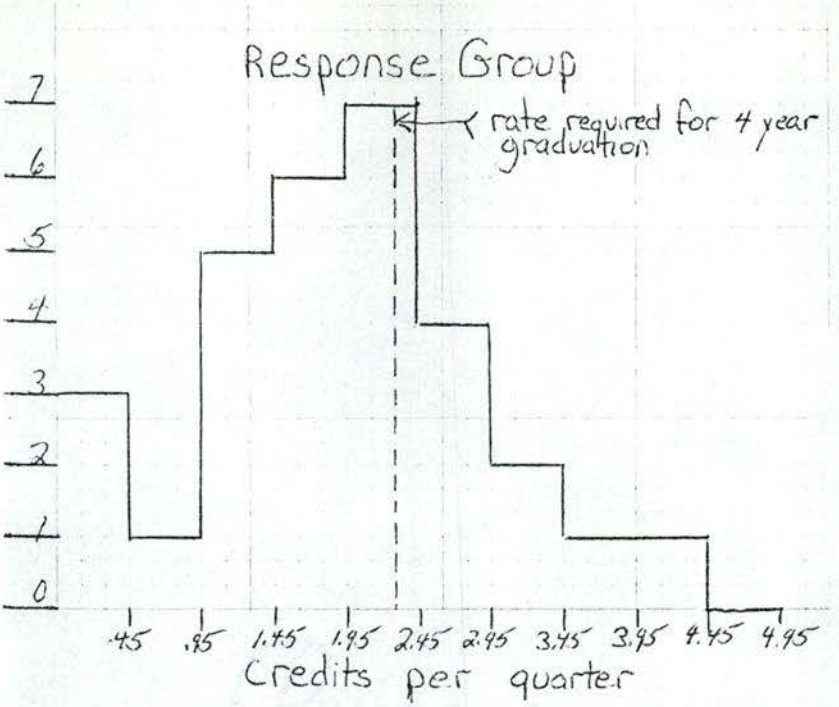
19. My parents think:
_____a) Alternative School is an excellent school and better than my old school
_____b) Alternative School is O.K. but my old school was better
_____c) Alternative School is just as good as my old school

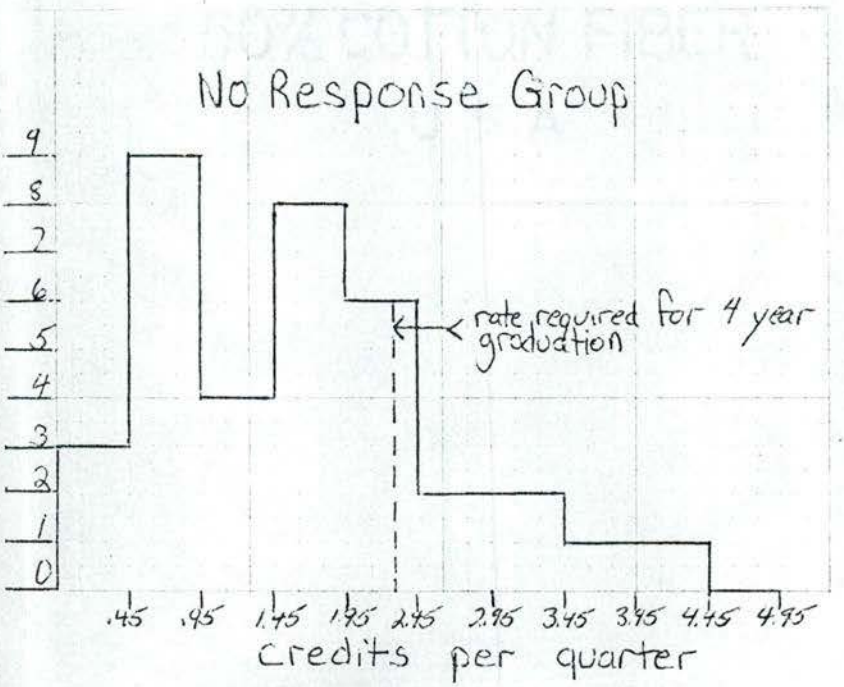
20. List the things you did at Alternative School this year that you either enjoyed most or found most interesting.
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

21. If you no longer go to Alternative School, why did you leave?
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____


Response Group
5
4
3
2
1
0
Percent required for graduation
12.5%
25%
37.5%
50%
62.5%
75%
87.5%
100%
Percent of Work in Academics


No Response Group
10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
Percent required for Graduation
12.5%
25%
37.5%
50%
62.5%
75%
87.5%
100%
Percent of Work in Academics


Response Group
rate required for 4 year graduation
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
.45
.85
1.45
1.95
2.45
2.95
3.45
3.95
4.45
4.95
Credits per quarter


No Response Group
rate required for 4 year graduation
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
.45
.45
1.45
1.95
2.45
2.95
3.45
3.95
4.45
4.95
Credits per quarter

Question 2. What was your reason for enrolling at the alternative school? (Other responses reported in table II)

1) Because I felt that I could get a lot more done at the alternative school that at East High.

2) Was referred (by my social worker). Was suspended by West (High) for tradiness-did not like the educational environment.

3) I couldn't get along too good in a high school.

4) I couldn't fit into a regular high school because of too much harrassment from students and pressuring teachers.

5) I couldn't maintain in a regular school and I'm really far behind in credits. I went to a school like this before.

6) Because I was kicked out of West High.

7) To get my head where I want it.

8) The system.

9) Be able to work at my own pace.

10) So I could get away from the traditional high school and its rules.

11) Because the program at the alternative school is outstanding.

12) I enrolled at the alternative school for the freedom of my time, and for the desire to learn as much as I could in as short a time as possible.

13) I work mornings for the school district food service.

14) Things were more personal, if you needed help almost everybody would try.

15) I am married and have a daughter and it was just too hard on me for a babysitter and at the alternative school I could still work and have my baby with me.

16) I couldn't take the other school's system.

17) Because at East High I never learned what I should have.

Question 3. Which of these best describes the way you came to the alternative school? (Other responses reported in table III)

1) Insistance from parents.

2) I had dropped-out before I went to the alternative school, but I went back in.

3) I got married and was pregnant and had a hard time the first six months of pregnancy.

4) I liked the staff and it was free.

5) I missed my finals, they wouldn't let me make them up so I went to the alternative school.

6) I'd heard of the alternative school and wanted to go.

7) Went to West and after the summer I went to the alternative school.

8) I dropped-out of the other school because I was going to have a baby. Then I decided to go to the alternative school.

9) I wasn't going to go to any other school but the alternative school.

10) I just decided to change schools.

11) The kids there didn't make me feel like I was wanted there.

Question 4. What do you want to be doing five years after you graduate from high school? (reported in table V)

1) Get a real good job in something I learned at the Alternative School.

2) Teaching-counselor work.

3) Become an accountant.

4) Working.

5) Supporting myself instead of living on welfare.

6) Go to business school to get a good job.

7) Be happily married and be working hard as a certified public accountant.

8) Be a key punch operator and interior decorator. I'm going to the college now preparing for it.

9) I don't know.

10) I want to be a married potter out of the US - prefer-

rably England and Australia.

11) Be a beautician, or a waitress.

12) I'm not sure but I will probably be going to college.

13) It doesn't matter what I want, I'll probably have a husband and kids by them. Nothing special.

14) Working as a beautician or working with animals in the zoo.

15) I want a good paying job and one I enjoy doing.

16) To be married to my fiancee and have a home.

17) I'm not sure, but I might like to take some more psychology courses, or some to be a social worker.

18) Working or in the marine corps.

19) Army.

20) I want to go through college and soon go to South America and/or Mexico.

21) Traveling across the States with a small time Union band (especially Alaska).

22) I personally have no future desires.

23) Be a dental assistant.

24) Go to college or a vocational school.

25) Working.

26) Work and try to travel.

27) I want to get into politics and be a lawyer.

28) Making lots of bucks and getting out of here.

29) Be working in forestry.

Question 5. (reported in table XII) What five things do you most enjoy doing in your spare time? (these answers are followed by the same students answers to question 6, Which of the above activities has the alternative school helped you with and how has it helped?)

1) Quest. 5 - Smoking pot.

Quest. 6 - None

2) Quest. 5 - Painting, smoking, drinking, hiking, swimming, building stereos, drawing, gardening, chasing women, scoring good and spending money.

Quest. 6 - Painting it helped me with teacher advisement. Gardening I got help from plants class. I got no help in chasing women.

3) Quest. 5 - Hitch hiking, meeting girls, going to parties, learning new things, driving a car for hours.

Quest. 6 - In politics it told me how it is run and how much Nixon is a crook.

4) Quest. 5 - riding bikes chasing women, reading books, working on cars, getting drunk.

Quest. 6 - All of them.

5) Quest 5 - Motorcycle riding, swimming, hitchhiking, camping.

Quest. 6 - No answer.

6) Riding motorcycles, working with wood, restore old cars, smoking pot, good music, learn how to play organ.

Quest. 6 - No answer.

7) Quest. 5 - Working, get high, get drunk, listen to music, make money.

Quest. 6 - I've learned that to work you have to do it on your own and that makes it a responsibility. It helped me learn how to make money.

8) Quest. 5 - Swimming, reading, working on our new house, roller skating, taking our daughter places and playing with her.

Quest. 6 - Reading - I've always loved to read but the reading work I did at the alternative school helped me enjoy and understand better what I have read in all types of things I read from newspapers to social studies books.

9) Quest. 5 - Talking to people I've never seen before, getting together with my friends, motorcycle riding, football, basketball, karate, and fishing.

Quest. 6 - Talking to people, it helped me to look at everybody as an equal until I have been proven different.

10) Quest. 5 - Smoking, playing an instrument, reading books, riding bicycles, drinking alcohol.

Quest. 6 - Reading books.

11) Quest. 5 - Playing my guitar, speaking Spanish, playing with electronics, making speakers, learning somehow, chatting among friends.

Quest. 6 - It has helped with all of these. By the influence of other musicians, I learned how to speak Spanish, I learned how to build speakers, there are always friends around, we're all friends.

12) Quest. 5 - Shoot pool, chase girls, make money, go out and party, read a good book.

Quest. 6 - No answer.

13) Quest. 5 - Art, basketball, reading history, and swimming.

Quest. 6 - History, I learned about communists, the constitution, and the United States at the alternative school more than shitty East High ever thought of teaching.

14) Quest. 5 - Horseback riding, decoupage, creativity in my art work, growing plants, meeting people.

Quest. 6 - Meeting people because I am more out in the open with people. Art work because I never knew half of the things I do now.

15) Quest. 5 - Cleaning my house, running around a lot, playing with my animals, painting, most of all spending time with my boyfriend.

Quest. 6 - All these things because I have more time to myself.

16) Quest. 5 - Reading, bowling, driving, entertaining guests, shopping.

Quest. 6 - Reading, I really didn't like to read before, now I do.

17) Quest. 5 - visiting friends, working on a car, working around the house, bike riding, cooking, and ceramics.

Quest. 6 - All, it just makes me more relaxed and feeling free.

18) Quest. 5 - reading

Quest. 6 - They have books to read.

19) Quest. 5 - I like playing the guitar, to make and design some of my clothes, taking my own pictures and developing, writing stories, or poems, being around my friends and having a good time.

Quest. 6 - Guitar-music class; Pictures-photo class; Writing-writing class; it has tuaght me not to be that shy anymore. I guess before I never talked or got into the conversation, but I am a little more now.

20) Quest. 5 - Dancing, writing poems, getting loose.

Quest. 6 - Writing poetry-showed me ways of how to write better poetry.

21) Quest. 5 - Getting high, just pot and/or rum, mushroom picking, clay, being with my man, tennis.

Quest. 6 - You don't have to get away to do it (getting high). A good teacher in the clay department, and especially finding out nothings impossible if you're devoted to it.

22) Quest. 5 - Partying, talking to friends, listening to the radio, listening to records, making meals.

Quest. 6 - Making meals-It has helped a lot because I could not cook before.

23) Quest. 5 - Reading a good book, having fun with my fiance, being with good friends, planning my future, shooting pool or swimming.

Quest. 6 - The Alternative School, helped me straighten my head out so I can have a good future. The home-ec teacher helped me in accounting so I can do what I want to do and be what I want to be, without pressures.

24) Quest. 5 - Drawing, riding motorcycles, go to parties, outdoor games, camping.

Quest. 6 - Drawing-the art teacher taught me different techniques.

25) Quest. 5 - Painting, swimming, tennis, taking care of children, dancing.

Quest. 6 - It helped me in my art, I learned candle-making and decoupage.

26) Quest. 5 - Jamming, basketball, tennis, making new friends, relaxing.

Quest. 6 - Well, the alternative school has helped with all of the above, because the school has a gym, tennis racquets, a stereo. I met new people, made new friends, and I think it is a very relaxed atmosphere.

27) Quest. 5 - Being with my friends, horseback riding, going places, meeting new people.

Quest. 6 - It has helped me be with my friends, I have learned to enjoy and respect other people.

28) Quest. 5 - being with my boyfriend, partying, swimming, photography.

Quest. 6 - I've learned all I know about photography from the alternative school.

29) Quest. 5 - Bowling, playing pool, playing pinball, go hiking, go camping.

Quest. 6 - No answer.

30) Quest. 5 - Watching television, visiting friends, occasional reading and writing, driving, listening to and analy-

zing music.

Quest. 6 - Helped me with literature, encouraged my own abilities with the pen.

31) Quest. 5 - Babysitting little kids and playing with them, cleaning house and moving things around, helping paint house and other things, painting pictures, taking care of dog and cats.

Quest. 6 - Babysitting little children-The alternative school provides child care classes and showed me how to make children's clothing.

Question 11. What do you like most about the alternative school? (reported in table VI)

1) The students have their heads on straight, and the teachers.

2) Freedom to learn what you want to learn.

3) The power of the students.

4) The way the staff and students have their meetings to decide on things together.

5) You can relax and learn more, without putting your nose in a book.

6) Freedom of speech.

7) The principal and the teachers.

8) Freedom and teachers.

9) It readies you to be an adult, having to make decisions for yourself on a complete basis.

10) You can smoke in class. Teachers take time in showing you instead of shoving it down your throat.

11) The freedom in general.

12) Freedom, good clay department, learning the more important things in the world besides reading, writing, arithmetic.

13) The atmosphere and the friendly people.

14) That it is a free school. You're not told to do anything. Everyone helps everyone else.

15) Classes and teachers.

16) Being free to go to any class, being able to say what you feel.

17) I used to like it when the credits weren't so hard to get, and you didn't have to be there.

18) Working at my own speed. It's not so pushy.

19) There used to be a real good teacher and student relationship. There was equal power between students and teachers.

20) Teachers, students, program-happy education.

21) Field trips.

22) Teachers.

23) No attendance. Less like a game.

24) Freedom to do your work at your own speed.

25) The way you can do what you want and work at your own speed. The togetherness of everyone. It seems everyone understands each other.

26) The way learning is a responsibility to yourself.

27) The classes are relaxing and you learn.

28) The students and teachers.

29) The teaching style.

30) The teachers.

31) The students are what makes the school. Therefore, they make the rules and the teachers co-operate.

32) The relaxed atmosphere, the teachers, few rules.

Question 12. What do you like least about the alternative school? (Reported in table VIII)

1) The lousy building, i.e. facilities.

2) Lack of constant classes throughout the day and off limit areas, such as the gym, classrooms, etc.

3) One particular student.

4) The jr. high students.

5) It's only for drop-outs, I think everyone should be able to enroll.

6) The point system.

7) The people who go for the hell of it and missuse the priv-

ilege of it. The ones who come to school high.

8) We need better books, rooms, and gym.

9) How few people come to classes.

10) The name

11) Time schedule.

12) Lunches

13) Right now the teachers they have this year were taking too much authority. The students were getting less of a say.

14) All the added rules and the younger students.

15) That if you miss classes now you lose points.

16) The place the school is at. The way some kids are running around or not doing anything except hanging around and making a lot of racket.

17) Some of the students didn't really do that much there. I'd like them to realize that it is still a school to learn, not to just sit around.

18) One of the teachers.

19) The junior high teeny bops, non-interesting science classes - only because I hate science I guess.

20) Hardly ever got anything done at the meetings.

21) When people who were friends would argue, because anger is ugly and alternative school people are each beautiful in their own way.

22) The gym isn't open all the time.

23) Not having a way to blow the smoke out of the classroom.

24) Point system.

25) One or two of the students that are there.

26) Some of the classes are unorganized.

27) Not enough funds.

28) The freaks who use it to pass the time.

29) The way some of the kids fight with each other.

Question 13. If you could change anything at the alternative school, what things would you change? (reported in table IX)

1) The fights between the kids so they will be friends.

2) I would integrate straight with the slow so that students could help themselves, i.e. tutoring, special help they can offer one another. I also feel a strict attendance law should be enforced. Avoid temptation, unless of course, the student works and studies at home.

3) Some of the unorganized classes could be organized better.

4) The Wednesday meetings, it got out of hand. The junior high program; I thought we were bad, but they took the cake.

5) Point system, judiciary committee.

6) I'd try to have it a little cleaner and have a few more teachers.

7) I would have the gym open all the time.

