

Report on the Alternative Education Programs for the Santa Clara County Office of Education

Submitted to:

Board of Trustees
Santa Clara County Office of Education
1290 Ridder Park Drive
San Jose, CA 95131

Prepared by:

Marycruz Diaz
Rebeca Diaz
Don Dixon

Submitted by:

WestEd
Evaluation Research Program
730 Harrison Street
San Francisco, California 94107-1242

Date: January 12, 2011



Table of Contents

List of Exhibits	4
Executive Summary	i
Introduction	1
Methodology	2
Assessment Approach	2
Study Limitations	3
Data Collection Methods.....	3
<i>Community Forum on Alternative Education</i>	4
<i>Site Visits</i>	4
<i>Interviews</i>	5
<i>Focus Groups</i>	8
<i>Observations</i>	9
<i>Surveys</i>	9
<i>Document and Data Reviews</i>	10
Data Analysis.....	10
Findings	12
Part I: Review of Models for Alternative Education.....	16
<i>Literature Review</i>	16
<i>California Practices</i>	19
<i>Developmental Model for School Performance</i>	22
Part II: Appraisal of Current SCCOE Programming Elements.....	25
<i>Who Attends SCCOE Schools?</i>	25
<i>SCCOE Characteristics Compared with Best Practice Counties</i>	26
<i>Referring Districts in Santa Clara County</i>	28
Part III: Emerging Themes.....	35
<i>Organizational and Administrative Environment</i>	35
<i>Culture and Climate</i>	46
<i>Staffing and Professional Development</i>	54
<i>Curriculum and Instruction</i>	60
<i>Student Outcomes</i>	63
Recommendations	76
References	78
Appendix A: Protocols	80
protocols	80
<i>California County Staff</i>	80
<i>Administrator</i>	81
<i>Transfer Coordinator</i>	81
<i>Board Member</i>	82
<i>Referring District Staff</i>	82
<i>Principal</i>	84
<i>Counselor/Aide</i>	85
<i>Probation Officer</i>	86
<i>Teacher</i>	86
<i>Parent</i>	87

<i>Student</i>	88
Surveys	88
<i>Principal</i>	88
<i>Teacher/Education Assistant</i>	90
<i>School Office Coordinator</i>	93
Appendix B: SCCOE Teacher/Education Assistant Survey Results	95

List of Exhibits

Exhibit 1: Stakeholders Interviewed	5
Exhibit 2: Stakeholder Groups Participating in Focus Groups	8
Exhibit 3: Survey Response Rates	10
Exhibit 4: Best Practices from Common Elements of Effective Programs	20
Exhibit 5: Stages of Student Development and Desired Behavior Outcome.....	23
Exhibit 6: Developmental Stages, Indicators of Growth, and Data to Assess Growth.....	24
Exhibit 7: Characteristics of Comparison Counties	26
Exhibit 8: County Office Enrollment by Type.....	27
Exhibit 9: CBEDS Enrollment Figures for SCCOE Schools, 1998-2010	28
Exhibit 10: SCCOE Community School Enrollment by Referring Schools for Selected Months.....	29
Exhibit 11: Patterns of Alternative School Enrollment in Santa Clara County Districts Serving High School-Aged Students*	31
Exhibit 12: Comparison of Referral to SCCOE Community Schools from Santa Clara County Districts Serving High School-Aged Students*.....	32
Exhibit 13: Demography of Santa Clara County Districts with High and Low Referral Rates to SCCOE Community Schools*.....	34
Exhibit 14: Comparison of 2009-2010 CHKS and CSCS Responses.....	48
Exhibit 15: School Environment Measures for SCCOE, Best Practice Counties, and Statewide 11 th Graders	48
Exhibit 16: Measures of School Connectedness and Engagement from CHKS Responses.....	50
Exhibit 17: Measures of School Environment from CHKS Responses.....	52
Exhibit 18: Teachers' Length of Service Across Counties, 2009-2010.....	54
Exhibit 19: SCCOE Teacher Professional Development Needs	60
Exhibit 20: Measures of Student Behavior from CHKS Responses.....	65
Exhibit 21: API of SCCOE and State Average for Institutional and Community Schools, 2006-2007 to 2009-2010.....	67
Exhibit 22: SCCOE CAHSEE 2009-2010 Pass Rates by Grade.....	69
Exhibit 23: SCCOE and Comparison County CAHSEE ELA Pass Rates	70
Exhibit 24: SCCOE and Comparison County CAHSEE Math Pass Rates.....	71
Exhibit 25: Average High School Credits Earned Monthly	72
Exhibit 26: GED Section Pass Rate for Institutional Schools.....	73
Exhibit 27: Grade Level of Dropouts from 2005-2006 Cohort of SCCOE Schools.....	74
Exhibit 28: Community School Dropout as Percentage of 2005-2006 Cohort	75

Executive Summary

The Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE) serves students who have been expelled, are academically deficient, are on probation, and/or have severe behavioral and discipline problems through its Alternative Education Programs (AEP) in court and community schools. SCCOE's AEP is operating in a fluid environment where change is occurring. For many years, there have been concerns by AEP stakeholders that the program is not adequately serving students. In the last two years, various reforms have been implemented. However, the SCCOE Board of Trustees has been uncertain that these reforms are the appropriate way to proceed given the continuity of numerous complaints from the AEP community.