8) I'd have a class called "happiness is yourself" where people would learn how to be happy within themselves, without having to rely on other people or other things to do it for them. They'd learn to control themselves better over their bad faults. Plainly, to find real beauty in themselves.

9) Keep it only for high school.

10) The building and the hours.

11) Ban the junior high. We should have nothing to do with the government, constitution or whatever it is. The alternative school never needed any formalities.

12) The point system.

13) We should interview people that want in to see how bad they want to learn or graduate or just to see how bad they want in.

14) I would move the school to a better place and be stricter on the immature people.

15) I would change some of the new staff they brought in last September so we could have the old school back. Also get the original head teacher back. It isn't even the old "everybody is equal school" anymore.

16) Better lunch program.

17) Have school start earlier in the morning and get out

18) The name, the location and the lunches.

19) Gym, books, rooms.

20) I would kick out the ones who come drunk or stoned. I'd like to change some of the classes.

21) One bad teacher can destroy the whole school, like one of last years teachers. He was burned out and didn't really give an (expletive deleted).

22) The junior high.

23) I would make it possible to keep all the same teachers.

24) Make it so that students can vote out a teacher without impeachment proceedings. Yet, students must have a good legal reason for acting. Get rid of hassle type systems, like a constitution, the schools got enough hassle without it. Simplify the school, make it easier for kids to get around and do things. Label everything so they know what it is.

Question 15 asked if students were going to continue their education and if so where. The following is a list of their responses. (reported in table IV)

1) A college of forestry.

2) The local junior college.

3) Everywhere.

4) The local J.C., Evergreen State College, Wash. St. Univ.

5) The local J.C. or Seattle University.

6) The local J.C.

7) The local J.C.

8) The local J.C. or Seattle University.

9) In the Army

10) Probably the local J.C.

11) At a vocational or art school.

12) The local J.C. or Skyline College in California.

13) Business school.

14) Business College.

Question 20. List the things you did at the alternative school this year that you either enjoyed most or found most interesting. (reported in table VII)

1) Everything, all my school work, the teachers, and friends.

2) Photography.

3) Photography, cooking, clay.

4) Photo lab, candlemaking, and field trips.

5) The Wednesday meetings were interesting. I think everyone is included through the things. They have a right to know what's going on. The thing I enjoyed most was the field trip, and some of the classes.

6) Field trips.

7) Going on field trips and having such good teachers.

8) Too many to remember all of them.

9) My accounting. It was fun taking care of the rats, watching them grow from tiny furry things to big hairy things. Poetry, I liked writing and really enjoyed it when someone could feel instead of just listening or reading, it made them feel I was one step further.

10) Being able to bring work home that I'm behind in and making it up. The teachers are people. They talk to you in a way your gonna understand not trying to make you learn something in a way you're gonna forget in a week.

11) The trip to the science center, the trip to Port Townsent, bowling Tuesdays, science class, drama class, roots class.

12) Pottery, field trips, current events, till the Watergate thing was studied, it's a drag. Knowing a few teachers as individual people-not necessarily authorities, made up my mind on the future.

13) The teachers, students, and the system.

14) Well, one thing I liked most was working as secretary while I was still going to school. I think I learned a lot from that. Another thing was you found out what most people

are really like. Like when we'd sit around and talk about certain subjects.

15) Current events, those films about other schools, tennis, and home economics.

16) Pottery, art, math, some history, photography, sewing, cooking, and woodshop.

17) Field trips, pottery, social studies-movies, art.

18) Reading and English.

19) Current events, batiking, candlemaking, volleyball, social studies.

20) History, art, independent study, basketball.

21) Field trips, ping pong, the people I met, classes, the teachers, visits to other schools, taking pictures.

22) Making speaker cabinets, learning Spanish, the classes that I went to, mostly the intelligence of the people there.

23) Learning to play tennis, joining a basketball team for the first time, joining a volleyball team for the first time.

24) My social studies. I did more home study than regular school because I work so I didn't get to go to many classes but, the ones I did go to the debates and discussions were very interesting.

25) Camping, going to Seattle, classes were interesting, art was finest.

26) Foods class cooked some great food, social studies was

great, science was fun sometimes, basketball, field trips, good looking women teachers, and china class.

27) Found myself out, and where I was going. I liked the field trips. I had fun with the teachers.

28) I got along with all the teachers and students and I liked the subjects.

29) Painting, gardening, plants class, field trips.

30) The original current events class, studing the so-called energy crisis.

Question 21. If you no longer go to the alternative school, why did you leave? (reported in table XI)

1) Got a job.

2) Because the school got screwed up.

3) There was just no way I could work and go to school and I couldn't afford to quit working. But, when I can afford it, I plan to return to school.

4) I quit because the staff was taking too much authority and the judiciary committee were bringing too many rules forward. It was getting too close to the same old games as a regular high school.

5) I had to work for my living six days a week 9 to 5 . I would love to go back and really try to graduate in 1975.

6) I left because I got married and instead of one child I had three all the time, so I had to adjust to a larger family, because I could return to school. It's taken longer that I thought it would.

APPENDIX III

M=Former Student, now Teacher Aide

R=Researcher

R: What did you think the Alternative High School was going to be all about, when you first came as a student?

M: Well, I didn't have any idea, because I didn't know there would even be a school like that. So I just got a letter, I went down, to see what it was about. I figured it would be like any other school, that's what I thought. I walked in there and there was Peter and Sally and that completely freaked me out because they didn't look anything like what you'd expect a teacher to look like. And they just told everybody, "Okay, this is your school, you just make it what it's going to be." It was just amazing, because none of us knew what to do. Before, we were told what to do, and how to do it, and all of a sudden there's some people who say, "this is your school, you make it what you want it to be." We never had that freedom before, so it was completely screwed up. Nobody knew what to do or anything. We just couldn't handle all that freedom.

R: How long did it go on like that?

M: Oh God, I think about the first six (6) months it went about like that, then here and there they had their little classes, you know. School was from I think 2:00 to 10:00. It was at nighttime, and you figured that the kids wanted to go out at night and they weren't at school that much. So they changed the hours then, from 11:00 to 4:00. They had classes, but it wasn't that much. I mean the students didn't want to participate that much at all. I mean the classes start and there'd be good attendance for about the first week, and then there was a drain-off. That's mostly what the Alternative High School was, was independent study. That's how most students graduated, was independent study, cause hardly nobody did anything in the classes.

R: Was Peter happy with it that way?

M: No, I don't think he was. I never went to any of the staff meetings or anything. When we had the big general meetings he was there, and like Peter wouldn't say anything. When Peter would get pigged out, he wouldn't say anything. That was his problem. One time he did. We were having a meeting and everybody was talking, nobody was listening to anybody; he stood up and said, "You guys are acting like a bunch of pigs," and walked out. That freaked everybody out, so at the

next couple of meetings everybody was really cool, but after that it started slacking off again. He had a lot of philosophies, like you don't yell at somebody, just use psychology on them, and it just wouldn't work. He wasn't happy with it. I'd come in there early to work and him and the staff would be in there, trying to figure out things to do, and it seemed like all of them were just big flops.

R: How did the students relate to it? Were they feeling that their needs were getting met, even though the staff wasn't too happy with it?

M: No. Last year on an average day, there were no more than ten (10) students there. Out of the ten that were there, they would either play games, we got some good games, and we'd either play games for points or else play volleyball or else go in one room where one of the teachers had all her independent study stuff, and there'd be people in there doing it and most of the other time people just came and messed around. I think the Alternative High School before was just a place where everybody would meet and hang out.

R: It's interesting that when you were first contacted about the school, you expected it to be like a straight school.

M: Well I really don't know. My first impression was a school for people who were in a lot of trouble, and I figured

that it would be one of these schools where they'd just really set down the law to you. I thought it was just a bull-shit letter to con you into going, and they just really set it down to you.

R: Do you feel that was the impression that most of the kids had?

M: I don't know because a group of people, like when I walked in, a group of people were there that I hung around with when I was getting into a lot of trouble. They hung around for about three days then they all split. Then a bunch of new students came in and they were just really amazed that there was a school like that. Well some of them said they had to go to the Alternative High School because their probation officer said so. I know there was one, she was in the juvenile home and her probation officer took her to The Alternative School in the morning and picked her up at 4:00 and took her back to the juvenile home.

R: This year when you came to work at the Alternative High School, what did you expect your job as teacher to be?

M: The same thing as last year. I figured it was going to be really hard and no matter what you did they'd still say, "yeah, sure," and act like they were really excited and then slack off. I expected to put up with just what the teachers

last year put up with.

R: Do you see it as much different?

M: Oh yeah, not so much me, different for me, because I haven't had that much experience, how to teach and everything. The students respond to the staff this year, a lot better than they did last year. They have more respect, than they did. Now usually when they say they're going to participate in something, now usually they do. It seems like there is a lot more interest in the school and I think that has a lot to do with that it is more organized this year than it was last year.

R: The Director of Federal Projects made a point to me, which I don't know if I agree with, she said that she thought the Alternative High School had to go through the stage of being very loose like it was in the past few years. And that if Peter had started running the school kind of like it was this year, with a bit more structure, it would have failed. Do you think that is true?

M: No I don't. Because The Alternative School now, is so completely different, than a regular high school, it really is, its whole philosophy is completely different. If Peter would have started it off the way it is now, or if you had started it off, it would have been a lot easier. Because I know a lot of students bitched, we got to do this last year

and all that shit, but if Peter would have started it like that there wouldn't have been any of that bitching going on; I think they got used to the slackness and wanted it to be slack. But even now, it's a lot looser than any public school.

R: Getting back to the time that you were a student here, it seems to me that you got a lot accomplished here. You were here for two and a half (2½) years and you did about three (3) years work in that time.

M: Yeah, I graduated a year later than what I should have. But, that's because the first year they said, "this is your school, do with it what you want" and I go, big deal. I was rut running around. It just never hit me and then about a year later, I got maybe four (4) or five (5) credits. Then it hit me, God damn if I want my diploma I'd better get my butt in gear, so I just started working. We would set up the classes, the students and the teachers, but the teachers couldn't do nothing, because none of the other students would show up, you know, so the only thing I could do was independent study, and one of the teachers was really good for that. If it wasn't for her, I don't think I could have gotten through. Because she was the one for independent study, and, all the graduates from last year, all of them were from independent study.

R: Could you figure any factor, maybe in the personalities of

the people who did get it together with independent study and graduate and the others? Could you think of anything definite about why one group succeeded and the others didn't do anything?

M: I think a lot had to do with the age. The older ones were the ones that graduated. I think they probably realized, they were there to get their diploma. Most of them were like me, on their own. They weren't living at home and got it made all the time. They realized that in order to get that job, they had to get a diploma. I think a lot of them had gone out looking for a job and found that they really needed that diploma.

R: When I talked to Laura she made a point on how the contracts really aren't accomplishing much. What do you think about that? Do you think they are accomplishing anything?

M: For most of the students, no. There are some students who like to have everything organized so that they have it written down what they are going to do and they check up on it at all times. Like one particular student, she has her own point sheets and she likes to make sure that it coincides with the teacher's. She has it all written down, what she's going to do and when she's going to do it. If she changes it, she comes up to me and tells me where she's going to change

it. I think it depends on the student.

R: Do you think that if we got our thing together and worked with the contracts that it would help? Or, do you think it would be the sort of thing that for some students it would help, and for others it wouldn't?

M: I think it would just be some students it would help, others it won't because there's some people that no matter how much you try to organize them, or how much you try to help them set a goal in life, they just won't do it. But then there's others, that if you showed them that, they'd realize that that's a pretty good idea, it just depends on the person. Okay, last year I was a student. Everybody related to me as a student. This year I'm part of the staff. It's just really hard for them to relate to me as a part of the staff. Like I notice in Algebra class, if you're there, they'll ask you the question, but if you're not going to be there I'll have maybe one student, and I'll go along in that class. Well they say, "Who's teaching it?.well I'm not going to go." It's really hard. When you've been with the students for two and a half years it's really hard to relate to them as being a teacher the next year.

R: My classes have had pretty good attendance all year. Is there some reason why people will go to the Head Teacher's

class? Is it easier for the Head Teacher to get people to come to his class than it is for others to get people to come to their class? Do you think that might be true?

M: In a small way I think it might be. Yeah, I think it's in a small way. The Head Teacher, they have to have their shit together. They know what they're talking about. They wouldn't have gotten the job. They've got degrees in almost everything. They really know what they're doing. I've talked to one student and he says that he really likes the way it's working now; he comes in all the time. He says he goes to your classes because you're really intelligent. You have things to say that he didn't know. A lot of the students that go there, that are in your class, it's just the fact that you do know something that they just don't know. Maybe being a director is a part of it, a small bearing, but I don't think that much.

R: In a school where you have less structure, you may have a lot of people coming in who don't have much teaching experience. If you think about it, I don't think anybody working at The Alternative School now has had any experience in teaching in a classroom doing a traditional trip.

M: I think if I taught in a classroom, I think I could do it. I think if there were students sitting in front of me at desks

and weren't allowed to say anything, if they wanted to say something they raise their hand, and I was up there...I think I could do that. It's just really scarey being in a world where these people, if they want to cut you down they can cut you down. You're just going to have to take it. Like today in Algebra class, one student got up there and was acting really smart, she knew how to do that problem. She was just acting smart. I just wanted to say, well screw you and get up and walk out. I just, God, I think teaching at an alternative school is a hell of a lot harder than teaching at regular schools. I think if I got a teacher's aid job in a regular school, I think I could do it very easily.

R: What could I, the Head Teacher, do to help things get rolling smoother with you or with your role in the class?

M: I think that maybe, God, I don't know. You could maybe, well we did that with staff meetings though. It's like talk to me before. Just tell me what is expected and what can be done. You do that too, but it's just like with that secretary business. I went around trying to get people to be secretaries and shit, what can you do? You can't say get your butt in there and do it or get out. I don't know. You tell me...you don't say I want you to do this, but I get a good idea just what is expected. But to go around to get someone to do it, they just laugh at you. It's not so much where

you slacked off, it's just teaching in an alternative school, it's really hard.

R: I don't know if there's an answer to that. In a straight school, the principal says do this, this and this.

M: It's surprising. When you teach, I taught third graders this summer where they had to sit down, shut their mouths, and I was up there and I was showing them math and it was no problem at all. They had to sit there and shut their mouth. If they didn't like it they'd get out because they can't say nothing about it. Here they can say something about it. What are you going to do?

R: At the Alternative High School, anytime something gets tuff, you can just walk out. Do you think that's a problem?

M: Yeah I do, I really do. Well, with math you have only two credits required and you can take that in general math. There is stuff, I don't know much about it at all, but there is stuff they're going to have to do whether they like it or not. Like what one particular student said today, "Look, I don't want to do it." It was just The Alternative School is a crutch for him to lean on. I think that was really sickening. He is just using it as a way out. I think they should be prepared for life and there are times in life when they're going to have to do something whether they like it or not.

You can't say look I want to The Alternative School so that means I don't have to do it unless I want to. That's what I mean, The Alternative School is totally different than a regular school. I think it's too loose in a lot of ways.

R: What ways do you think we ought to tighten things up?

M: I think if you're going to be in a class, if you plan to take a class for a quarter or for how long, that you should try to attend every single day. I'm not saying you're kicked out of the class if you miss one day, but you should try your best to be there every day; it's like several students. Those people came in maybe a week ago. Now they came back and here is one other student getting bored sitting there because we had done all that stuff with her, when if they had all been there and come in constantly, we could have gone on. I think if you do sign up for class you should try and make it and not just wander in and expect everybody to just stop so that everything can be explained to you.

R: Some other schools work where they have a contract for each class. They sign you up, if you want to take a class, you are then committed to come.

M: I think that would be really good. I really do. And not so much as really crack down on it, but if they're wandering around in the halls, you say look, you signed a paper, you

signed a contract to be in that class, why don't you get in there. If you want to drop the class, okay, fine, drop it. If they're sick or they have to go do something, that's different. I don't mean crack down on them like you do in regular schools but I think they should sign something because it's too hectic. Like in science, when that guy was there. I don't blame him for quiting. I mean he'd have a class, then someone would come in new, a week later and he'd be talking about something else and they'd go what's that mean? And he'd have to go all the way back to a week before and write it on the board and go through the whole damn thing all over again. That just gets really frustrating. Then those people won't even be there the next day so why should they even give a damn? This is really sad. I think The Alternative School should be a little bit tighter with that.

R: Do you think if it was tighter, we would turn off more students?

M: Probably, but the ones you would turn off, I think that when they decided they wanted their diploma they'd be back. Because the ones who are going to screw off, no matter what you do they're going to screw off. But the ones that want to learn, they're going to be there to learn. Last year, one student didn't come at all. He said, "This school is so

screwed up, you came in here to go to classes and there's no classes." He didn't blame it on the teachers; they're there but nobody else wants to be there. And they can't just have one student when they have to watch the rest of the building because people are riding motorcycles down the hall and the whole bit. He just said, forget it. I'll just do independent study. He came here this year and said if things are going to be like last year, he's quitting. The students that want to learn are going to be there to learn. I don't think it would matter that much to the people who wanted to learn.

R: There are some students that we did lose this year that probably would be actively enrolled if it was like last year.