The assessment approach addressed the concerns shared by the SCCOE Board of Trustees and the requirements for the assessment that SCCOE enumerated in its Request for Proposals (RFP). Using multiple research methods, WestEd gathered both quantitative and qualitative data through four main activities:

- An appraisal of current SCCOE programming elements and formative outcomes
- Research on best practices in alternative education programs
- Solicitation of stakeholder input through various forms—a community forum, site visits, interviews, focus groups, and surveys
- A synthesis of trends in alternative education, stakeholder feedback, and site observations culminating into findings and actionable recommendations for effecting change in SCCOE's AEP

WestEd's report provides an objective view of the AEP, and in many ways, the unvarnished truth, that may help bring the divided perspectives together to take a step forward in improving students' lives. Key findings from WestEd's assessment of SCCOE's AEP include:

While alternative education is a developing and fragmented field, both in terms of verified research knowledge and implementation, emerging research indicates there are some common characteristics of successful alternative education programs:

- Leadership that is coordinated, sets a mission, and is responsive to student needs
- Collaborative partnerships that integrate family, school, and community efforts
- A positive school culture that encourages safety, high expectations, and reciprocity
- A strong academic program with ambitious professional development and regular student assessment

- Students as the focal point of all decisions

SCCOE has made significant improvements in the last two years, with changes implemented reflecting alignments with best practices of other California counties—a closely-aligned curriculum, assessment, scheduling, and in-service training. The predominant perception across all levels of stakeholders is that SCCOE is improving.

- A primary focus of the changes implemented have centered on replacing and developing leadership. New staff is on board both as administrators and principals. Further, principals have received regular support to become stronger instructional leaders.
- The roll-out of a newly adopted curriculum with accompanying assessments, scheduling, and in-service trainings is creating consistency and coordination in programming across SCCOE.

While SCCOE has implemented changes in various areas, there is a need for a stronger organizational and administrative environment that includes high levels of internal two-way communication, a consultative planning and decision-making process, and an organizational focus or mission agreed upon by all levels within the county.

- School staffs feel there is a great disconnect between the central office and the various sites, with very little consultation and communication regarding decisions that impact schools and students.
- Many AEP stakeholders perceive consultation and communication with the various community agencies as weak. Engaging these critical partners in the AEP is key for providing needed services to students.

Perceptions of SCCOE’s culture and climate are inconsistent. Students and parents are generally satisfied with the climate. School staff has low morale.

- Students and parents appreciate the small school setting and individualized instruction.
- Students and parents feel that schools care about student success and safety.
- Teachers do not feel appreciated for their work, their responsibilities are extensive, and they are ambivalent about so much change, particularly related to staff turnover.

School staffs have mixed perceptions regarding changes in staffing. Staff is pleased with the new support positions, such as the Miri and California Youth Outreach staff. However, staff is dissatisfied with the lack of experience and expertise among principals and teachers.

- SCCOE increased the number of single subject, highly-qualified teachers, but these teachers instruct subjects beyond those in which they are credentialed.

- Staff perceives the need for training to understand and work with students in alternative education.

Professional development is plentiful, yet overwhelming and incomplete.

- There is a need for more follow up to the training provided, technology training, and sensitivity training.
- Teachers want county office staff at schools to facilitate the implementation of reforms.

Teachers and other stakeholders believe there is value in creating a network to share practices.

- Teachers would like more time to meet with colleagues about the curriculum, teaching approaches, and student needs.
- Teachers want to be part of the decision-making regarding the implementation of reforms.

The new curriculum has generally been well-received, yet there are concerns about its implementation.

- Too much curriculum is being rolled out too fast and staff is uncertain they can implement the curriculum with fidelity.
- School staff is aware of and beginning to use the new curriculum, but its adoption for some illuminates the AEP's move toward a traditional school, causing disappointment about this shift.
- While staff like the move toward current technology, there is a need for technology that works efficiently and training to use it for instruction.

Parents, students, SCCOE administrators, some teachers, and referring district staff believe greater academic rigor is necessary for students. Administrators, teachers, and district staff see the curriculum adoption as a step in the right direction.

Measures of student and school academic growth need to be used jointly to provide a more complete view of SCCOE school performance and may include data from the California Healthy Kids Survey, the California School Climate Survey, the Academic Performance Index, indicators of annual yearly progress, the Alternative School Accountability Model, the California High School Exit Exam, and graduation rates.

- Students' self-reported drug use and violence-related acts are generally higher than students in model practice counties, particularly regarding drinking or being high on school property.

- CAHSEE pass rates for SCCOE 10th grade students are lower than the pass rates for two of the model practice counties.

While creating change and seeing results often takes time and focused effort, WestEd’s recommendations can be stepping stones toward creating a best practice AEP. WestEd recommends the SCCOE Board of Trustees and administrators consider key actions in this report as steps to improve the AEP.

For SCCOE’s AEP reform to be successful, reform should proceed from the ground up and be teacher based. Without teacher buy-in, all of the efforts devoted to change may prove unsuccessful. Garnering the support and leadership of a small number of teachers, respected by their colleagues, to be change agents for the AEP would respond to teacher and community members’ desire to have teachers more involved in decision-making. Teachers can drive curricular change and other changes, such as creating more time for teacher collaboration. This may also help improve teacher morale in SCCOE.

SCCOE should spearhead the coordination of services among a greater number of community agencies and individuals invested in improving circumstances for alternative education students. Various stakeholders with extensive knowledge of services to support young people would like to work with SCCOE. Developing a steering committee representing the several key agencies—including probation—that convenes a summit to discuss a specific topic each month and identify action steps in response to that topic is essential to informing the direction of the AEP.

WestEd suggests that SCCOE develop a coordinated system of service delivery so that all staff, students, parents, and referring districts are aware of the supports available. The responsibility to intake, track, and produce reports on all students who enter the AEP may need to go beyond one person. For SCCOE to measure its impact in sending students back to their home districts, in graduating students, or in failing students, the county needs to have a consistent mechanism for gathering this information. One step toward this coordination is the creation of a team that reviews student records and identifies learning, behavioral, and health needs. This team, for example, can ensure each student is appropriately identified for an individualized education plan, matched to a school based on specific criteria, and referred to community agencies as needed.

SCCOE should create a stronger sense of community in its AEP. Reports of connectedness to SCCOE and schools were varied among staff. Full implementation of a reward system, such as the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support model, for student growth—both for academics and behavior—at each school may support student connectedness. Recognizing staff for hard work and for going above and beyond their role is another step toward creating community. Additionally, SCCOE administrators can hold quarterly “community meetings” to engage with staff, students, and parents and discuss concerns about and progress of the AEP.

To ensure fidelity of curriculum implementation, SCCOE should consider slowing down the training and implementation schedule of the new curriculum. While there was general

agreement for the need to adopt a new curriculum, teachers are overwhelmed by the amount and intensity of training. Teachers need more time to process the information and also need more guided information about implementing the curriculum. Teachers and principals expressed the desire to have more time for on-site staff meetings to discuss professional development, the new curriculum, as well as the challenges and successes of implementation. These minor changes may have a lasting impact on practice.

SCCOE needs to create more positive relationships among staff and between staff and students. SCCOE hired many new staff in the last two years. There is the sense that many teachers are not prepared to work with alternative education students who often have severe academic deficiencies and behavioral problems. Further, it is perceived that SCCOE teachers and administrators do not understand students' lives. Training in youth development approaches and sensitivity to work with students of color can benefit all SCCOE staff to ensure relationship building with students. Additionally, SCCOE can establish a shadow program for teachers to learn from those who have positive rapport with students.

WestEd strongly encourages SCCOE to develop a plan based on some of the findings and actionable recommendations presented in this report to guide the AEP efforts moving forward. A steering committee can establish goals, indicators of progress and success, a timeline for meetings and products, and responsibilities for each of the participating individuals or agencies. Further, progress of these developments should be regularly communicated to the community to increase transparency between SCCOE and the various stakeholders.

Introduction

WestEd is pleased to submit its report on the Santa Clara County Office of Education's (SCCOE) Alternative Education Programs (AEP). The SCCOE Board of Education asked the superintendent to secure the services of an outside consulting organization, WestEd, to assess the quality and configuration of its current AEP and make recommendations for improving SCCOE's quality and responsiveness to student needs. WestEd reviewed and analyzed current services, researched and compared model alternative education programs, and through this report, makes recommendations for enhancing SCCOE services. This report of findings intends to enable the SCCOE and its Board of Trustees to make sound judgments to improve the AEP.

The SCCOE AEP serves approximately 800 students at 11 sites through community and institutional schools. The majority of its students are incarcerated in juvenile hall or at county-run "ranches." A new superintendent and deputy superintendent have led SCCOE for over two years. In addition, within the last year there has been turnover with the chief schools officer and the AEP director, positions that have direct oversight of the AEP. SCCOE hired replacements for these positions, within the last six months.

SCCOE's AEP is operating in a fluid environment where change is occurring at the national, state, and local levels. These changes impact leadership, funding allocations, and accountability measures for programs that may profoundly impact work at the county, district, and school levels. Failure to meet state educational standards may result in assignment of Program Improvement (PI) status, which carries various consequences, such as revising the Local Education Agency (LEA) Plans. Through these plans, affected sites are asked to rethink past ways of working and apply new strategies to produce positive outcomes for students. Failure to make improvements through these strategies increases the sanctions placed upon the site. Additionally, revamped categorical program compliance monitoring in California requires sites to shift their approach to documenting their progress. These changes may present opportunities for SCCOE to implement new and efficient practices that use fewer fiscal and human resources while also improving educational and life outcomes for young people.

This report opens with a description of the methodology employed to conduct the AEP assessment. The report then presents the findings in three parts. Part I presents a review of model practices for alternative education. Part II appraises the current AEP elements, describing the practices taking place. Part III highlights the emerging themes from the study, organized around five key elements aligned to literature on alternative education. Lastly, recommendations are presented.