M: Which is like two of last years students who last year, the only reaoon they came to The Alternative School was to gossip. I mean one of the students, at the very end of last year, she grabbed a bunch of books, in a week she came back with about six or seven credits. If you asked her right now what she learned, she couldn't tell you. The same thing with the other student. The last semester she did work but she was doing it all independent. But the only time they would come to school was just to gossip. To say who got drunk last night and who got the most loaded the other night, and that was the whole reason. I think when they want to get that

diploma, they'll be back, when they realize they want their diploma, I think they'll be back.

R: What if The Alternative School functioned pretty much as it does now, but was located at East or West Campus High Schools? We'd be part of that school; we'd be our own school-within-that-school. We'd still have our own teachers, our own school, but be on their campus. Do you think that would be a good idea?

M: I think it would screw things up. The whole deal, being on a campus and all, I feel that we get to smoke you know, I think there would be a big conflict about that. The people at East or West Campus teasing the people at the Alternative High School..."Oh, you're drop-outs, you couldn't hack it in a regular school." I think that they would cut them down. I think that would be a worse problem. I think there would be fights, a little bit. And the fact that people at the Alternative High School; they smoke dope you know. They, the cops, watch East Campus pretty good. They always talk about somebody got busted out in the parking lot and I think everybody would just be getting busted and the whole bit.

R: Do you think the Alternative High School students get put down by East and West students?

M: Definitely. I do.

R: Do you think it bothers the Alternative High School students?

M: Yes, I do. I know it bothered me last year. We had East and West students come over to talk to us and see how our school was and everything. They would come in there and act like they were gods and would just throw questions at us like just giving us the third degree, like we were some tourist attraction or something. Just really giving us shit the way they asked us questions. They didn't say nothing nasty, but the sarcasm in their voices and the whole bit. A lot of people walked out of the room. I just got really pissed off. I go look, if you don't like it why don't you get the fuck out of here. They completely flipped out with that. "Oh, she said fuck." Nobody did nothing about it. I just left. I just left and Peter goes what's wrong, and I just go, I just cannot handle it. I cannot put up with them doing that. The ones from West weren't quite as bad. They weren't. There's a difference between West and East High people. The ones from West, you could still see the sarcasm in them but not half as bad as East. It was bad though.

R: That might be the positive thing about being in one of those schools; you wouldn't have the feeling that it was a put-down to be in The Alternative High School.

M: I think it still is. Some girl over here the other night said, she asked me where I worked. She said, oh yeah, the Alternative High School. And I said what's wrong with that? She goes, I know some people who go there and I go, oh yeah, you do really? She goes, mentions a student, and she said, "yeah, you sure the hell don't learn very much there, do you? I mean, everybody I talked to about it says you can't learn anything there. How can you learn there?" It's really sick; you can't explain it to them, they go, yeah, sure, of course, you're going to stick up for your school. You just want to throw them up against the wall and say, listen, I know. But it is bad. I think that had a lot to do...a lot of people when they come in there...like last year they'd say what kind of a diploma do you get. I'd say you'd get one from the school you dropped out of; East or West Campus. They'd go, good because they're not going to, oh, you went to The Alternative School. It's a good fact that you do get a diploma from East or West Campus.

R: How did your parents react to the Alternative High School?

M: They were really glad because I was just really screwing up. Anything anybody could do wrong, I did. It's right down the list. I had a big, long, what do you call it?...file on me, all juvenile, just all sorts of shit. I didn't even want

to go to The Alternative School. My mom told me just to go down and see what it was like. I came back and I said it's really strange...I don't know about it. I thought it was all a scheme. It just really freaked me out. But, then I realized that there's someone who is just really trying to help kids who were screwing up like that, that had to get their diploma, who didn't want to, or just couldn't hack it in regular high school. So they were really excited for me going there. They were glad that I was. My mom taught German there, and my dad said anytime I needed any help, with any type of electronics or stuff that he'd gladly give his time for it and stuff. I realized that it was helping me because when I started going to The Alternative School, my whole crime thing just went down. Because Peter and Sally were good people to talk to if you had a problem. If you had a problem you could talk to them about anything, and they were right there. They were really good people. They had good feelings for other people and they were just really good. They talked me out of doing a lot of stuff. They just come out and say you know that was really stupid. I'd go, oh yeah, is it? And they'd tell me why. It wasn't because the law says so. They'd just give me a really good explanation. They really helped me a lot. I think as far as running a school, they were too much into

psychology instead of trying to really organize it and stuff.

R: I'm really bothered by the fact that going to Alternative School is a put-down. Do you think that ideally something could be done about that? Maybe to make the rest of the community see it differently? Maybe if The Alternative School wasn't just for drop-outs. What if it was just another school in Bridgeport with places for drop-outs, but anybody would be free to come?

M: I think that would be really good. I think that would help it a lot. I know when the Alternative High School first opened up there was a lot of people really down on it. But then we had some lady at the newspaper write an article on it and we had anybody who wanted to come visit us, just come on down. People would come down and there was really a lot of interest. We had a little craft shop and they'd come up and buy all sorts of stuff and little old ladies were just thrilled to death because we were really bad and we were just doing really good now.

R: Is that when you were in downtown?

M: That's when we were downtown. In the Alternative High School it got really bad again. Because, I don't know if it was the change of students or what. But all anybody cared about there, was going out and smoking dope and Peter was

just a nervous wreck because he didn't want to come out and say don't do it; he wanted the students to say don't do it. He couldn't put that across to any of them and they'd all just joke along with him and he'd try to joke around and try to be serious and they would take it the wrong way. It was just really sad. I've heard a lot of people say that people who come out of The Alternative School, don't make much of their lives anyway. They don't go out and get a job or nothing. Who was telling me that...it was a couple of years ago I was talking to somebody about it. It was an older person. Every person who had graduated that year, there were three girls there, that for being so young, they were real mature. They were about sixteen (16) years old, living on their own, living together. They were so mature, I know a lot of twenty-five (25) year olds aren't as mature as they were. They got their diplomas, they realized they needed that. They went out and got jobs; one became a teacher's aid because she wanted to do teaching. Another, she moved upstate, she wanted to go to some college up there, some kind of art school they have up there. She was working as a waitress to pay her way through college. The other one has a shop over in Port Washington that she has with her husband now, for her art...art stuff, pottery and candles. It just makes me so mad when people just

say that people don't make nothing of their life when they come out of The Alternative School. There's a lot of them that do, that really want to do something. Like one student I noticed, he is really into politics now. We gave him a ride to work. He had a Newsweek or something and he was talking to Sam about Kruschev and Nixon and we didn't know anything about it or nothing. But it's really strange that he had got interested in it. And he really is. He goes into your classes and talks about that stuff. One of the teachers and his friend were talking about politics and this student was right there. He kept right up with them with all the names that I never heard of them all. I think that's really good. He doesn't want to be dumb. He told me he wants to go to class with somebody who really got brains, somebody who really knows what they're talking about. One student, I really admire for that. So there's a lot of students that I think are doing really good. If it wasn't for The Alternative School I wouldn't not have got my diploma. I would have said screw it. Maybe I would have got a G.E.D., maybe, but I think I just be really downhill, if it wasn't for The Alternative School.

J=Jenny, An Alternative School Teacher

R=Researcher

R: What I'm interested in is what were your expectations of the Alternative High School, if you can remember back that far to when you first came.

J: Well, I had a lot to compare it to; I'd just come out of a public school and I expected everybody to be running around, busily working, getting so much done, that's what I expected, but, it took me just about the whole year to get over that. This year I think I've been a little bit more, kind of going along with the flow.

R: How did you feel about it last year?

J: I didn't feel good about it at all, the main conflict between the staff and Peter, Peter was the one who developed the school, the basic concepts of the school. He'd been working with it almost a year when I came, and another staff member, who was with the school when it started and I was rather frustrated because we weren't setting goals, we weren't setting classes, weren't setting any structure at all, and that was our main conflict between Peter. He wanted things to come and go. He wanted the complete freedom of the student with no hassles for the student, it was awful.

R: Did the staff ever have confrontations on this?

J: Yes, all the time. I wish we could have filmed, the way they filmed the American family, I wish we could have filmed all our staff meetings, 'cause they were something else. We had three people from the university that sat in on our staff meetings. They did it for awhile and there was one psychologist that sat in the rest of the year. We always have a psychologist sit in so that, I don't know, it's like an encounter group. Every staff meeting went like that. It would have been fascinating, especially, last year. This year was more like a school, but last year it was a mind term all the time. Everybody was searching for their true feeling and if there were any hostilities they came out; everything was pretty honest and all. I felt like I was in a session the whole year. I didn't feel like I was much of a teacher, I just felt like I was also a student trying to start a free school, and what the hassles are in trying to get something like that to work, and in the end I didn't feel like it worked.

R: Well, contrast that then, with the experience that you have had this year, keeping in mind that you are perfectly free to criticize anything I did. That would be just as helpful to me.

J: I don't think it is a matter of criticizing, I think that

compared to Peter, it was just 100% change for the better as far as goal setting, and instructions. We expect something out of the kids, we don't just let them, like last year we were, probably closer to the students, because we were always listeners, if there was any kind of problem, that came first, if there was just anything, we'd talk about it. We had meetings, in fact it was called psychology encounter or something like that. Peter taught it in the mornings. It took all morning. We all lay down on the floor. Peter talked to us and we'd visualize, and fantasize all these things, and we did some weird things, you know, just trying to find people socially and give to their personal part of their person, instead of trying to teach them anything.

R: When you were involved in all that being head-oriented, you were feeling less comfortable. Do you think there is a difference in staff morale this year....as to last year?

J: In what way?

R: I guess in any and every way, Is it in some ways definitely better and in some ways worse?

J: No, it was worse last year.

R: I know from time to time we have talked about this. You pointed out here that the staff was closer to the students last year. Could you talk a little bit about what you see as

the cost of the change. Has it become more of a school this year? What harm you think might have been done?

J: Well, I wouldn't necessarily call it harm, but, we have found that the kids don't like to be pressured at all, and that's the only horror, quote, harm, and they feel more pressured, and hassled by the teachers...try and get this done, do this, do that. Just the whole pressure of getting points, we didn't have last year.

R: Do you see any of the students that you have worked with where the increased pressure had had positive results?

J; Well, there are really not that many students here this year, I mean now, that were there last year anymore.

R: It would be interesting to look at that, because a lot have graduated. For a lot of the old ones it has finally gotten to be that time after two (2) years.

J; I think they form their own pressure in what they want to get done. But the kids I think of couldn't handle it and the pressure just built, the school pressure made them drop-out.

R: I want to ask two (2) questions. I will start with the negative first: What things have you encountered in The Alternative School this year, that have been the least rewarding. What were your low moments of the year?

J: I guess the rip-offs.

R: What about the rip-offs, what about the way we handled them and maybe the way we should have handled them?

J: You know as well as I do, we couldn't even handle them.

R: What do you think we should do?...or something like that; I know it's a problem that all alternative schools have.

J: No one had last year except, Peter wouldn't have called the police and got the police involved, and that's what I think we did a lot of times. We didn't involve the police, yah, I guess we did, we called them anyway but we didn't... Oh I don't know, if we could get mad at a person you know, then it would be, if we could guarantee when we got the person by calling the police, then I would say let's handle it that way. But maybe the breakdown is that we don't have people concerned enough about the school to get the information, this is it.

R: Yeah, that has been a continual problem; I kind of see some signs of that changing. But I don't know if it's one or two students willing to come forward in that way or not.

J: Yeah, like in the case of what just happened. There were three people that knew about that, and came and told me. So that was neat, and that's the way it should be.

R: What have been the things about this year that have gotten

you off the most?...The high points.

J: Well, I have always enjoyed group things, and I think when we get together as a group, all of us, everyone. Not necessarily our meetings, but our times we have a lot of fun. I can think of a couple things, like the pot-luck, and we had the school board meeting here that was really unity with the kids and the people and everything. That was neat, and Christmas party, I wasn't there, and some of our field trips, where we just got away and have been together. I can think back last year, one of the neatest times we had was a party that was given for everybody; all the students and staff. Those kind of things just make it, make The Alternative School what it is. We're friends, friends with the students and helping them as friends helps, instead of hassling with them.

R: Do you think those times are becoming less frequent as things are going?

J: Yeah, I think that in the last couple, of three or four weeks, I would say yes. There's been a lot of hassles. I mean, this is new to me and it's new to a lot of kids who have been here for awhile. Student hassles between students and then student and staff and I don't know why. I can't tell you why, but...

R: How about in the art area, specifically. Are you happy with what the students are accomplishing?

J: Yeah. I think we've accomplished more this year academically, than we did last year, mainly because we had the structure and we're forced to present something every day. You know, what you do to things to keep up momentum day by day. Whereas last year, as I compare to last year...I got the photo lab started last year, the end of the year, in the spring. It got off to a real slow start mainly because they didn't know anything about it, even what it was and I've seen a real, I've seen with the photo lab anyway, the interest build and build where I'm working with more and more people. Whereas I kind of find in clay that all those who have always been there, and have always been around and at hand; I don't see as much growth in that. Except with people on the wheel, the people who work on the wheel; I've seen a lot of growth that way, both last year and this year.

R: What would you like to see next year?...changes.

J: Well, my suggestions would have to be directed toward the administration, not necessarily what the school can do or the teachers we have now or the students we have now. I think we can get more quality, quality everything, if we have contracted teachers. Teachers aren't paid what they deserve as their professional certificate applies, and working our eight hours, eight hour basis and you know...

R: Could you go through your history of coming and working for less, how it affected you, working at The Alternative School, chronologically, how you felt through the whole process?

J: I think truthfully where I lost my job at the public school I wasn't, I didn't want to look for another teaching job. This turned me off. I was so...I was, well, anyway I didn't look for one and it got...I spent the summer in Louisiana and it got later and later and later and I got back the first of September and, you know, I didn't have anything. So it was by luck and chance that I found this Alternative School job. As...it was described as an arts and crafts person needed at an alternative school. It sounded really great; it sounded just what I wanted but after I talked to Peter, one of the last things you discuss is money. So I had this fantastic interview and it lasted for at least an hour, and I was so excited about the school I just thought wow...really great. So I said I'll do it, I'll do it, and he says we'd really like to have you and I said I'd really like to do it. And then boom, here comes the salary which I thought, I thought well, that's alright, at the time. But, it became a bone of contention after awhile as it has been here. As time went on, the thing that was hardest to take

was that I didn't see...I wasn't really happy with the growth of...well, as far as the administration was concerned, the growth...they didn't feel like The Alternative School was going to grow and they didn't want to plan anything, and Peter could really, I think Peter could see that coming. And my friend, of course, gave it up. She wasn't going to teach past the end of the year without...without a better salary.

R: Was she certified, also?

J: No, she had...she had a Bachelor of Arts in Fine Arts, and she...she had a Bachelor of Arts in Fine Arts but didn't have her certificate. All she needed was her student teaching.

R: But she was professional?

J: Yeah, she was. She had her Bachelor of Arts. And well, there was a lot of everything that kind of lead into it. Just because of Peter's personality; he was...he was kind of estranged from the staff in a lot of ways and I think that it didn't make it any easier for us to be working for a little money when he was that way, and he was the whole year. It was like, you know, I think my friend and I summed it up in a way that we felt like we were part of one of his experiments, as the whole school and the whole...and the teachers

were part of that, too. We didn't feel very close to him at all as a...as a head director. So the money thing became, since we weren't going to have...we weren't going to have a really close staff and if this was going to be a head shrinking thing, the whole thing, we thought, we just would hope it would work towards more money in the end, or in the next year. So...

R: Does that take you to this year? I know this year was frustrating.

J: Yeah, but the consolation was more time. Where we were working half time last year and now, that was another problem we had. I would be there two days a week; we'd all be there on Wednesday, but we would all stagger. There was only three people there each day, three different people each day. But, we were all there, all six of us, five of us, were there on Wednesday, and that was awful. We had a kind of alien, alienated staff, too. This year, the consolation was more time, so we had a little increase...makes it, even though it's not the most ideal, it was a little bit of increase. I didn't mind last year, and I still don't really mind because there is a lot of...compared to the public school I enjoy it so much more. I'm not a nervous wreck. I guess that I just don't care.

R: I imagine it's frustrating when people are hired and it is difficult to differentiate between being hired on a teacher's salary and another as an aid.

J: Oh yeah. It's embarrassing more than anything. That's one thing I would like to see changed. It should be changed. I don't...it doesn't do the staff any good to have all these different levels when they're doing the same job.

R: If the number of dollars were finite, would you think it would be a better idea to have maybe two less in staff and have everybody in staff on the professional salary?

J: We've got eight staff.

R: I think it would come down to one professional would equal two aides, so we now have four aides so you could eliminate two aides and have everybody getting the professional salary, if we were getting the same amount of money.

J: I don't think you can talk about that on a work level. It would just be on morale; where you get as much out of the people is not the question, it's just a matter of how they feel. I don't think I'm openly hostile about it, but inside when some things come up, I can feel I just get really tense about it because it isn't fair. But, then again, I haven't done that much to change it. I'm a pretty easy going person. I like it where I am, what I'm doing. I like what I'm doing

anyway, and so it doesn't really bother me that much, only when I'm compared. That's when it bothers me, or when it's brought up.