Methodology

This section describes the methodology WestEd employed to conduct the assessment of SCCOE's AEP. First, the assessment approach is presented, followed by the study limitations, and then data collection methods analysis conducted for the study.

ASSESSMENT APPROACH

SCCOE has operated an AEP for many decades through an established program that serves students in court and community schools. Assessments of a long-standing program, like the AEP, may occur for a variety of reasons, including to collect hard data on its impact; to justify a decision to continue or expand it; or to respond to community members' priorities (Rossi & Freeman, 1993). Since 2008, the Board of Trustees perceived the AEP was a weak program, with concerns about the diverging viewpoints about the schools' focus—academics versus reducing violent tendencies, lack of consistency among the schools, recruitment of qualified teachers and administrators, and the need for a plan to guide the AEP. WestEd's assessment addresses the various concerns shared by the SCCOE Board of Trustees and the requirements for the assessment that SCCOE enumerated in its Request for Proposals (RFP). To guide the assessment, WestEd developed four questions:

- What influence are programs having on student academic achievement and socio-emotional needs?
- How are programs configured to support site, staff, student, and community development?
- What promising practices are local and national alternative education programs using that could be adapted?
- How can programming be improved to ensure stakeholders are benefitting from services offered?

These four questions framed the approach to the assessment, serving as an umbrella for viewing the AEP. Using multiple research methods, WestEd gathered data related to these questions and linked to the SCCOE program areas, as well as best practices for promoting positive youth development.

WestEd gathered both quantitative and qualitative data through four main activities:

- An appraisal of current SCCOE programming elements and formative outcomes
- Research on best practices in alternative education programs
- Solicitation of stakeholder input through various forms—a community forum, site visits, interviews, focus groups, and surveys

- A synthesis of trends in alternative education, stakeholder feedback, and site observations culminating into findings and actionable recommendations for effecting change in SCCOE's AEP

As the study proceeded, WestEd developed more specific questions that were asked of multiple individuals to measure the breadth of common perceptions across the county. To clearly identify the questions to be asked of the various stakeholders, WestEd created a crosswalk that guided instrument development.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

SCCOE's RFP identified over 30 areas to study in the assessment, including curricula, teacher qualities and characteristics, professional development, drug rehabilitation, counseling, parent involvement, student and staff safety, and size of the program to name some of these areas. While all are important to alternative education programs, WestEd chose to limit its assessment to a subset of these areas for several reasons. First, studying over 30 areas with the level of resources available for the assessment would have resulted in more surface findings, without much depth. In WestEd's initial meeting with Board of Trustee representatives and SCCOE administrators, they communicated that WestEd should go deep to support the development of a plan to guide the AEP. WestEd decided to concentrate on areas that surfaced most during its preliminary site visits and the community forum on alternative education, as well as the areas identified by literature as quality practices. Second, the timing of the study impacted the assessment. SCCOE has implemented reforms in many program areas, including some of the 30 areas identified in the RFP. At the time of WestEd's data collection, many of the areas asked about elicited responses reflecting programming that was in flux. Thus, this study is formative and cannot yet measure the impact of programming. Additionally, the seven-month time frame, while necessary to inform the AEP planning, can only measure a point in time. Third, due to limited access to students and parents in institutional schools, which serve the highest proportion of SCCOE's AEP students, the study could not capture the most marginalized voices SCCOE serves. Thus, this study is more representative of community schools.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

WestEd employed multiple methods to capture broad stakeholder feedback across various areas. These methods responded to the four study questions and programmatic areas SCCOE asked WestEd to study. As such, WestEd convened a community forum on alternative education, conducted site visits to all SCCOE schools and the alternative education programs in two other California counties, interviewed 51 stakeholders, conducted focus groups with various stakeholder groups totaling 116 participants, informally observed the sites, administered three surveys, and reviewed documents and data to inform the study findings.

COMMUNITY FORUM ON ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

WestEd convened and facilitated a community forum in June 2010 at the SCCOE offices to gather community member input regarding SCCOE's AEP. The forum served as an excellent opportunity to collect multiple community stakeholder perspectives. SCCOE administrators and select Board of Trustees identified 45 individuals representing various agencies serving alternative education students to participate in the forum. SCCOE provided WestEd these individuals' contact information, including email addresses and phone numbers. WestEd composed the email invitation language and SCCOE staff managed the responses to the online invitation. Only community members were invited to the forum, intended to be held without SCCOE representatives in attendance, to facilitate open conversations about the AEP. Eighteen individuals attended, representing the following categories: community-based organizations/local experts (n=11), school district representatives (n=7), and board trustee (n=1).¹ Seven individuals representing law enforcement were invited, but none attended. Information shared by community members during the forum was used to inform WestEd's data collection, as key issues surfaced that were explored more completely during interviews and focus groups. Specifically, attendees spoke to the history of SCCOE's AEP that contextualized the project, shared their concerns regarding AEP students, and also identified key components necessary for supporting student academic and life success.

SITE VISITS

WestEd conducted two rounds of site visits to SCCOE's AEP sites. The first round of site visits, or preliminary visits, were conducted in June 2010 at the beginning of the assessment. Two Board of Trustees recommended WestEd conduct these visits to see programming prior to the end of the 2009-2010 academic year. SCCOE staff organized the site visits, given the short lead-time of a week to plan the visits prior to the last day of school at the community schools. SCCOE identified four schools for the half-day visits over two days. The sites were: 1) Stonegate, 2) Osborne, 3) Pathfinder, and 4) Novo. A team of three WestEd staff visited on the first day and two staff visited on the second day. These visits benefitted WestEd in four key ways: 1) we became familiar with the sites' physical locations; 2) we observed the populations served; 3) we met staff at each site; and 4) we conducted informal interviews with principals. Further, these visits allowed WestEd to gather contextual information that helped in the development of data collection instruments.

The second round of site visits were conducted between late August 2010 and November 2010, once the 2010-2011 academic year started. WestEd visited all 11 county-run sites, seven community schools and four institutional schools. One WestEd staff member, fluent in both English and Spanish, conducted in-depth one-day visits to each site. WestEd, with SCCOE help, scheduled the site visits and contacted each principal directly to ensure understanding of the visit and the role of the visits in the study.

¹ While no SCCOE administrators or Board of Trustees were invited to the community forum, one Board of Trustee attended.

The in-depth site visits provided an opportunity for WestEd to formally meet with principals, teachers, students, parents, and other key staff such as education assistants, guidance counselors, intern psychologists, and probation officers. WestEd developed protocols for each respondent type so that data collected across the sites were consistent and could be compared when analyzed. The visits generally consisted of the following:

- 60-minute interview with the principal
- 50-minute focus group with teachers
- 45-minute focus group with parents
- 45-minute focus group with students
- 45-minute focus group or conversation with other key staff (as designated by the site)
- Informal observations of the site’s program

The site visitor took notes during each interview and focus group. Additionally, the site visitor requested respondent permission to audio record the conversations to accurately capture shared perspectives. Only one group of community school teachers chose not to be audio recorded. The notes and audio recordings were only shared with the WestEd team. No SCCOE or other personnel had access to these data.

Additionally, WestEd visited two counties in California, known for running high quality alternative education programs, to understand the factors contributing to their functioning. One WestEd staff member conducted one-day visits to each county, speaking with key personnel responsible for programming.

INTERVIEWS

WestEd conducted interviews with various SCCOE and AEP stakeholders, both in person and by telephone. Interviews allowed deep conversations about stakeholders’ work and included probes to understand roles in supporting students in the AEP. While interviews are resource intensive, WestEd identified key individuals who could provide detailed accounts of programming from unique perspectives. In all, 51 stakeholders were interviewed, as illustrated in Exhibit 1.

Exhibit 1: Stakeholders Interviewed

Interviewee	N
California county staff	17
SCCOE key stakeholders	11
Referring district staff	9
SCCOE principals	7
Other key staff	7
Total	51

CALIFORNIA COUNTY STAFF

To understand how alternative education programming works in SCCOE relative to other counties in California, WestEd interviewed 17 staff from three county offices of education²—the San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE), the Orange County Office of Education (OCOE), and the San Joaquin County Office of Education (SJCOE). With help from SCCOE administrators and California Department of Education (CDE) staff, WestEd selected these counties, known for running quality alternative education programs. The goal of this effort was to provide a basis for comparison with SCCOE and to ascertain whether examples of model practices exist that could be appropriately incorporated in SCCOE’s AEP.

WestEd conducted both in-person and telephone interviews with key county staff, including superintendents, alternative education directors, and curriculum and instruction directors. Notes were taken during each of the interviews. An informal interview protocol was used as these conversations were meant to understand unique facets of programming, such as operating a successful community school, the challenges posed by fiscal constraints and state-level changes in funding, and program structure. Specific focus was given to factors that facilitate model programming. Common questions were asked of these county representatives to allow for comparison between the three counties and with SCCOE. (The California county staff protocol can be found in Appendix A.)

SCCOE KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Four SCCOE administrators—the superintendent, the deputy superintendent, the chief schools officer, and the AEP director; two SCCOE staff—the transfer coordinator and an administrative assistant; and five board members made up the 11 SCCOE key stakeholders WestEd interviewed. Ten of these interviews were conducted in person and one by telephone. WestEd developed formal protocols for each of these respondents. In all cases, respondents discussed additional themes not covered in the protocols.

SCCOE Administrators

Three WestEd staff conducted 60-minute interviews with the superintendent and deputy superintendent. Interviews explored SCCOE’s approach for alternative education, decision-making processes, challenges to running the AEP, changes instituted during the last two years, and indicators of success. Notes were taken during the interviews and permission was requested to audio record the conversation to supplement the notes. Additionally, the new chief schools officer and the AEP director were interviewed using a modified version of the administrator protocol considering their short tenure with SCCOE. All responses were treated as confidential. (The administrator protocol can be found in Appendix A.)

² WestEd visited two counties and conducted a phone interview with a third county. Thus, WestEd collected data from three counties.