R: You were running off a list of things to change.

J: Salary and I guess it would have to be...salary would encompass different levels. There would be no aides, all teachers, either all or none. Last year we were all on the same level except one teacher was full time. The hours were different. She was doing a lot of things that had to be done immediately, that had to be done and it could have been done by one of the other staff members, except we weren't there. They'd have to wait...well, if you wait until Wednesday when one teacher comes in or when another comes in, then you've lost two days. So that was bad. So the times, everyone on eight hours, eight hours would be good. Other changes I would...this is really dreaming...having the head teacher maybe teaching one class and then have a vice principal, so to speak, vice teacher, vice head teacher. Either that, or a full time secretary who would take care of all the filing and all the student's points and everything on a professional level, because it's good that the students learn how to do all this stuff, but it's a source of frustration on the other student's part, when they don't have their points corrected

or they are correct but they are lost or mislaid somewhere, or business that doesn't get done. It has to be done to keep things running more smoothly. I don't know, I've always been...I've always had this pet peeve, the administrators that don't do anything anyway. I think since I've been working with The Alternative School I realize...when you're so close to it, when I was at the public school I never saw the principal or vice principal do anything, I thought, but everything got done. Everything was there at my fingertips all the time. When you're here then you know that somebody has to take care of it since it wasn't being taken care of. It would definitely improve our school; we could use a secretary. Have the head teacher only teach maybe one class, and then spend the rest of the time getting everything else together. He spends too much time trying to get classes going and that should be the staff's job. He should have a staff that can take care of it. I don't think our staff is very well balanced here at The Alternative School. We don't have a...if I were to start over I would...you'd have to start over. You'd have to can everybody and start over.

R: For a school like this, what would an ideal staff be like?

J: Well, I think the English...in the academic areas I think the English is most important. English, writing, reading,...

and last year's teacher did an excellent job. She had those kids right on it. She was on top of it all the time. They got more points in English, in reading than anything. Peter taught a social studies...well, like you're teaching. They discussed things. I think that's important. I think math, kids need math. The three, reading, writing and arithmetic, right there. I was thinking about this this morning that I was really glad that when Peter designed the Alternative High School he placed art as the other half of the school, as a road to make the kids interested in other things.

R: I think the Renaissance man is scholar and artist and if he was just one and not the other, he wouldn't be Renaissance man.

J: That's one of the unique parts of The Alternative School. Our art program is just outstanding. We have more in our art program than at about ten (10) schools that wouldn't be close to the standards we have. And that's wonderful. Of course I'm prejudice. I think it's really important, too.

R: From what you say, probably English and math are the weakest now.

J: When we lost last year's English teacher, when she resigned or whatever, we lost a really strong part of The Alternative School. It never was picked up again.

R: She would have been happy if she could have gotten a better wage out of it?

J: Right. Well, my friend was the same way. She was excellent...what a person to lose. You just can't afford to lose good people like that. And we've been lucky to pick up good people; Nora is good, too. But I don't know, she and I would talk a lot about this. It's just a matter of personality I guess. It bothered her not to be making a lot of money that she deserved; it really bothered her where it doesn't really bother me. Plus...well, there's a lot of factors I guess... other factors. It's just a matter of personality. Peter was the same way. He was giving a rotten wage.

R: Who will work for less?

J: Yeah, but it's neat. But it's not fair.

R: It can't go on forever, people leave.

J: Yeah. The sad part of it is...maybe...I don't know, if you could look into the future, how would The Alternative School change if there were more professional staff people working here at $10,000. a year. I think the best advantage would be that you know when you're being paid, you know that you're expected to do an eight hour job. Right now the way I feel as compared to the way Laura feels, I don't feel like I have to teach every hour of the day or set up three or four

classes to take up the day, like I was teaching in the public school. I'm not being paid to do that and I kind of assumed and try to keep in my mind what I would like to do as an aid, not as a teacher. I do teach, but I'm not going to break my back like I did at the public school. I select a couple of things I like to do at The Alternative School and do what I can. It's like compared to Laura who feels the pressure of doing something every hour of the day, all the time. I think that advantage would just keep The Alternative School rolling. It wouldn't have any slack moments because you're being paid as a professional teacher. That's where we fall downhill.

R: I think that would be really good. You could really talk in terms of aides; somebody could work under you, they could be aides and not work full time.

J: It would be defined as an aid. We aren't even defined down at the district office. We are aides. Whey you look at that aid scale, we're in charge of playground duty and a little clerical. That's what it says...last year. That's what our description was at the rate of pay we were paid. I think that's embarrassing that they don't...and we didn't push it because we said why bother...but it does have an affect on your staff and I think it has had an affect this

year, too. The kids are never taken into consideration, the kids and people here. That is where it is so bad. I think Peter felt that, very deeply. His dream school was never taken seriously down there. The way he envisioned it and the way he wanted it and the people in the school, the people.

R: Did Peter ever express why he felt that they didn't take it seriously?

J: It was mostly the money end of it. Boy, you just don't realize how big of a deal that is when your trying...people have to be rewarded. They have to feel that they're important enough that they will be paid.

D=Don, the Alternative High School English and music teacher

R=Researcher

R: After two years at The Alternative School, what do you think of it?

D: I see the Alternative High School as being an attempt to offer alternatives in an alternative way. It succeeds only partly, mainly because it's not that much of an alternative, in its structure, in its school situation, its scheduling, is all quite classical. I see it as being not that much of an alternative. Last year it was probably more of an alternative but there was probably less education going on. Peter was trying to make it a completely open situation. We didn't have the personalities to stick by that and certain staff always felt as if they were still responsible to do everything. Even though he would say, you're not responsible to students, we would agree on that for a couple of days and everyone would try it but nothing would happen so we would go back to the classical idea, sort of. The things to make it better would be really, really radical things and that would be to change the style of the Alternative High School completely from a building and one that's closely related to the school district, to one which is more of a live-in situation, and more of a country setting, and more of a slow pace. That, I would see,

would enable the scheduling much more relaxed instead of having to be there at 10:00 and schedule classes. It would give you more freedom to have spontaneous classes because the staff would be there, other people would be there.

R: Why do you think that would be better?

D: To me, alternative education is education which should be outside of... Real alternative to the regular education system which...and the regular education system includes things like scheduling specific classes at specific times and that system in itself gets in the way of my idea of alternative education.

R: I see the difference in the structure you're talking about. What is bad for kids about the system The Alternative School is operating on now?

D: Okay. What's bad for kids is the way I am, for one thing, and what happens to teachers in that situation. And also, I think just the lack of stimulation that a building like that and that kind of location offer. Like the effort to get things going has to be really terrific to combat the setting. Myself, I just don't have the energy to do what I feel I can do, in that type of setting. I'm quite sure for myself the setting would be different.

R: There are some students who seem to be succeeding here.

Do you think their need would be better met in another setting or is it just simply a matter of different strokes for different folks?

D: Maybe. They might be better met. I think it might be a situation where they haven't been offered that alternative and they wouldn't know whether they could do it or not. It's like the people on the hike didn't know what was there and were pretty skeptical about whether they were having a good time or learning anything at all, but found that they could function that way. Ideally, it would be better if we had both. If there are people who really succeed academically in a more classical system, then it should be there. But, there is a more extreme alternative to the present education system which I think should be wide open, too.

R: We've had a disagreement in the past which may not be a disagreement anymore, where you felt that the type of education that was being given at the Alternative High School now was in fact, destructive and virtually every student if they give themself the opportunity would be better off...

D: I sort of still feel that way. I try to compromise this thing. Maybe some students would be better in the academic. I know for me and for a lot of people I know, I'm pretty sure anyway, that the other would work better. I'm probably fairly

sure that it would work for almost anyone. Maybe there's a larger percentage than the present system would work just because of relaxation, lack of tension and scheduling and...

R: Is there any place for requirements?

D: Not where I'd be involved. I'd prefer to be involved in completely in wide open, artistic.

R: Do you have any kind of expectations? That when a student would be succeeding he would be meeting those expectations. Do you think a program should have outcome goals?

D: Well, a vague outcome goal for me would be that the student would know more about himself. That would be my most important goal through art, because I feel you discover yourself through art. That has to be vague.

R: Beyond that.

D: Beyond that. Well, beyond that, it's my belief that it's taken care of. If you become aware of who you are, somebody wants to study art that way, then choices are obvious. I don't feel there's any need to go beyond that, as far as planning is concerned.

R: Could you see the model of education you're talking about having a greater chance of getting people to push themselves to competence?

D: The difference is, I wouldn't say getting people to push themselves to competence, I would say what you're doing is

not a failure...that's what I'd say. I think I read something A. S. Neil said something about like that. Instead of saying to a kid who starts drawing a picture and then stops in the middle, and takes up a fishing pole and goes somewhere, why did you stop, you say, well that's terrific you stopped because he didn't feel it anymore. So that like failure doesn't exist exactly now in the same sense. Maybe he's working on something in his mind that is a whole different thing than completing something.

R: You wouldn't be bothered by somebody who does something like...

D: Like draws a picture of you then put a great...smears it up and puts water on it and it looks terrible, I wouldn't say you failed, I'd say, wow, why did you do that?

R: It troubles me when at the Alternative High School someone who will spend a day in one activity and show interest and get to the next difficult step and move on to another activity and keep moving around. Would you say fine, at each step?

D: I don't know. Staying on one road all the way...I mean I play many instruments and I work up to a point on one instrument and I take up another instrument; I seem to progress on all of them. But, if there's somebody there saying, you should stay on that one, then something else would happen. I don't

think I'd progress. But, I progress all my life, I personally have been considered a flash in the pan. I have that complex. I start really gung ho on something and then I'll lose interest or something. Actually that got me down a lot considering myself that way, but the past year or so I've discovered the positive aspect of that is like I'm doing a lot of different things and I find that I can do a lot of different things and they seem to support each other. Maybe the person who does something and fails is not a failure, but, is someone does something differently.

R: I would be concerned because I don't see in that process that he will become an accomplished saxophone player, etcetera. In one way or another you applied yourself to your music, which I'm sure included a lot of frustration but you put up with that.

D: I don't know. I would like to have that opportunity to see in the setting that I...

R: I would like you to critique the role of the head teacher at the Alternative High School.

D: I see your role as being too much of a classicist in an alternative school. Too much of one who likes to organize and steer.

R: Could you give me an example?

D: Trying to inspire a schedule and asking the teachers to stick to a schedule and that, from my way of teaching, just didn't help me a bit. I couldn't function with that going on. I always felt that pressure to perform to schedule and stuff like that. I don't think it really helped and I don't think it helped my doing the job. I think perhaps if you had said nothing, and just trusted that I would probably would have done better. I really feel that. Instead of having to struggle against that which is not in my world. I don't want it to be. I don't want it to be. Let's see, what else. One of the arguments we settled on before we went on the hike, we were talking about how are all these people who are learning this spontaneous free way going to do anything about the world, which is destroying them while they do that. Gordon, a friend of mine, told me a story about the Sioux Indians the other day, about how the Sioux Indians before they went into extinction, had a culture which had obtained incredible heights. In fact, they all decided all across the plains to be, to agree on the same sort of religious beliefs and to have one leader or who kept them all together and had a very high culture and then the white man came and killed them all. When he told me that it kind of blew me away for awhile. I said, wow, that's really relevant, but, what can you do about that. We talked

about that for awhile and you and I can both jump off from that point. You'd say well the Sioux perhaps should have done something. Obviously they were getting high but they were destroyed. My opinion on it seems that that disease is going to spread, anyway. That that disease is always spread and there have always been pockets of liberation sort of a in its wake, or, the only answer is, as far as I can see, if you try to fight the wake you give up your entire way of life. You become a martyr to fighting what you're trying to fight or else you can go somewhere else and live your life. It seems to me that's the choice that's always there. All throughout history and probably all throughout mankind it will always be that wake pushing against the other and so the choice is be part of which one you want to be. That's like I'm being a part of an opposite.

R: What is the role the elders serve to the children? What is your responsibility, as you see it in that context, to the young braves?

D: Well unlike the Sioux who didn't know what was coming, you should try to be sensitive to what is coming. If something is going to come and destroy it, what you're doing. So, it's like, what I would say is there's always something that is going to try and bring you down, at least in this civilization,

bring you off of saying this is wrong. If there's something relevant, they're in it. You can go all the way in it, and take the risk. Or you can stop doing that and trying to struggle. It seems, my feeling, my rationalization for staying out of the struggle is that there is a whole lot of people who are in the struggle and there is a lot of energy going in the struggle right now and I think there needs to be a balance, I really feel strongly that there needs to be a balance of people fighting the struggle. There has to be someone living the life...somebody has to be doing something...doing something without...either outside the struggle, against.

R: You can see yourself as allies with the person fighting the struggle, in a spiritual sense. You can draw comfort knowing you're doing that.

D: I think maybe someways they feel comforted that there are people who are also just soaring or whatever. The reason why we're locking horns because our worlds are so close and they're such opposite worlds. Your world it seems to me has to mess with my world and my world has to mess with your world. I have to say no, no, no, and you have to say that to me. It seems ideally, we could work together if we're in different buildings. If we're in completely spheres of influence. If we just left each other alone. And I said I can't judge what

the researcher does because it's in a different world.

R: The kids are getting screwed over by East and West. You say you want to take them out of this rat race. I may say I want to teach them about this rat race. So we're pulling the child from both arms; he can't be on your mountain and in my Alternative High School at the same time.

D: I think one of the worst things, probably, that we're not even talking about is that has dragged us down is just ego competition at school. I really think that's it. Toward the end when we were fighting so much, I really meant what I said that neither one of us I thought were really qualified to be teaching because we were struggling so much with our own ideas.

R: Accepting that as a given, we would still be outside the school, me believing this particular group being taught how to confront and you believing that this group should be taught how to live apart. I'm saying you can't make that decision for these young people. Let them get to be twenty-five (25) and make their decision. In essence I guess you're saying to me that I'm precluding their making that decision by putting them through my school. Go through my school, you won't be able to choose.

D: I probably accused you of that. In a sense I still think that's right because of the school may be too classical. It

doesn't offer enough alternatives because they've been having sort of a classical education all of their life and there've probably been some times during that education that they would have had pretty good teaching. I think that the extreme alternative is very valid because it will offer them something they haven't seen before, at all.

R: Our goals should be to get somebody with the competency so that they can choose, then fine, I won't make a moral judgement on how that man chooses to do it. But, I don't want to use an educational system that would preclude options. At the end, if they decided they want to choose something else, it wouldn't be too late.

D: So you figure what you're doing is sort of gearing, giving them tools to choose and your implying that what I'm doing, trying to do, doesn't give too much of an option.

R: Remove a child at the age of three from the myriad of things going on from the hub of it...the rat race. Then he's going to have fewer choices.

D: Maybe. Maybe. But that's pure choices in your world. And I see the basic differences. Like, you always see your world, and I'm always seeing my world. And you're seeing your world as being a complete world, sort of, and part of your world is my world. A part of that, a part of the choices

that I see my world as being a complete world in which choices like you're talking about are irrelevant. So I don't feel the the responsibility of preparing them for your world. I see maybe your responsibility... A lot of, most of the other teachers at the Alternative High School are on that kick.

R: Do you feel at all concerned that you might be making an oppressive choice for them and not preparing the kid...

D: Yes, sometimes I thought I should be teaching them, but then I look at my role as a teacher is English and music and I'm trying to think about if anybody is really ever been able to prepare me for anything in those fields and I don't recall anybody ever has, like grammar and things like that.

R: One group says that our old view of literacy as reading and writing will become obsolete with all the other mediums of communication. Instead of measuring competency by someone reading and writing, they use the media as equally as good. Would you agree with that?

D: I think that the way things are now it's a real problem because the tube is so bad. The media is really screwed up. So he isn't going to really learn, doesn't have the opportunity to learn very much. That's all he has. I can see that as a problem for sure. I don't know if that's my problem. Maybe it should be? I don't know.

R: In your school in your world, you will get people who can't read. That's a tough one. What will you do about that?

D: I don't know. I haven't had a chance to try it yet. In my school and my world I look back on it and it's been...there were a few students I was in contact with who agreed with me on certain things and just didn't touch...there's so much I didn't do, couldn't really do. I must admit in fact, in my mind I'm really glad I can read and write, and I feel bad that others can't. It's sort of, maybe that, maybe it's important. It depends on the individual. Some individuals wouldn't need that at all. Do you think everyone would?

R: Yeah, I have a definite feeling that in 1974 someone growing up without reading and writing would be at a definite disadvantage.

D: That's supposed to be our field at the Alternative School. It's supposed to be our responsibility?

R: I would think so. I think it's a responsibility of an adult.

D: I can't really disagree with that but I still can't teach it. That can't be my role. And as far as I would see that my role has got to be...if it's there at all. And somebody else has to be around. If somebody else can't afford to do that then it's too bad that my role is to prepare them for a

different kind of responsibility instead of to...

R: Your role can't be in the city. If someone who can't read or write goes off with you, is not being able to read and write one of the crosses he'll just have to learn to bear?

D: I wouldn't think so. I think I could teach somebody how to read. Having enough time and atmosphere, I think I could. But I'm not sure.

R: Would you feel it important?

D: I think it's pretty important to read.