SCCOE Staff

The transfer coordinator and an administrative assistant constituted the SCCOE staff interviewed. A formal protocol was developed for the transfer coordinator. Two WestEd staff conducted the 45-minute interview and asked for permission to audio record the conversation. Areas explored included the transfer process, communication with parents, students, districts, and principals, as well as changes in SCCOE during the last two years. (The transfer coordinator protocol can be found in Appendix A.) Additionally, three WestEd staff informally interviewed an administrative assistant in person immediately preceding the community forum. The 20-minute informal interview provided context for the project, as it took place at the beginning of the study. All responses were treated as confidential.

SCCOE Board Members

WestEd invited all seven SCCOE board members to participate in an individual 30-minute in-person interview at the SCCOE offices before a regularly scheduled board meeting. Five board members were available for an interview, which was conducted by one of three WestEd staff. Formal protocols were developed and asked four key questions of each member related to the SCCOE approach and philosophy for educating alternative education students, communication patterns between board members and SCCOE staff, indicators of a successful AEP, and changes that have occurred in the last two years. WestEd requested permission to audio record the conversations to supplement the notes. All responses were treated as confidential. (The board member protocol can be found in Appendix A.)

REFERRING DISTRICT STAFF

WestEd sought to understand the relationship between referring school districts and SCCOE, in particular as it related to the process of transferring students from the districts to the county and back. In the 2009-2010 academic year, 22 of the county's 32 districts referred students to the county's schools. SCCOE staff identified district staff that sent the most students to the county schools to help WestEd's selection of interview respondents. As such, WestEd conducted telephone interviews with nine referring district staff representing a cross-section of the districts that purchased slots and/or referred students to SCCOE's schools. The selected districts included those referring a large number of students and those referring few. In some cases, more than one staff member was interviewed. The job titles of those interviewed included dean of students, director of student services, assistant superintendent of educational services, director of curriculum and assessment, and principal. Questions asked during the interviews centered on five themes:

- Referral patterns and types of students referred
- Experience with the referral process
- Impact of geography and demographics of referring districts
- Perceptions of the adequacy and quality of SCCOE schools

- Communication levels and coordination between district and SCCOE staff

During each interview, respondents were also asked in what way these five themes had changed during the past two years. WestEd took notes during each interview and guaranteed responses would be treated as confidential.

SCCOE PRINCIPALS

WestEd conducted 60-minute interviews with seven principals. For all principals interviewed during the in-depth site visits, WestEd used a formal interview protocol that explored the context of programming, curriculum and assessment, school culture, and organizational issues. WestEd requested permission to audio record the conversations. One principal who left SCCOE in summer 2010 was only informally interviewed during the preliminary site visits.

OTHER KEY STAFF

During the in-depth site visits, principals identified other key staff that should be interviewed, depending on the services provided at the site. WestEd interviewed seven other key staff made up of two counselors, two intern psychologists, two resource specialist program (RSP) teachers, and one school office coordinator. Formal protocols were developed for the counselors because WestEd knew in advance of the site visits that we would interview them. Notes were taken during interviews with all respondents. With the formal interviews, WestEd requested permission to audio record the conversations. All responses were treated as confidential.

FOCUS GROUPS

WestEd conducted various focus groups during the in-depth site visits with the following respondent groups—students, teachers, parents, education assistants, and probation officers. At most sites, principals asked all teachers to participate in the focus group given the small number of teachers at each site. However, at one site with more than eight teachers, the principal provided the site visitor a teacher roster that the site visitor used to randomly select participants. As such, principals identified the parents, students, and other key staff who participated in the focus groups. All interviews and focus groups were voluntary. A total of 116 participants shared their perspectives of the AEP and the services offered. Exhibit 2 shows the total participants and the respondent groups represented.

Exhibit 2: Stakeholder Groups Participating in Focus Groups

Group Type	Total Participants
Students	47*
Teachers	32
Parents	24
Education Assistants	11
Probation Officers	2
Total	116

*This number only represents students from community schools.

WestEd developed focus group protocols for all respondent groups and used teacher protocols when education assistants participated in teacher focus groups. WestEd requested permission to audio record the conversations to complement the notes. All responses were treated as confidential. (Focus group protocols can be found in Appendix A.)

OBSERVATIONS

During both the preliminary and in-depth site visits, WestEd staff conducted informal observations of the schools and their programming. Observations allowed WestEd to contextualize and triangulate the data collected. It is often only through physical visits of sites that the richness and breadth of a program can be assessed. For example, during the preliminary site visits, school staff took WestEd on tours of the schools. WestEd observed activities in the school office, in classrooms where both teaching and behavioral incidents took place, on the school yard, and even in the surrounding neighborhood.

SURVEYS

WestEd developed and administered surveys for each of the following respondents—principals, teachers/education assistants, and school office coordinators. Upon the recommendation of a SCCOE administrator and board member, WestEd identified these three groups to receive a survey for two key reasons. First, surveys allow the gathering of a significant amount of information from a larger number of people than interviews yield. While all principals, most teachers, and some education assistants and school office coordinators had already shared their perspectives through interviews and focus groups, WestEd thought it important to capture all perspectives on common issues, many of which surfaced during these interviews and focus groups. Second, surveying these groups ensured that key school personnel had the opportunity to share their perspective, should they have been missed during the site visits. For example, school office coordinators, often the longest-standing employees at a school, shared informal thoughts about programming with WestEd during the site visits. The survey allowed for greater contribution to the study.