R: Reading could be added to knowing themselves as a goal.

D: Yes.

R: Secondary place.

D: Yeah. If I had the time and I had the right setting, I could probably help to do that. In fact, for sure I could. But in this present setting, I couldn't because I wouldn't have the...I don't know, maybe I could. I haven't tried it yet. It seems to me the emphasis is more that I should be emphasizing something else, something that I'm more skilled in than that.

R: One of the things that I pick up on that is that one of the areas I feel you enjoy most is reading; it's an interest area.

D: Not really. I love to read, but I don't read enough. If

I enjoyed it more I would read more. I think it's pretty valuable. Anyway, what were you going to say?

R: The ideas you get out of books often enthuse you a lot, whereas teaching politics might not be a logical thing for you to be in on.

D: I guess the best thing to do is not to try to teach them how to like to read because nobody ever tried to teach me how to like to read. I just did it and decided I had to learn.

R: That's an interesting phenomena that you and I were forced to read, end result being that we were forced to read.

D: And we know how to read.

R: Would you put your kid through what you went through to learn to read?

D: I don't know. Elementary school, I'm not talking about. That's what I say, is it the Alternative High School's job to teach reading. It seems to me that as an alternative school we shouldn't be a remedial school, we should be an alternative school. But, we are a remedial school and that's too bad because that doesn't give us as many alternatives at all. Yeah, right. Instead of messing around down here with the basics, it's completely free to float off. That's what I was going to do.

R: Do you see any major differences in the way the Alternative

High School and say the school you went to?

D: I've been trying to remember that. One of the major differences is of course the fact the way the students and teachers relate. There's a lot more freedom that the students here have. The main thing that bothered me about the classical part of it, are the things like specific scheduling, and the desire to structure things, from above or from about. It's that pressure. I haven't been in a school yet where I felt that that was gone, and even with Peter I felt it was there.

R: There's a question of how the democratic model is supposed to work, because in either case you start out with an imposition, structured versus unstructured. What the staff is really exercising is a kind of a leadership, getting out in front with an idea. But you thought that was unfair. Why do you think that?

D: The reason I thought that was unfair is because you have as a position of leader, you have a lot of power, and I think more power than you are aware of. Maybe not, more power than you're aware of, but I think more power than you're aware of... just among the students, and more power than I was even aware that you had. I would see students just unthinking and following you, and I think they're following me too, regarding certain issues. I think somehow I minimize that unconscious

power, you can't help but use, or at least always try to see that that's working, selfishly instead of this thing...I've got an idea I want to try, try to really just soft peddle leadership. I'm guilty of it, too. But the thing is you are the leader so everybody was much more afraid of you than they were of me, as far as showing you you're wrong.

R: You're speaking of our humanity. The student and staff should each be given the human right to be able to assert themselves, and as adults we should be able to assert our humanity, also.

D: Except that I see it as that we have an unfair, a way of unfair advantage, in that sense, because students have been told all their lives that the leaders and the adults know more than they do. So I think we have much more responsibility to... Last year the staff decided to take no responsibility whatever except to show up and just to play around with things ...just play around. We all decided in one desperate staff meeting to do that because nothing else was happening. But we didn't do it. We didn't have the courage to even do that. So I suppose, maybe allow someone to take over the school. Ya know, students to take over the school and run the school in every detail. Maybe play that game...reverse, complete reverse. And see how well it, how tough it is to become a

non-leader, and how tough it is for students to become a leader, and I don't know. I think that...regular high schools try that to a certain extent but never all the way. Never, to the point where you would say I don't know. It's not my responsibility.

R: I can see a lot of value in that. I would want to be sure everybody was there to watch it. I think the "free school" concept might work with a group of highly motivated kids.

D: Yeah, I just threw that out. That's a pretty cliché method, reversing role, try to understand what the other role is, but I see something.

R: I think a lot of things could come out of that.

D: I could almost predict what might happen, but, then I might be dead wrong, because like the trial we had this year. You were telling me how amazed you were about what happened in that, and that was something you didn't...couldn't take responsibility for at all. And that was really spectacular what happened. It could be a very surprising thing. I don't know. Like, another thing I proposed at one time, but, that was during a very radical discussion, was having some kind of a seminar during the week sometime in which people really let off steam in order. In order like let out steam, but scream, steam that was an order, and it was alright to do it. So somebody could

say, damn it, I'm tired of being told what to do, or you can say whatever, and it's all in order. And somehow we can, but I think one of the worst things that was happening was all this undercurrent of tension between expectations and like, because you always tried not to tell me. You wanted to let me try to do things and simply, you still had an idea of what I should be doing and so that was always...that undercurrent was always going. The same with the students, instead of them blasting it out once a week, and so everybody see a little more clearly about where they are. I think that, that as the Alternative High School is now, I think we desperately needed that...some kind of a thing like that. Some kind of a thing besides our arguments, something which students are... There's one thing that I did say later in the year, was like whenever things like that happened, students are just notoriously quiet. They would never seem to feel like they really had the right to really blow off steam. And perhaps in a session where that were in order, every week, I really think it would evolve, something would evolve.

R: I'm having trouble in my mind trying to figure out how to do it.

D: I know. I don't quite understand how to do it either.

R: Would you mind if we did the basketball thing next year?

D: The basketball thing is really exciting at first and I remember the first game we played; it was so much fun even though we lost. It didn't matter if we lost. I remember everybody saying, I don't believe we're here playing basketball again. And then after that it got too serious, and I got really blood thirstily competitive and the people on the team were bitching at each other because they wouldn't continue, and in short, really, became a drag. I really don't think it was that constructive, because a lot of people would take off for a whole week and not practice, and everybody would downgrade them for it and they'd be getting back in the same old hole they were in at first, not wanting to be a part of it and feeling bad for feeling lazy. I advise more like one basketball game or two basketball games and some volleyball games. Different things, nothing where you could ever get too competitive, because I don't believe in competition that much anymore.

R: It kind of brings out a conflict of an alternative school. The staff is against competition, but the kids want it, so what's best for the kids?

D: I think the way you're going to solve that is the kids will have a basketball team if they want to do it, I think instead of me being the basketball coach and organizing it

like last year, taking all that responsibility of practices, and bitching at them, and the classical basketball team. Just forget the classical basketball team. If they want to play basketball, they can do it themselves.

R: They may do everything themselves, but come to you because they need you to bring something to it that none of them could bring to it; no one of them could be coach.

D: Also, just for the fact that there's a coach. They need someone to play the role, too, not necessarily that I knew any more. Then what you're saying is what happens with...

R: Once you set up a coaching job, it's not a completely a democratic situation, which they ask for it; they democratically decided to make you coach...

D: Yeah, then I'm a dictator.

R: They appoint you dictator.

D: That doesn't work.

R: What if you could really teach them something as a coach?

D: Then I would just love to teach basketball skills, I think. But I don't know. Coaching, coaching for my own temperament was terrible.

R: I was thinking of role reversal. When they're saying teach me they're definitely asking you to step out, aside, step up a peg or something. I'm curious what you would have the adult

do when they ask that question.

D: That's tough. I'm kind of going through that right now; I don't quite know what to do right now. It seems that as soon as they ask me to teach, that's when I start teaching and there's a lot of interest there but somewhere along the line, I take over and it stops. That takes a real sophistication that I lack right now to do that. To really give them what I have to offer and leave it at that.

L=An Alternative High School Teacher

R=Researcher

L: Let me tell you the three areas I worked on and you can tell me if you want me to go on. All right?

R: Okay.

L: First, I put down my expectations that I had in October when I came. Next, I put down the positive surprises that I had, the things that I didn't really think would happen that have happened. Then, I put the negative surprises.

R: Good; perfect.

L: Expectations: When I came I thought the kids would come to class easier. I didn't think there would be a big hassle. And I thought the kids would go on field trips easier. I thought they would be very happy to do that. I thought the kids would stick with The Alternative School better; I didn't think we'd have people that would come one day or two days and then you wouldn't see them again. I thought kids would rip-off less; I thought they would be less destructive. Just like this ping-pong thing, I just didn't expect that. I thought there would be more student-parents; I was led to believe we would have lots of students with babies and there just aren't that many anymore. Maybe that's part of my fault; I thought that I'd have a big class for this child care deal. I thought

I'd have huge support from the administration because I remember when I was hired, and the Director of Federal Projects and Director of Vocational Education were down there and said, anything we can do for you. When I came I expected to write a journal article. I thought that I could write about what I'd done this year, and I haven't any idea on what I'd write a journal article on now. When I came I also had very limited experience with this type of kid...with these type of kids; I had no idea what rotten homes they could come from. I had no idea that they would have parents like these. I'd never worked with kids that had been in jail and had these many problems, so I was unprepared. Okay, the positive things that I've felt have come out: There's a better rapport with students than I expected. I didn't think that they would be this close to me, that I would be this good friends with them, and that I would really care about them as much as I do. I was surprised that there was as much respect on both sides. I think the students respected the staff, and I think the staff respects the students, and it's not a divided area where they do all the dirty work and we sit and direct the show. And then I was surprised even yesterday, like one sticking up for me in the junior high meeting, saying that he thought it was wrong for the junior high kids to use such profane language to my face. I was just

really surprised at that. I'm surprised that've been able and given the opportunity to write proposals and grants and have been able to obtain that money and I'm glad I've been able to do it and I think the Director of Vocational Education helped me a lot. Every proposal I've written I've gotten funded for, and that's been a good experience for me. Okay, my negative surprises: I was really surprised how the kids will flip out and I feel that some of them are...I don't know that much about mental illness or about emotional problems but I feel some of them are schizo. I can not believe how they will react; one minute or one morning and they can be a completely different person in the afternoon, and it really worries me because there is something wrong. I've been surprised about the student's absolute defiance, that they will not do something and that no matter what you say, it won't change their mind. I also have grown to realize more that I'm not as authoritative as I'd like to be; I cannot make them do what I'd like and that's a problem that I have, and that I have to overcome, and just realize that I have to be a stronger person and try to gain that respect and gain that control. Because I'm not as strong as the researcher, and I'm not as strong as my husband, but that doesn't mean that I can't be a stronger person. I've been very disappointed with purchasing, and that's

one of the huge hassles I have had and think they're very incompetent people. I have also been very disappointed with no secretarial staff, and somehow I think that's very important. I've been surprised at how the kids can throw all the blame on you if things are going wrong, then it's all your fault that you screwed them up and you haven't carried through, and done enough. I've had to see this as a problem and then set the strategy so I can lay it back on them because I'm not going to take all the blame. I've been surprised about parents even when they go along with us on us...they're indifference to the school and to their children they're keeping in school; I think that's why some of the kids are dropped-out and don't care. I was very surprised when I told one student about income tax class and he just flatly told me that was a stupid thing to expect any Alternative School student to be interested in, something that academic, or that complicated, that I was just dreaming and that any Alternative student would be up to that and especially from that student I was disappointed. I'd hoped to have my classes lead into a more academic role, I've also been disappointed with that, and maybe I've not set high enough expectations. I expect the kids to work harder and I expect like when I show a film, that had information about DNA or RNA, I thought that they would like to learn, if it was presented in a fun way. And part of this is my leadership

problem. I've been disappointed with the contracts, I think it's a fantastic idea, and I think it's the way it should be set up, but I'm still not happy with the form, or the format of the contract. I think that's one of the high priorities that we need to work on for next year. I've been disappointed with the unorganized record-keeping and it's frustrating and I think it makes The Alternative School look pretty dingy... when somebody calls on the phone and we can't tell them when so and so came or went and can't even find their records sometimes. The whole hassle over the levy failure and the BEA, the contracts, the hearings, the lawsuits, and the school board, has been a great surprise to me and I think that as a first year teacher I've learned a lot. I did not know anything about this type of procedure. I think it's been handled very poorly, and I feel that as a lowly teacher we are being left out and we have very little power. I've felt a great waste of time in getting the groceries and I know this is a very little thing, but it's a big expense and it's been a big time waster for me. I think we have to buy our groceries somewhere where we have to pay high prices and it's the only place we can buy them, and I have to get them because they goofed up so much in deliveries. I've tried to use it as a learning experience and take kids with me so they can shop for groceries

and see how expensive they are and see why we can't spend so much money, but it's just a continual hassle. Other supplies I've had to get have often been difficult even though I've had the money, in essence, I've not had it at my disposal. I've been quite disappointed with the student's low attention span, I don't know if this part of their disadvantaged problem ...if that's part of their failure syndrome... I mean that they came from a place where they couldn't pay attention for more than fifteen minutes, and so they just got into trouble, and that's why they got kicked out and everything. What I really can't believe, I can't understand and accept where high school kids can't sit still in a meeting that's an hour or two hours. When we go some place like to a workshop or something, they can't sit still through it and when they give me the excuse that they have to go have a cigarette or go to the bathroom, that's just a cop-out. I just can't accept that yet. I've been disappointed with the relations with West Campus High School with the run in with their principal and trying to use their library, with trying to get typing materials. I understand that The Alternative School has their rejects, and that they have no reason to be friendly with us, but I still believe those are the supplies of the school district, not of a certain teacher, or of a certain school, and I hope that we can work

more to build better relationship with West Campus.

R: The negatives are so much more interesting than the positives so we'll work on those. What do you think, jumping away from The Alternative School for a second. but what would be the goals of a first class secondary educational program? Kind of speaking regardless of whether you have disadvantaged or advantaged youth; the ideal educational program for seventh to twelfth graders, what would the goals be of that program?

L: I feel that the students should learn to set some expectations for themselves they have to carry through, take responsibility and not necessarily reach the goal to the utmost, but at least be able to have a track to go on and see where their ideas change and how they fulfill them, and I feel the second goal of a good secondary program would be to give them some career orientation, and definite career objectives.

R: Okay. As a goal you put, coming up with personal expectations, taking some responsibility to meeting them, developing a career orientation and can you add anything to those two?

L: I'm sure I would...

R: We'll deal with them if any strike you. Now concentrating what you have seen at The Alternative School with what you saw as a substitute in some traditional schools, mainstream schools, do you think that students in those schools are

getting greater help in meeting those goals?

L: No, I don't think they do, in the setting of personal goals, and having to carry through and be responsible to themselves. I think the reason is because the schools are too big. With thirty students it's very difficult to work that individually with them and give each one attention and I think in that structure each kid has to have individual time. I don't say it's impossible.

R: I think the question that I'm kind of building to, that I'm really curious about in this whole thing is, are the students at The Alternative School getting as good a deal as kids in a mainstream school? Are they getting a worse deal or a better deal according to each of our perspectives on what education should be?

L: Well, personally, I have been swayed to believe that The Alternative School is a better way. I feel that kids could get a better deal in The Alternative School, but it takes a lot from each kid to do it. A kid can be really slack and he will not accept the responsiblity, and it's not easy to accept all this responsibility at this age. So I think a lot of them do not, but I don't think that this is the thing for every kid, and I think that any kid that goes through The Alternative School program can get more than the East or West

kids, if they want, and they, some of them even just from osmosis can get more.

R: Comment on the authority that a person on the staff can wield, like you had some problem in terms of being...in finding how you can assert authority and recognized that you lack it. In an alternative school you just don't have the big stick like you have in the traditional. I could see where morally it's nice that we're equal but do you think that it gets in the way in some respects? Can it get in the way of accomplishing your educational goals?

L: You mean we're equal, like the students and the staff?

R: Right.

L: Well, it's not that way in The Alternative High School, that I'm the supreme boss, but I do think that there should be a definite leadership role in the staff and that the kids should look up to us for guidance in some leadership, as well as academic or curriculum input. And I think that we should still have a friendly rapport with the students, and have them thrown as many decisions as we can. We have to set these situations up.

R: I would think that for us to meet those goals of getting them to drive towards something, that attention span problem and its ramifications would have to be really attacked. How

could we attack it? Can you think of anything that we could do? To maybe put it in a negative one, is there anything you can think of about how The Alternative School's structured that reinforces the low attention span?

L: I know why I see it and I probably do reinforce it and if the kids say, "I don't want to do this, I don't like this," I say, "this is The Alternative School and you don't have to stay here and you don't have to sit here, don't tell me you don't like it, you know, that's your thing," and so I reinforce them to get up and leave.

R: Do you see a way out of that dilemma?

L: Well, I think the kid should have his own...should be able to make that decision. If he doesn't like to sit down to something, I don't say that everything that I do you should have to listen to. I think that can be worked into the contract, which isn't very strong for us, but I think that maybe like for a half an hour, that isn't the goal I need to work for, to make them sit for a half an hour, but to make them look that I want to read, or I want to attain five points or ten points in a certain subject, maybe get at it that way. Well, it's just like when I ride my bicycle and I say I want to ride four miles and in that four miles I get tired and I don't want to go any further, but if I look and I decide, well, those

telephone poles...I have to reach that one like a hundred yards up the road, so I reach that one and then I'll reach another sign post, and another crossroad, well, all along I'm really working toward the four mile goal but I break it down and get to littler goals.

R: What effect do you think parental influence has on the students at school?

L: I think sometimes that the parents are in opposition to our goals. And I'm not saying that the parents are wrong, that's their business...that every parent hasn't been through the educational system and led to believe that it's really that important. And I think that's what we see in a lot of our students.