Each survey had four parts—demographic items, current programming items, changes in the last two years, and an open-ended item. All surveys contained similar items for purposes of comparison. All response options were on a four-point likert scale, which ranged from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree.” (All survey protocols can be found in Appendix A.)

WestEd administered the online surveys during a two-week period in November 2010. SCCOE provided the names and email addresses of all identified respondents, which WestEd used to send email invitations to complete the survey. Upon WestEd request, SCCOE encouraged staff to complete the survey to share their opinions and inform the study. Given the low teacher/education assistant response rate after two weeks, WestEd extended this survey an additional four days to elicit greater feedback. Exhibit 3 details the response rates for each survey.

Exhibit 3: Survey Response Rates

	Number Responding	Percent Responding
Principals	6	86
Teachers/Education Assistants	41	46
School Office Coordinators	7	78

A tabulation of teacher survey responses can be found in Appendix B.³ Approximately 73 percent of teacher/education assistants were SCCOE employees for three years or more. Of the teacher respondents, 56 percent were from community schools and 44 percent were from institutional schools. Survey respondents from community schools had a somewhat shorter tenure with SCCOE than teachers from institutional schools. New hires with less than one year of experience working in SCCOE made up 13 percent of teachers from community schools. No teachers from institutional schools with less than one year of experience working in SCCOE responded to the survey. Eighty-five percent of all respondents have worked in alternative education for three or more years.

DOCUMENT AND DATA REVIEWS

WestEd collected various SCCOE documents and data, including its goals, visions statements, PowerPoint presentations detailing the county's plans, professional development calendars, budgets, and California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) data. Additionally, WestEd reviewed literature on alternative education, community schools, youth development, and school reform to inform understanding of the issues faced in SCCOE. Documents and data were shared with the study team and used to substantiate data collected during site visits, interviews, focus groups, and surveys.

DATA ANALYSIS

WestEd employed several methods for analyzing the quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data consisted of closed-ended survey responses, California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS) data, CHKS data, and the California School Climate Survey (CSCS) data. In addition, extensive use was made of CDE's DataQuest system for extracting information on dropouts, graduation rates, California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) pass rates, Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) test results, and Academic Performance Index (API) scores. For the closed-ended surveys, response frequencies were tabulated using SPSS, and are displayed as percentages, means, and counts. To analyze the CHKS and CSCS data and as appropriate, WestEd used a number of additional techniques, including correlational and principal component analyses. Where necessary for comparison with model program counties, results from counties which reported data for more than one alternative and/or court school were aggregated into single a school score for community and for court schools using weighted averages.

³ Only survey data for teachers/education assistants is included in the appendix because the total number of respondents was large enough to avoid compromising anonymity.

The qualitative data consisted of responses to the open-ended survey item, as well as to interview and focus group questions. To analyze these responses, WestEd used what is known as the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which leads to the development of grounded theories. Using this process, WestEd identified the underlying themes expressed by respondents' answers to questions. We paid great attention to the themes expressed by each individual and also looked for how perspectives differed and converged for specific subgroups of people.

Findings

The findings present a review and analysis of the AEP services, comparisons with best practices as cited in the literature and evidenced in other California counties, interviews with and input from stakeholders within and outside of SCCOE, and survey and achievement data related to SCCOE students.

This report comes at a time of great urgency for SCCOE. WestEd heard countless reports, both formally and informally, about the “broken” AEP system, which, according to stakeholders, appears to have been broken for well over a decade. In fact, in the last six years, several reports on the state of SCCOE educational programs have been produced with recommendations for improvements.⁴ Both community stakeholders and board members are concerned that despite these reports and recommendations, the state of the AEP remains unrepaired. Key stakeholders outside of the SCCOE office questioned the potential impact of WestEd’s AEP study, given the county’s track record of “shelving” reports. Nonetheless, all stakeholders agreed that concerns regarding the AEP need to be addressed because students are not receiving the services necessary to achieve academically and in life. However, there are differing points of view about solutions to fix the AEP.

SCCOE employees and community members spoke of the fear that has permeated the county for many years, suggesting staff “walked on eggshells constantly” concerned that they might do something wrong and be chastised or lose their job. In addition to the fear, there were various reports that SCCOE staff lacked sufficient supports to perform their job, such as having access to a school budget and regular performance evaluations. Further, SCCOE staff and community members alike alluded to the need for more partnerships to better support students. Overall, what resonated was a lack of trust, not only in what SCCOE administrators could support, but in what the community could support.

Most community members talked about a good AEP that existed well over a decade ago that functioned on a student-centered model. Under this model, schools were smaller, autonomous, rooted in the community, and focused on connecting with students to ensure they felt safe before addressing the academic curriculum. Additionally, the program provided coordinated services such as mental health services. With growing federal and state accountability that has increased achievement expectations and academic rigor, schools have changed to reflect these expectations. Over the years, all schools, including the AEP schools, have responded to these demands. In doing so, greater emphasis has been placed on meeting academic performance targets and less on student-centered learning. The current rigid accountability leaves alternative schools without the operational flexibility to create alternative pathways to give students credit for progress in school. However, the

⁴ WestEd gathered reports from the Santa Clara County Alternative Schools Collaborative, PACT, the East Side Union High School District Office of Student Services, and a report commissioned by the Joint Task Force on Educational Programs in Institutional Schools produced by Huskey & Associates, Inc.

problem with little accountability is that it fails to set appropriate expectations that guide students to postsecondary success (Almeida, Le, Steinberg, & Cervantes, 2010).