R: How do you think we should deal with that? If we pick up what's an apparent difference in values between what we hold here and what the student's getting at home?

L: Well, one of the things that the parents reinforce in them more than we do, is work and a lot of times kids give the excuse, well, I had to stay home and help my dad clean the boat, I had to help him dig ditches or do this or that. I think the work ethic is important to the parents to make money, and so I think if we could do more on careers and putting our kids to work, and having them earn money, then maybe that would be

more in agreement with the parents.

R: The students blaming the staff, holding the staff to some higher standard than they hold themselves accountable; why do you think they do that?

L: It's a cop-out because it's easy to blame me. A student can always blame me for leaving him or for not giving him work or for not paying enough attention to him when he comes in and wants attention in a second and then he doesn't have to be responsible for why he didn't do his spelling right, he didn't come to school right, he didn't get to his job.

R: What's interesting is that one of the things that all the students do in the traditional school, they bring right with them to the alternative school. In the traditional school they blame the teachers and the staff for everything they wouldn't do it but somehow they still want to come back to that. I'm wondering what we could do, what an alternative school could do to get the kids get away from that, or if we should accept it as a fact of life?

L: Well, I don't think it has to be accepted and I've thrown it back at the student. I say, listen, you didn't, you didn't do this, don't blame me for that goof up. I say maybe it's a little bit my fault, but it's a lot...it's your doings, too. I don't always like to make the student look really bad and make them look stupid or make them feel incompetent because

then you'll get nowhere. I'll be glad to take a little bit of blame, but to throw it back to him and say look, you've chosen to do this, and you know it and you need to carry through. You have to come back to them, though, I think immediately.

R: The low academic goals of students, for example, when you were talking about the student saying that having a income tax class here was silly. Do you think we've made any headway in combating that?

L: I think you have and I don't go to your classes hardly ever, in fact, I've only gone to a couple of them. I think it's part the image of the teacher. The teacher gets into it. Those are his type of classes and there may be people who thought my type of classes are a goof around, and so when I try to do anything academic, they immediately...they didn't come to my class to learn anything academic and so they won't accept it, but I think...

R: I think from my perspective it's easier because of the topics in my classes to get sometimes fooled into thinking it's more demanding academically. I sense that there's a problem at The Alternative School getting people to work on developing academic competencies, to work up a ladder doing something more challenging each day, like from one telephone pole to another. I think that's more of a difficulty in the

alternative school possibly than in a traditional school where everything is geared towards, everything's a prerequisite for something else, everything is...you're learning Step A so you can do Step B.

L: And that's one problem I think we have at The Alternative School is that kids can go through here like one student and not really know the parts of speech, not really know what plural and singular is, but be going down to take a GED test that maybe he's going to get through, but did The Alternative School really help him with any basic academic skill. And I think we're at fault if we haven't, I think we're putting out an inferior product. And I don't think we should be very proud of kids that can't hardly spell anything and can't read very well. But it's a problem if they don't want to do it; they can always find another way to reach those points, and I think we need alternatives to get points.

R: How do you think we could work the thing by not being too repressive? Could we still get people to get those basic skills and to get their competencies down, but by not being repressive, by not saying you've got to go to Freshman English and the Sophomore English and then...

L: The way I've tried to do it all year is make them read the things in my classes they have to read, instructions and stuff

and try not to read it for them because of course I can really read it quick off for them, but like if they have to follow a recipe, make them read through it, if they have to divide a recipe, make them divide it or multiply it and it's a very slow process; it's not like having a half an hour of reading a day. But at least it's better than nothing and they see a reason to do it because it's pretty hard to make something if you can't read the recipe, but it needs to be worked in as you told me, every way you can.

R: The students who come and go, the students that it's just not the place for them, can you kind of comment more. Is that a problem? Is it something we should be concerned about?

L: I think we have too many who flick in and out. I think it's a problem. It's a waste of my time, a waste of your time, it's a waste of other kids time, to deal with a kid that's only going to be there three of four days but it's hard to say which kids are going to be successful and which aren't so we try to be fair to each one of them and I assume the responsibility and so they don't continue. So what can we do about it? Was that your question?

R: Yeah, what we could do about it. Isn't it something we should be concerned about?

L: I think it is because you see the kids come here for a

last step and if we don't reach them, they don't have any other school to go to. I think that part of this could be in the contract. I don't know what, but I think that initial contact should be the strong point.

R: A lot of it comes back to the contract when we don't have a whole set of rules. How do you think a fantasized out contract...how would it go?

L: That's the thing I can't come up with without any specific reinforcers like grades or attendance; they don't have to do it by a certain time and they don't have to do it at a certain competency. And so I don't have the answer to the contract, I know we're lacking.

R: What have been the...scan back over the years, the high points and low points, the incidents involved with students or involved with staff, just things that've gone on with you?

L: I think one of the low points was my recent trouble with one student. I felt very strongly that I have been unprofessional and that this could lead me into a lot of gossip problems, and that I could really lose my effectiveness with other kids if this went wider. Thank God that that was handled correctly. I think one of the high points has been this one student's coming around and how we've had respect for each other and then how he stuck up for me yesterday. I mean when

the kids can hate you one minute and then say something pretty good in front of a lot of people another, you know, two or three months later, I think there's been a lot of progress. That's just a very personal high and low point with one student. I think writing proposals and getting them funded was another high point because it's something I wanted to do and that I know the money's there and that I've been helped to achieve writing them which some people never, never do.

R: Any other...

L: Yeah, I'll think of them in a second.

R: Do you think that there's harm to having the head teacher being influential and people look to for guidance and a lot of the school revolving around him, as opposed to it being more of a cooperative effort, maybe?

L: Oh, I think we've definitely seen it in our school and I think as much as we want the kids to take this over if we both leave, I don't think it's going to happen; I don't think the kids are that strong. They don't have it that together and as hard as we continue to try we aren't achieving that goal. I think that's what's so scary to the kids, to know that you're not going to be here because they know they can't handle it.

R: Do you think that a program that by description is designed solely for drop-outs, would have some stigma attached to it?

Do you think that's really true here?

L: I don't think so. I would...you would think it would... the common person would think, oh, a place for drop-outs, goof-offs, people who have been in jail; oh, what awful kids, what an awful school, but I think the kids like themselves, are beginning to like themselves. I think they like each other, I think they like the Alternative High School and I do not think there is a negative stigma attached on them from going to it. I don't know what they go through when they see their East and West buddies, but I think they have grown to say, I am liberated from it and that this is my place and I'm happier and I don't have to go and sit in school in one little class and I think there is negative stigma.

R: Yeah, it's really hard to find the evidence. You hear it from, well you hear a cop say something like there was rip-off at <u>that</u> school...what do you expect, but it's hard to pick up on the evidence.

L: I think the parents do, though. A parent has told her daughter, "you're smarter than to go to The Alternative School, you don't need to lower yourself to do that." Other parents have not wanted to come up, and one student didn't want me to visit his employer and tell him he was from The Alternative School. Now I don't think the student was ashamed to come

here, but he didn't want to tell his employer, so in a way he was ashamed.

R: Do you think if the students in The Alternative School were not all from that one particular group, disadvantaged, drop-outs, whatever, people who haven't made it in the school system, do you think that the atmosphere of the school would be different, for better, for worse?

L: It depends on how strong those people were and how large they were in numbers. I think one or two wouldn't make one bit of difference.

R: What if we did something, we made it fifty-fifty; either we kept the school at this size and brought in thirty-five college preparatory track students or doubled the size of the school and did it half and half?

L: I don't know if that's the goal we want to work for, but the outcome could be positive. We would set higher expectations, we might be a little more punctual, might plan out a little more, maybe just we feel more indebted to these students. If we didn't give them something now then that would be a huge disadvantage in college.

R: There is a huge diversity in the staff. The values that we have and the goals that we might establish for the program are different, that's not all wasted on the students, they

know that. What are your feelings about what it does, positive or negative to the program, having someone like Don on the staff?

L: I don't see it as a complete waste or a complete negative part of our program because students are given the option to stand up to him or students are given the option to express to other staff that he is not working, and it's good to have people that students can look at, try to figure out the good points and the bad points and why they would not want to be that type of person. It seems like there's lots of rotten teachers in the regular school, and they've already had all this practice and that's why they're here. So I don't know if we really need people like that, but I don't think it's a good model, that's for sure. In another way, though, when students see a staff blow-up and lose his temper, they can look and see, oh, how silly, my little sister wouldn't even do this, well if my little sister wouldn't, then I certainly wouldn't. They've attained more self-control; they've attained more responsibility. It's a pretty round about way to get at that goal. And I'm not saying that I don't have points that aren't good and that I don't have points that the students dislike. I mean, I think we all do.

R: What about the relationship to West High School?

L: Anytime you throw a kid out and you've had multiple problems with him you're going to be on the defensive. I think that's natural, I think some of it would exist at any school, I think it's up to the staff to build up a relationship. Look, we're trying to help these students, we're for kids just like you're for kids, we'll reach some and you reach the others. I've gone in there with the attitude, I've nothing against you, I've done nothing against you, I'm innocent, I don't know anything about these problems, I'm just asking for some help and I think that maybe in my innocence I have expected to get help and usually I do.

R: Let's say you are called into a meeting of secondary principals and they say, you've got experience working in an alternative school for drop-outs, and we want...we feel we're not doing enough for drop-outs, we want to start a program, what do you suggest? What types of programs would you suggest for another school district starting from ground zero?

L: I think there are some definite advantages to being a completely separate school. But I think it would be a better experience if we could be integrated into the schools so we could at least have some common resources. Maybe I just feel this way because you brainwashed me. I think that more West Campus High students should be able to opt for a period or

two in the Alternative School program if they want, and vice versa and that The Alternative School students should be able to opt a period or two in a regular, straight school. Those are things we can't offer, but I don't know if we have that privilege of asking that type of favor, after all we asked to be separate, now we're asking for the goodies back. I think I'd leave it in a regular school, have a separate wing. I think that I would try to have more academic, innovative, professional people in basic academics, because obviously they'd been lost and left out at that point. It wouldn't quite give them lots, but we need to give them some academic as well.

R: I am kind of grouping together some of the ways students behave. The students aren't as committed to the school as we might like.

L: I think they have a friendship developed, they like the community of the Alternative High School, but I don't think you see it as much as I do. But I think the kids feel a strong group here, and they come to see their friends. That's one of the biggest reasons why they come. As far as really feeling responsible for the equipment, it's a pretty easy cop-out. Big deal if I rip-off one thing, it doesn't matter, there's a whole gob left.

R: I'll eliminate that one and say that really one of the

big pitfalls that you've seen this year has been that counseling thing, any kind of a myriad of administrative things, the purchasing there, the lack of secretarial here, the division of my time between the two. I guess the real problem, if there is one, is that we really haven't done as much as we can to help the students get goals.

L: It's a time waster, that's the thing. I see another problem.

R: Lay it on me.

L: A long time ago I was so insensitive with the students; I didn't like students to come in before school, as I wanted to come and do some work. But now I see kids coming at 8:30 or 9:30 or so, and I'm really happy to be able to talk to them just in a friendly conversation, because lots of times kids need to talk friendly. The thing I get really upset when they get bored and say nothings going on. Well, nothings suppose to be going on before 10:00. If they want to come in and talk to me, I waste my time. It's not waste, it's using my time to talk to them. And then to get mad and bored and leave, and that's just a cop-out, just blaming me again for not having anything going.

R: There's a wild thing that happened. Do you remember the debates over changing the time from 11:00 to 10:00? It was

alleged that no one would show up at that. And now I really wish we could have graphed it, because now the whole day is shifted earlier. It's the same people who used to crawl out of bed to get here at 12:00, now get here at 11:00. Those who used to crawl out to get here at 1:00, get here at 12:00. Everybody shifted earlier.

L: But there's lots that come at 9:00 and that's what upsets me, the ones that come at 9:00 and leave before 10:00. And I think a lot of that is that the schools open up too early. I think we could get some program going.

R: Also because West Campus gets going early and they might want to hang out with some friends. But maybe there's something in that, it was a staff decision. The staff felt that we should shift earlier and time has shown that if we weren't right, at least we weren't wrong in terms of the effect it's had. The students were pretty much united, and I guess that there could be some question about was it appropriate, was it right for us to bulldoze it. Well, we really felt we were right and pushed it. And then it was shown to be right. Sometimes there's an argument in schools like this, you shouldn't do that, that you should let the students do it their own way and let it fail, and learn completely by the

logical consequences of their own behavior. I'm kind of feeling out the limits of what the leadership role should be.

L: I don't feel that you should let them do anything, and then if they fail, they have to pay back for it. I feel that things should be set up as openly as possible, so that they succeed. And at the same time they should be given the option to make these decisions, but this is part of our role to set things up for them. Maybe we did bull the thing through, but we did vote and we didn't do this without a goal in setting hours earlier.

R: I think there is an interesting problem, that is, what should staff be called upon to do? An alternative school really depends on people being authentic about what they're doing. You can't have the facades that you have in a traditional school. The things that go well and things that you teach are what you're excited about. But, there are sometimes things that are hard to get people always excited to do. Should it be a staff responsibility to keep things going, or is the more important responsibility to have the staff person doing that what they can get up the enthusiasm for?

L: Well, at first impression, I'd say this could all be cleared up a lot in job description. That if I knew exactly what the things were I was supposed to lead this year it would be real

easy, I'd know and I'd do them, but somehow it doesn't work that way and things come up. Now I still feel that if somebody starts something, they should finish it as long as there is student interest, even though they really don't want to do it. I feel that if we don't carry through on our projects, how can we expect kids to carry through? Now, if the staff doesn't have any kids involved, it's a different situation. It's kind of like well, it's inevitable it's going to fold. It seems like that's our responsibility to the kids. I know it doesn't happen this way, but if the kids like it, usually you like it. But it didn't happen in the sports that way. Don was becoming ineffective and damaging the program, but also there is still kids that want to do it and without a leader to get them together, it's not that easy. I can't blame the kids completely, they shouldn't have to take the whole role. A student shouldn't have to be blamed for no baseball. But there's not that many people on our little staff that can do the athletics or something. Personally, I'd have done the track. I've taken track in college and I'd have helped those kids if there would have been at least four or five. But the thing is, you don't have a job just for fun. You have a job and responsibility, and you're earning money and we take some things that we don't always like.

R: Do you think it's difficult to keep those traditional values in the alternative setting?

L: Well, we still say that's what we are trying to work for. We're trying to work for kids to carry through, we're trying to work for kids to accept things that they don't always like to do, because life is that way.

R: Have you had difficulty keeping it, sometimes the question is are you working for yourself, or are you working for the kids? Have you had difficulty keeping those roles separate?

L: I'm sure I have. Sometimes I'm so short sighted, or thinking of myself that I don't see it, where other people can. Sometimes I kind of want to do something and I get my feelings hurt because I don't have enough kids behind me. That's because I feel that they don't like me, or they don't like what I'm doing. It's not that I want to do it so bad, but I want to do some activities, set something up then I'm disappointed if they don't do it. But I do not think I've been one to say, "I'm going anyhow." Well Jenny and I did once, we went to Weyerhauser. But that was at the time when Friday's were only field trips and only a few kids were showing up. I'm sure I have, but I've tried not to and I can't think of any concrete experiences.

N=Nora, an Alternative High School Teacher

R=Researcher

R: What was your assumption of what the students and program would be like?

N: I expected them to be very free flowing like I found them to be as I went through the interview. I wasn't sure about their expectations as far as academic performance. I didn't think about it a whole lot. I hoped that they'd be really interested in some new programs. That's why when I started the classes they were different. If I had great expectations as far as hopefully high interests levels, that I could encourage different students to become interested in academic things. I went on my campaign to suck students into my classes.

R: In any way, was what you found here different from what you anticipated?

N: I don't think so. I was disappointed in some ways because I think that some of the skills that need to be acquired by students such as higher reading skills, individual reading skills, if I had worked on that, if I had more training in that field, they would have gotten more out of other classes and my own classes. Perhaps, like many other teachers in the public school, I expect them to have a greater ability in

reading than they did. So it's discouraging to set up an independent subject, such as an independent reading class when people who have a bad track record in reading aren't going to enjoy it because it's too hard and they don't understand the words. You are only going to acquire a few of the really good reading students into a program like that. It's like teaching SRA's which really benefits a lot of times the student who already is pretty good in reading or has a lot of push behind him to get there. I found that in the Alternative High School, because people have a lot of discouragement in school, you have to provide a lot of beginning things. They are frustrated by that, too, because they see themselves as high school students and not having the skills that they should have already had. It's up to us to develop programs that don't look like elementary programs, that are really just exciting as anything else they've had anywhere else, really reinforce the beginning skills no matter where it is. Make it challenging so that they don't start at a really high level, but if you start at a lower level and progress faster it's much more exciting and also it's challenging to them. If you start too high and aim too high you have a greater amount that drop out no matter what your classes are. It's getting students involved at a lower level perhaps than I

realized when I first came here. I'm not really disappointed. I think I learned a lot. I had to do that. I don't think somebody could have told me. You just have to experience it and the students that you work with do vary in levels. You might meet somebody's level one place, and somebody else's at a different time and a different place.

R: Did this program conform to the theories that you held about education?

N: I read the constitution and I read...well, I must have read the brief that the Alternative High School put out about itself and I was really excited from that. I think that it was what an alternative school should be aiming for. Sure we have a long ways to go, but that's good, too. I think you'll always have a lot of things that you know you can do better. It did meet a lot of expectations as far as what I thought an alternative school that student participation should be. I was excited, especially in the meetings that we had with students on Wednesday, to find that people were getting excited about having a part in their school. Sometimes it takes a lot of effort on everyone's part to get that feeling. Once people got excited about it, God, you could hardly turn it off. It was really neat.

R: What particular incident in the course of the time you

were here, last semester, was the greatest "ups"?

N: I got really excited about the debate we had, the one with students, the first debate that we had. It was neat because people got really into it, yeah, the junior high debate. There was a lot of participation. A lot more than I even expected. I was really excited about that. I also like that...I was very happy about the nomination and election of the vice president. It took a long time and it was really hard on everyone but I think that was the only way we could do it. And in the end, everyone had a sense of accomplishment. That they had been part of the process and elected someone. It wasn't just pushed through, like so many things do, occasionally get pushed through in our own state government. But we learned the change is hard, we learned the process of democracy, just through that one incident. I thought that was really fantastic. Another thing was in art; a particular student, he always tickled me every time he came in art, it made me feel really good. His head that he made of me, accomplishment that he felt, I could see in his face. It was really neat. I really felt good about that.

R: Do you feel you were able to accomplish things in this school that you feel you couldn't accomplish in the traditional school?

N: Sure. There's no way that you can spend the time that you spend with the students around here, personally. You have about maybe three minutes a piece per student per week, if you figure you only have a couple hundred students go through every day. People just get turned off, other people who don't have a lot of faith in themselves. They need a lot of personal encouragement, however. It's hard on a teacher in this kind of school, too, because you find that there's a conflict within me about how much encouragement I should do. Whether I should really go out and be gung ho and kind of pull the students into my classes or whether I should set up a good program and encourage people that come in but not push them so much that they get turned off. You have a kind of duality, you have to draw a line between those two things. I think I tried both of them this year. I tried being very lax and just being there to see how that would work. People would just come in and felt no pressure at all. They came to me and said, I need some help in this or I'd like to do this. I tried to compare that with being more enthusiastic and running around saying, well how would you like to do this? In comparing the data that I found in my head as far as experiences, you just reach different people with different things. I don't think that you can

say that one way is always better than the other. There are some people that need that extra pushing and encouragement. Other people get turned off by it. It's just a matter of getting to know the students well enough to know what they need. In a public school there's no way that you can do that. It would just take you so long that by the time you learn, it would probably be spring term or the end of spring term. Or they might not be in your class because they might have got so discouraged already that they didn't stick it out the year. At least at the Alternative High School you can track them down later on, once you find out you can make your effort.

R: Another possibility is to sit back and let the student come up with the initiative and then provide the resources.

N: That's kind of like a secondary thing. It's just that I think I incorporated it into the second one, in just being there and I started doing more of my own things to encourage people who didn't have any ideas. You have to try all things and maybe with each person that you work with. If you find that there is an interest in whatever you're teaching, maybe you could develop an "A through C" plan with them, and not give up. If there is the interest there you know that one of those usually works. It's just that most people don't have

the time and energy to do that when they have 100 people a day or 300 people a day. With just twenty-five students who would be really interested in doing something with you or with something else, you can work out plans in your head. Also you can contract with students. That's another form, when they come up with an idea or you come up with something you think they might be interested in, make some kind of an attempt with a contract. That encourages them to seek goals whereas a lot of times, they end up in these ten minute projects which are discouraging because you can't learn what you need to learn in ten minutes, to have a really good product, no matter what it is, whether it's just learning something in science or it's making something out of clay. In science you didn't have the background to be able to do an experiment in ten minutes. You might have to do some research. In art it's the same way. You have to have some failures a lot of times to have successes.

R: How do you feel about working in that process about where they might have to experience failure?

N: It's really frustrating. I know that in my own work I still all the time experience failures. But I have to learn some of that to learn two or three times before it will sink into my head that that is what it was that made my pot crack

up. I can understand how they feel. I can sympathize with them. At the same time, it's up to me to keep encouraging and pushing them a little bit, at least. I think that if they don't have somebody around that knows about their field, that knows what they're doing, what happens is that they do just get turned off and they go away and they don't come back. They don't want to come back no matter how much encouragement you...what resources you have. You're not going to get them back in the classroom, or back in the setting where they can learn something. It is frustrating though I think for the person who wants to do a lot of independent work, sometimes. They find that when there is a lot of students around, they have to do something with their time. Otherwise, they feel like they're wasting the school district's money, and they're wasting their time. So then when I do develop the options about working and encouraging them through my work, I enjoy being here all day instead of just a couple of hours. Jenny and I talked about maybe next year, if we don't have full time art people, aides or otherwise, maybe they could hire some people on a two or three hour basis. It would be a lot more concentrated and if you did come in and instead of kind of plodding along all day, which sometimes happens especially when you don't have anybody coming in regularly. You really

develop a super exciting program. You have a lot more structure than you do now. They know that you'll only be here for two hours and if they want any help they have to be here whatever time it may be, 12:00 to 1:00 or 12:00 to 2:00, whatever it is. I don't know if that would be better or not. I think you tried that last year. It's probably like...like I said in every situation you meet somebody's needs, usually. Then there's always people that you can't meet because for some reason, so it's a trial and error thing all the time.

R: What were the things that were most frustrating?

N: I think it's really hard when you're excited about something and you don't find very many people excited about it. Or they're excited about it, but like plants class, they'll be excited about it for a short time. Then if you come up with the idea that they should have to do something to make the class go, and it doesn't matter and you don't tell them what they have to do, but you talk to them about maybe reading some articles or doing some independent reading, then they just fall on their face because they don't...they're not used to that kind of push. They're not used to having some teacher hand over some of the responsibilities to them. I think it's combination of frustration and also just amazement. The only way to solve that is to learn to develop

some kind of techniques to encourage students in a really exciting way, to get involved in classes and make it. It's hard to write out everything you need to do, but maybe that's what's necessary to begin the classes, to get kind of a consensus of what kind of direction you want to go and then develop programs around that. It might be two weeks on each quarter to do that. It would be hard but otherwise what happens is that you're back to the same structure. The teachers do the lecturing or do all the preparing and students come if they want to come, they're interested. That's even hard because a lot of times they get turned off if you don't have something rolling every day, if you don't really have some kind of structure every day, then they get turned off to it. The problem with doing that is not only is it not good for the student, I don't think it's good for them to have someone to do all their work all the time. They don't want to do outside reading anyway or very much research. So what happens if the teacher gets very frustrated. You have to go home and read all night and try to come up with some new ideas. You can't have all the facts there about everything you're teaching all the time; it's impossible. Especially when you've only been teaching for a couple of years. You still have a lot of things to learn about teaching. That

was really frustrating to me. Not only in plants class but also in the sex roles class, because Doug and I spent a lot of time when we went to Evergreen picking out really good books. I laid out all the books in class and talked about it and tried to encourage people to develop some reading skills where maybe they could do...read a chapter and present it or talk about it, discuss it with me or have some kind of open forum. They just...it was like I was talking to the wall there. They like to sit there and talk, which for awhile it was pretty good. He did encourage people to come to class because I don't think they had a chance to talk about how they felt in that respect, in that subject. I think we got some honesty, of course we got a lot of bullshit, too, but that's just part of sex roles; people have to...people try to be honest about things like that. If I'm here next year, I have some definite ideas about making changes towards that, towards encouraging students in a more meaningful way to participate. It will probably take a whole other year to work out good systems for that. I think after next year if I worked on that all year I could come up with some real good strategy to do that.

R: How do you account for the difference of involvement in the Alternative High School of men to women?

N: The only thing I can see from just being around from February to June, is that a lot of the women at the Alternative High School have traditional views of women's roles. What I mean by traditional is that see themselves just a homemaker, someone to get married and have children. That's about all. They don't see themselves as someone going to the educational tract and being successful. That really isn't important. It isn't important to be successful and develop the kind of intelligence which would get you a good job, if that's what you want, or just to kind of round you out as a person. I don't think they see that as being important to them. That's something that maybe their husbands to have or their children to have, but they don't see it as being important for them to have. I think that surprised me a lot. I expected people in my generation and younger to have those things worked out in their head a lot more than they do. I was surprised how traditional that the women here are. I think that realizing that fact, we really need to develop a good program that goes on all the time, or at least periodically throughout the quarter or every three quarters for women to develop a growing awareness of themselves and their potential. Not only in the house, if that's what they want, I don't think it's bad, but I think they

should also have an awareness of themselves in the community or in the work world, both. There's so many things that they can do. Not only to be happier individuals, if they plan to have a family, they'll be able to add something to the family, from the inside and outside perspective. It's just really sad that so many people that I see and have had time to really work with; I didn't realize what was going on with them until we had already made commitments like married. There's some other people, too, who left. They moved; their parents took them out or they went somewhere. They left for months. It was too late. I didn't see any of the frustrations in time that I need to see them when I was here. If I'd seen them when I first came, maybe February, March, perhaps if we all had had more time to sit down and work out... work these kinds of things together at our staff meetings. That's something that you could do next year. Maybe you could develop some things before spring that would help that. I don't think it would change things because I think the change is going to be very slow, and I'm not sure, maybe it had to do with...well it's obvious that the kind of women who end up dropping out of public schools, most frequently are women who do not see education as being for them, so they become frustrated. They drop out. So we're dealing with

the fact, after fact, that those are most of the women that we have. It's going to take, I think, a couple of years, at least a year, whole year, of really working together with the same people to develop programs for women.

R: If working with women is after the fact of what happened to them in the traditional school, what do you think of the strategy of having an alternative school as a method of working with these people?

N: From what we talked about several times and some of the readings I've done just really thinking of an alternative school. I think the best thing that could happen to an alternative school would be to be incorporated in a really large facility. You can call it a high school, a whole bunch of buildings that maybe people from different age levels or grade levels could come and they would be experiencing all sorts of alternatives. They wouldn't even be trapped into like saying, this was traditional and this was alternative but they just have all different kinds of ways to go. I think that by separating them, as we talked about before, from the regular school and their friends, it may seem hard for them in many ways to become successful. They've already experienced a lot of failure. The Alternative High School at this point, even though suffering amongst students

it probably has...the name has good vibrations. It wouldn't bother the kids, but probably community wise or with their parents or older people in the community, and jobs, people who effect jobs in this area, it's looked at as more of a drop-out center. It has negative connotations. So even if they're successful here, we could probably learn...another great success that I see here is(student). His ability just constantly amazes me. He excites me and pushes me to do better things here, a student like that does. He's kind of a light and you have a lot of darkness sometimes. He has soon... (student) you just say wow, it is worth it. It is worth pushing myself to become more knowledgeable, and to spend more energy here. To get back to what we were talking about, I think that developing a program or a school, if you can call it a school, a facility that has the kind of alternative that we have here, into a more traditional school or facility, I think that's a direction that we should be making. I'd like to see some money that we spend here used to develop a library. Or we could add to their development with the money we have. Very few amount of people can participate here because we're isolated in sense from the regular school. And other people could use our facilities. Hopefully in a good way and we could use theirs. Instead what happens is we

let both have poor facilities because we don't share. These people from West came over. I don't know if I told you. I didn't get to see you when you came over, we were gone. I wasn't here. They wanted to use some of our reading tapes. We have about $800. worth of reading tapes that we haven't used. I know we don't use them, at least I've never seen anyone use them. I suggested to them, I said, it's too bad that we can't work with you, that we can't filter to some of your students over here in some of the classes and filter some of ours back through yours, for some classes. Because it's really terrible that we have some things that you could really use that we don't have the teachers to develop the programs to use them. And you do. And we have things that we need to develop their programs for your students. It's a real shame, they kind of looked at me awkwardly. I don't know if that's a good term. That, yes, that could be possible but at the same time they were probably glad that we were isolated because we were taking care of some of the sores that they had, that they just assume never develop again. And that made me really unhappy and sad because it's not healthy for our district and it's not healthy for the students and it's not healthy for the teachers either. I think you're experiencing, if you lose the students, kick them out

or whatever, no matter what school you're in or where you are, if you have any kind of feeling at all, you experience a sense of failure. Even if you tried everything with that student. I think it's important to follow up on people and find out what they can get; if they have experienced the alternatives that are possible.

R: What should we be trying to give students? What should our goals be?

N: I think we should be trying to develop in them a system, well, partly responsibility for their education. They should understand what is necessary for them to develop educational programs for themselves, to encourage themselves. Where they can get the knowledge, they should have an understanding of library skills and things. If they want to learn something, how they can learn it, how they go about it. Where, who... The reading and math room, the problem with those was...we finally got the shelves in. When we really get our equipment together it was the end of school. And hopefully, if we only knew who was going to be here next year, maybe the people will go on working to develop the programs this summer. I think that's another thing that just frustrates the hell out of me is that we don't have...we don't really know who's going to be here, we can't develop a program we need to develop

over the summer. You can't usually just whip out something in a couple of weeks. If you have the summer to know what you're going to be doing this fall, you could get together with people and really get things going right at the beginning of school instead of half way through the term. The problem with our facilities, well now because we've just been moved around so much. At least knowing we're going to be here is a great help next year and getting our shelves and hopefully, we'll get things cataloged so that people can walk into the room and easily find what they need. They haven't been able to do that because we don't have a lot of people who have spare time to do cataloging. Now maybe we can do something in the summer to be able to spend some time organizing the other room in July and finish up the art room. Doing things that people just don't have time to do or the energy to do during regular school day. I think that's not only frustrating to the staff because they have trouble finding what they need for their classes, but it's also really frustrating and discouraging for students. They just won't put up with it. They'll probably just walk in and walk back out if they don't see what they want just right off the bat. They don't have the experience in using a library, so it's hard.

R: Getting back to my question, about the goals, would be. You developed that as being able to find information.

N: Right.

R: How to get access to information.

N: Also, to add to that there is a lot more. Being able to find the things you need causes a sense of success in a very minor sense. Once they get encouraged to more reading, I think it kind of turns them on to learning things, that they never would have been turned on to at all, before. I think part of our goals should be to turn people on not only to themselves because I think that that's a very beginning thing. If they're turned off, they probably are when they come here, turned off to themselves, they're pretty bad. They're failures. They've probably heard that from their teachers, and their parents and just about everybody else. If you get them turned on to themselves, again you're turning them on to learning things not only make them happy about being alive but also successful in doing what you want to do no matter what it is.

R: So you would have one defined goal as what a success would be. If the Alternative School student were capable of making use of information and knew where to find information, then we would accomplish our goal.

N: I think so. I think that's very important. Too many times you find that students get turned off to teachers which gets them turned off to education and the reason they turned off to teachers was because the traditional sense of teacher is a person who has all the answers. When you see someone who has all the answers, you try to put them on a pedestal; they're something like a god. They don't see them as being a person. In a way you're hating that person. You see them as being in the parent image or something, or how they think they should see their parents. I don't think they should see their parents in that respect either. The problem is that teachers should be resource centers. They should be people who know where to find things, find information. If you see a teacher as a person that encourages you to seek out things that you need to know, then you don't see it as a threat anymore, I don't think. You don't see them as being that someone who would turn you off. Instead they turn you on, because they're exciting people to be around. They're not threatening your life style. They don't threaten you individually grade wise. Hopefully someday a lot more schools will develop a point system or something similar to that, so the grades don't threaten people.

R: Should there be things that people should learn as they

go through school or is it just skills, how to find things out or is there other specific information?

N: Yeah. I think like Doug's class, self study, those kinds of things develop the knowledge of yourself and other people around you. Just learning how to turn yourself on, how to understand what's going on in people's head, being able to get sensitive enough to other people that you're around, so you can better understand them, and a better understanding of yourself. If you do those things, if you have a better understanding and you're confident about yourself, sure you're going to be able to get a job. It's easier. You're going to be able to be successful in social situations. You'll be a happier person just all the way around. It doesn't matter, there are a lot of people that are really brilliant but they really can't talk to anyone else. They haven't developed skills in communication no matter how much money they're making or how intelligent or both. They're going to be miserable people. I think you have to deal with not only skills in the school but also interpersonal relationships, working out problems with each other and with themselves. If you don't deal with that, it doesn't do them any good, it does them good to have the other skills. But as far as being a real happy person, I don't know, maybe that's

a bad term but someone...and I define happy as someone that should they get depressed and have set back they will be able to recover from that because they know they can make it. There's someone you can go to, there's people around. They have the skills that will get them through the next day.

R: So it's the basic skills, learning, communication, that count. Any others that would be important to have in the curriculum?

N: I think that on a higher level they must develop goals for themselves. That would be the ultimate, I think, what we could do for them now. I think if they have the basic skills and they got interpersonal relationships, hopefully like the end of that time they'd be able to develop goals for themselves, ultimately. I think another thing we haven't dealt with which is completely separate but also relates to your question in some sense is that we have to deal with getting people into the community instead of isolating them like we have, through trying to provide work kinds of skills. They see themselves as one trying to graduate from this school, and their whole aim is to go into the Navy perhaps. Hopefully we can provide a training ground to see if that's what they want to do. We haven't dealt with that at all, really, very limited sense because what happens to a lot of

people not only in high school but also in college is that they have this ideals which they've built up over years and years and years. Their parents have had for them... They never have a chance till they're kicked out of school or pushed out or gradually or whatever to find out if that's what they really want to do. And there's nothing worse than getting very into something and finding out that that's not what you wanted to do at all, and not having the money or the energies or whatever to be able to go back and do something else. I think we did a considerable disservice to people to not really have dealt with it. Provide work situation... setting up work situations, we have done it in some senses. We have done it with like particular students in schools, we have done it with people who have worked next door. I think that's a beginning.

R: As I understand what you've said, you feel courses in the aesthetic area like art or literature and social studies take on secondary importance and could almost be put in an elective capacity; they're not central.

N: No, I think they are very important. I didn't stress them because I think there are other things that we have to with right at the beginning first. I think they're just as important as developing reading skills in some sense because every-

one needs to have outlets. Like for art, just art, a lot of people who get turned on to art in that being turned on to something else they find other ways to get excited about learning. They have to learn back door process. They have to have some success doing something else. I may just relate to a reading skill or something, but once they've become successful at something else, it's easier to challenge something that's been a lot harder for them. I think they are important. There's a lot of things that we have to work on, and you spend years doing it. Sure, I think that what you did working with political system in our country was really fantastic because people have gotten so turned off and so they have a feeling of frustration not being able to change things. It becomes a self fulfilling prophecy. They just don't change. Not only do they not change at school, what happens at school, but politically they don't change. The types of people that end up being reelect, etcetera. We have to deal with those kind of realities in our school, like the democratic process that we tried to do in our meetings and also in our classes. It's incorporated into everything.

R: Do you have anything in particular to add, important in an overview and evaluation of this year?

N: I think that the Alternative High School will not be as successful as it can be because of the very structure. The other schools will be the same way. We feel the crunch even more because we're smaller. The things that I wanted to do that I feel we need to do, I hate to be a little on the doom side, I feel a lot of positive things too but that it will take us a lot longer to accomplish just because of the setbacks. I think that hopefully we're going to have to be, all of us, whoever works here next year, more politically minded in the school district than we have been this year. Because I know I haven't been as much as I need to be, in order to understand what they're doing to us. I think you had to take care of those things too much and trying to reach and trying to do those things, too, it's pretty hard. Maybe impossible in the total sense that we all need to be more aware, we all need to be more interested in what's happening as far as the school is concerned. Another thing I'd like to do is that at staff meetings, maybe take a couple of students in our counseling sessions who are not making it, who are not coming to school, and just not get in the traditional sense of knocking them down, but just develop way to improve them, and find out where the people have been dealing with that person, and why they got turned off if you

can. You can work out a lot of problems that way. I'd also like to see our counseling program developed at the Alternative High School, where new students coming in a good orientation program that is continuing. Maybe if you just bring people in at the beginning of the quarter, that will be fine but that people are not allowed to start anytime and expect whoever is going to be your counselor just drop things and take care of their problems. Not only people that are students in the Alternative High School already to do that with their points, but it would work out specific times in the quarter to get together with people. I don't know if it's better to do it school wise or just for each person that's doing the counseling to work it out with their student. Maybe, I don't know. I don't think it's worked to the best advantage as effectively as it should because a lot of people kind of discouraged and quit coming to the Alternative High School because somehow, well there's a lot of reasons. It's not because we haven't talked to them enough but I think if we had more times when we just got together informally with the students that we were working with on a counseling basis. The point is we have to iron out a lot of problems that seem to linger on from term to term. Those are things that I think that I really ought to talk about.

R: There is one minority feeling about what you said and that is the idea that it is not our responsibility to counsel students.

N: I know he thinks that...I'm not saying...how I feel about involvement is probably different than Don's and how he defines involvement. I don't think that everyone has to be talking all the time. That isn't necessary to be involved. Or do you have to be running around doing a lot of things. My definition of involvement is on a different level I think than Don's. It would be more that people do know that we care about them and we do want to work with them whether it takes five minutes to help figure out some little thing that bothers them or five hours. And we have tried the different strategies that we talked about of encouraging them, leaving them alone or just kind of a combination of both where we are around and when they come in we suggest things, that we've tried all those things. I wouldn't do that, I don't think we need to do it with everyone but especially people who haven't been coming to the Alternative High School but have gotten turned off by one thing or another. We should deal with those people first and not neglect the people that are quiet because a lot of times that happens that you take care of those people who seem to be having the most problems in one way or another.

I don't know if it's just adjusting. Sometimes they're new students and they just don't know what is available to them. So all we need to do is just have somebody introduce them to what's going on in the sense of library, etcetera. You need somebody to take them around and work with them specially. I don't see that as being a threatening thing. I don't think it has to be done in a threatening way. That's what I mean by involvement. It's knowing that we are in the way we are a family and if they participate in the best way they can, they'll get so much more out of the Alternative High School than they would if they just sat around. It's all selfishness, hiding in your little corner. Because I don't think that that helps them become the person that they wanted to become.

D=Doug, an Alternative School Teacher

R=Researcher

R: What did you expect The Alternative School to be like when you first came?

D: Probably A. S. Neill's Summerhill is about as close as I can come.

R: What do you expect to be doing as a teacher?

D: Okay, I assumed that I would be there to help students learn in a sense where they could locate certain materials. I had assumed that most of the students were probably motivated, at least on an individual basis, rather than to say, going to a class and listen to somebody lecture, I thought that was where they were least at. That they were going to depend on their own personal resources, to get together through kind of material, and learn from it. This isn't exactly what happened. Yeah, all in all I expected the students at least to be motivated when they did go.

R: How would you describe the motivation of the students?

D: It's really poor. There's some students that are motivated like one student, for one, I think (two students), these students I don't think you really have to spend too much time with. You can point out certain materials and

certain ideas and so forth and they'll take it on their own to follow those things up. But certain other students that I find that you've got to pull the wool over and trick them into doing certain things which is what I didn't want to do. It's to be much like a West High in a sense of saying you have to be here or else. You can come here. But it's got the same kinds of rules and regulations that you've just got to pull the wool over the student's eyes. I didn't want to get into lecturing kind of things because I felt students aren't going to learn as much if they would get in there and do some reading and writing. That's another thing, I assumed the students did do some reading and some writing but this isn't taking place, unfortunately. The only alternative I have now is staff people are going to have to be more aggressive with the students, depending more on lectures and try to make the structure of the lectures so that the students will come to question the lecturer, or the material being lectured to get some kind of interaction. Otherwise, if it's what they want to hear, what they think is right, then they'll just lay back and listen. And possibly some kind of a mini-course thing, because I find that students interest burn out after about two days on one subject. And I found out that it's going to take a lot more planning than what

I've been doing, a hell of a lot.

R: Why do you suppose it is that they're so academically lazy, so seeming not to care?

D: I don't know whether if it's that they don't really value education, perhaps, they've just associated education as something negative. Somehow I think that you've got to prove that it's quite the opposite. Our approach to that problem I think has been all wrong. I don't know exactly what approach we can take. Transferring from a highly structured environment like East or West, where you've got to be there every day to something that's a little bit more free such like The Alternative School, you don't have to be there every day. You can be there whenever you want to be. To adjust to that kind of environment takes time, and with highly motivated students it takes probably somewhere around four or five weeks. Considering that these aren't highly motivated students it might take longer. There's a lot of factors. One might be home environment. You identify with your parent's support. I believe in identification theory. That has an awful lot to with it. And going to the background of the students you see that maybe their father isn't a professor in chemistry, something like that. So they really can't identify with an awful lot of education. You

have to come up with some kind of, get something to motivate you in some other area and these students just don't have that. They have more going against education than for it. Another one, I noticed that throughout the semester that I've been there, it's just that students have been down on staff people for being so highly unorganized. That's probably a good reason to turn students off.

R: Do you agree that students can't tolerate teachers not going 'by the rules' so to speak?

D: I've experienced that in different ways, too. It's always the philosophy of us and them. Most of the students held to that philosophy, us and them meaning East or West or other people. The idea of we, I don't know, that hasn't really developed within them.

R: What kind of problems might there be in the us and them problem as students see it?

D: I don't know. Us and them, it's a stereotype for staff. Maybe students have to work from the stereotype as an anchoring point as to what that person might be and then, how close can they get to that person. There are certain expectations that must be met. If the staff person doesn't meet those expectations and that throws the anchoring point way off. I don't know. There's a lot more there that I haven't

really thought much about. I think it's significant.

R: How do you think the staff might be able to take the initiative to break this down?

D: It would have to come from something like total honesty. For example is the issue that is now pending before the Wednesday meetings. You've explained your position, kind of vaguely, you'd say, well I won't do it, and I don't think you really explained why and what your feelings were. You said you won't do it and people will say wow. You should say I'm under pressure because such and such and such, etcetera. Then, my own feelings are this. Don hasn't been totally honest with the students in that sense, it would seem. Well, I'm going to do this and this and this is probably what's going to happen rather than say let's do this and let's do this, that's a better way. He doesn't say, well this is probably what's going to happen. Don never stated all the pros of his position, very few of the cons, if any.

R: So you feel more honest communication might break it down?

D: Yeah, for sure. That's the only way you can break down stereotypes.

R: Do you think the students have a particular stereotype of the staff?

D: Yeah. I think it's you're receiving money, and therefore you've got to perform. I know they've taken me out of this because I don't receive money. The money aspect, you're getting paid. Several students said that that's placing you apart from the students, too. You're getting paid to do this.

R: Do you think there are any positive things that come out of the distinction between staff and students? What would be the most healthy arrangement between students and staff and how should they relate to each other? How should those two groups relate in the most positive way?

D: What I've done is that as a person, again it's okay to do certain things, but as a staff person I have to play this role. There's no way in hell I can get out of it, cause I am not the person, I'm not really the feeling person in the role I have to play when I come to The Alternative School. I have certain responsibilities otherwise I wouldn't be there. I have to hold true to these things. I try to explain that every time I make a decision, like in the dope thing, go ahead smoke, I think it's okay now, but I don't smoke it for various reasons, like such and such. But, it's okay at this time although you may get caught. Another example is when you go on field trips several students would ask, "can I

smoke dope?" I said okay, I don't care but let's wait. I'll play God and say you can't smoke it now. You have to wait until we get out of town then it's relatively safe. But then keep your eyes open for cops. You can't beat them in that sense, so help them. So they may not get caught at it. I don't know. I guess we wait until the situation happens something like that and then I have to go back on my past experience at high school and what I did plus other different experiences I've had. I can see where a lot of the students they're acting in way that I think isn't beneficial to them. But then going back over my own experience, I did the same thing and I wasn't listening to no one who was going to tell me something different until I found out by experience. You just have got to learn through experience.

R: In the semester you've been at The Alternative School what were your most positive moments?

D: Probably the Wednesday meetings. That and the recent field trip we took backpacking. That was a great experience. The court thing on the judiciary committee, that was a good experience. Then there were some individual classroom experiences that I've had, that were planned for in a way, that... it's like this thing where you try and manipulate the student's experience so they'll discover things for themselves

and then quite often...and I've planned this out the previous night or couple of nights to have this certain experience take place without it appearing like I wanted it to take place. Quite the opposite happened and it still came out really. That seems to excite students.

R: Don was saying about the camping trip, taking the stereotype thing one step further, he went along expecting you to bring some structured ideas on the trip.

D: I took it as that I'd bring some of The Alternative School as what he expects The Alternative School to...

R: Yeah.

D: I thought about it but then I figured, why try to mix the two because they can go out there and they can experience, and from what they've experienced, then once they get back to The Alternative School, then we should go over it like in a paper. In ways like that. Once they're out there let them experience for themselves. In doing the paper I hope to say, well did you experience this? Why not? I experienced this, why do you think we did? What did you learn from your mistakes, etcetera? Learning after the fact rather than trying...I realized once they got out there, all this talk about social stratification... I figured once they got out there and they froze and they got wet and

they were miserable, a tremendous amount of learning would take place. What can you do to prevent this in the future? If it really looked like the students were just sitting around with nothing to do, then I probably would have taken direct action to have something to do.

R: The conclusion that Don drew from that trip was that that is the kind of activity we should engage in all the time, activities which will self-generate some learning, motivation, etcetera.

D: I think, I agree in part with him but I think an awful lot of emphasis should be to go back over the experience and see what you've learned, and this takes classroom activities. Because if you don't, then it's going to be lost and you'll actually learned nothing. You can learn whether it's a positive experience or negative experience. You take and break it down and put it in some kind of structure. Why didn't you enjoy it or why did you enjoy it, etcetera? Of course you write and so forth. I think one goes with the other. You should try to bring the writing and spelling talents to it or else you blow the whole thing.

R: I really agree with that. Could you say something about what happened with the court thing?

D: Okay, I think that it was fairly fair and just and I tried to bias the court to my side and throwing in all kinds of bullshit and apparently they were able to see through the bullshit and get to the point. It was really great.

R: What was the most frustrating experience at The Alternative School?

D: One of the most disheartening things was at the end of the last quarter when you're figuring out the point system. I knew better then to, I talked to you about the point system and something in me says I have to talk to him, that's not going to work. But I said I think it will work. And sure enough, it really burned a lot of students. Yeah, okay, the record keeping. That really burned a lot of students. Students assumed that they had so many points in my classes and I knew that they didn't have them, but I didn't have the documents to prove it to them; their expectations for the grade. There were some that obviously did deserve more than ...deserved fifty points, whereas according to the records, they only received ten. They should never learn to be dependent on somebody else whether it's staff or the welfare office or something like that; keeping track of their records. I would say that maybe you should have counseling, you should beef up the counseling system and say that they should counsel

once a week where their points are or something like that. That if a student has irresponsible behavior then he's going to carry it along into the outside door and this is what he's going to do for the rest of his life. Maybe you should let him know early enough that...point it out that this might happen. Then maybe he'll be aware of it.

R: What do you think about whatever counseling we do have at the Alternative High School and what do you think it ought to be?

D: I don't know. It's really hard to say. I've got counseling tied up with contracts and contracts at The Alternative School are really bad because they're just nonexistent. However they exist, at least on paper or in the student handbook. As it now stands, it's really poor. I've seen my people at the start of the quarter and I guess I'll see them at the end of the quarter. Students, none of my students that I counsel, my advisees, have I talked to. Most of the people I've talked to and counsel are somebody else's students.

R: Do you think perhaps those are two separate functions and should or should not be separate functions, academic advising and counseling?

D: Well that's really hard to say. That's a tough question,

probably prove to be that's something between two personalities...that I would say that maybe should be together perhaps that way to let both people get to know each other better, and some trust place. Because I just don't have enough contact with those people I'm responsible for now.

R: What do you think could facilitate more contact?

D: You mentioned something earlier I was thinking over, too, and that was maybe each student taking a class should draw up a separate contract with the instructor. That way I would have some knowledge of where this guy's at with his contract. I would be responsible rather than you be responsible for a contract that actually takes place between me and another person. You don't know exactly what's going on. You don't know how his performance is. But that makes an awful lot of contracts. But then I can see something, well that's another problem.

R: If we get like that we spend a lot of time negotiating. I guess the only justification is that if we can justify that as being education.

D: Well, you could move to another structure. Well, I like playing around because that's the only way to go with The Alternative School. I think it's unique cause if you say I'm interested in the social services then you'll be the

coordinator for that area and people who think they're interested in that area can go in there and can spend a time block of two hours, and get to know your students. And tailor it to meet certain needs like most of the students can't get there on Thursday so we'll just drop Thursday and call that a study period, a research period for those people. But then you spend an awful lot of time with the individual students mostly interested in that area. At that time maybe a lot of good counseling can come forth. At least half the day is spent coordinating study programs, the other half in classroom type activities specializing in spelling or writing, creative writing, or independent studies. Another real sad ...something that's really sad about The Alternative School that's independent study.

R: What would you say are some of the major problems of independent study?

D: I really haven't seen Marcy in action, I guess she's in charge of that independent study, I guess. I've taken some independent study in certain subject areas. But, let's see who was it...(a student), no it was (another student) who brought in a wad of papers, it must have been about thirty papers or something. I don't recall if she ever went over those papers or not but she said that was worth a credit.

So the only thing I can think of is that she didn't really check over the papers. Maybe (student) got the idea of just trying something out and just handed it to her and if she thinks you're a good joe that she won't go over this stuff. I don't know how much interaction had gone on before start of the quarter and at the end of the quarter he came in with the paper.

R: What would a good independent study be, how would that work?

D: I could say, well, what I'd like to see is independent study coming out of specific subject areas and I find, say current events. You say you've been going to current events. Okay, I'm going to deal with this thing for the next two weeks or so. Then you draw up a contract. Then you drop the class and go into that one specific area, spend time. That would be---I think you could do it. What else can I say about independent study? That's the fault of the structure at The Alternative School. Students know that's what the structure is. You're just going to work something out at the start of the quarter and at the end of the quarter you hand it in. Nothing else is required of you (the teacher). I think it's something that, you know, if a dif-

ferent structure applies there, then you might get more gratification out of the relationship. The way it's structured now, there's no way to help.

R: The bad points are what happened with point-keeping, then independent study and with the contracts.

D: There's a lot of small things.

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