At the time of this study, SCCOE faced an estimated a \$2.6M deficit and all stakeholders were aware of SCCOE's economic situation, citing concerns about reducing staff, school sites, and program features. It is evident that despite the pressing economic constraints, SCCOE is ready to take steps toward ameliorating the condition of its AEP as the board has commissioned this study. In the words of one board member regarding the AEP, "This is not an easy subject, nor is it an easy fix." While there are no magic bullets to fixing the AEP, this report provides a compilation of honest perspectives and data from a broad range of SCCOE stakeholders that can inform the direction of the AEP. The report provides an objective view of the AEP, and in many ways, the unvarnished truth, that may help bring the divided perspectives together to take a step forward in improving students' lives.

Key findings from WestEd's assessment of SCCOE's AEP include:

While alternative education is a developing and fragmented field, both in terms of verified research knowledge and implementation, emerging research indicates there are some common characteristics of successful alternative education programs:

- Leadership that is coordinated, sets a mission, and is responsive to student needs
- Collaborative partnerships that integrate family, school, and community efforts
- A positive school culture that encourages safety, high expectations, and reciprocity
- A strong academic program with ambitious professional development and regular student assessment
- Students as the focal point of all decisions

SCCOE has made significant improvements in the last two years, with changes implemented reflecting alignments with best practices of other California counties—a closely-aligned curriculum, assessment, scheduling, and in-service training. The predominant perception across all levels of stakeholders is that SCCOE is improving.

- A primary focus of the changes implemented have centered on replacing and developing leadership. New staff is on board both as administrators and principals. Further, principals have received regular support to become stronger instructional leaders.
- The roll-out of a newly adopted curriculum with accompanying assessments, scheduling, and in-service trainings is creating consistency and coordination in programming across SCCOE.

While SCCOE has implemented changes in various areas, there is a need for a stronger organizational and administrative environment that includes high levels of internal two-way

communication, a consultative planning and decision-making process, and an organizational focus or mission agreed upon by all levels within the county.

- School staffs feel there is a great disconnect between the central office and the various sites, with very little consultation and communication regarding decisions that impact schools and students.
- Many AEP stakeholders perceive consultation and communication with the various community agencies as weak. Engaging these critical partners in the AEP is key for providing needed services to students.

Perceptions of SCCOE's culture and climate are inconsistent. Students and parents are generally satisfied with the climate. School staff has low morale.

- Students and parents appreciate the small school setting and individualized instruction.
- Students and parents feel that schools care about student success and safety.
- Teachers do not feel appreciated for their work, their responsibilities are extensive, and they are ambivalent about so much change, particularly related to staff turnover.

School staffs have mixed perceptions regarding changes in staffing. Staff is pleased with the new support positions, such as the Miri and California Youth Outreach (CYO) staff. However, staff is dissatisfied with the lack of experience and expertise among principals and teachers.

- SCCOE increased the number of single subject, highly-qualified teachers, but these teachers instruct subjects beyond those in which they are credentialed.
- Staff perceives the need for training to understand and work with students in alternative education.

Professional development is plentiful, yet overwhelming and incomplete.

- There is a need for more follow up to the training provided, technology training, and sensitivity training.
- Teachers want county office staff at schools to facilitate the implementation of reforms.

Teachers and other stakeholders believe there is value in creating a network to share practices.

- Teachers would like more time to meet with colleagues about the curriculum, teaching approaches, and student needs.

- Teachers want to be part of the decision-making regarding the implementation of reforms.

The new curriculum has generally been well-received, yet there are concerns about its implementation.

- Too much curriculum is being rolled out too fast and staff is uncertain they can implement the curriculum with fidelity.
- School staff is aware of and beginning to use the new curriculum, but its adoption for some illuminates the AEP's move toward a traditional school, causing disappointment about this shift.
- While staff like the move toward current technology, there is a need for technology that works efficiently and training to use it for instruction.

Parents, students, SCCOE administrators, some teachers, and referring district staff believe greater academic rigor is necessary for students. Administrators, teachers, and district staff see the curriculum adoption as a step in the right direction.

Measures of student and school academic growth need to be used jointly to provide a more complete view of SCCOE school performance and may include data from the CHKS, the CSCS, the API, annual yearly progress, the Alternative School Accountability Model, the CAHSEE, and graduation rates.

- Students' self-reported drug use and violence-related acts are generally higher than students in model practice counties, particularly regarding drinking or being high on school property.
- CAHSEE pass rates for SCCOE 10th grade students are lower than the pass rates for two of the model practice counties.

We present WestEd's findings in three parts. Part I begins with a review of models for alternative education. Part II describes current programming elements. Part III presents the findings related to the organizational and administrative environment, culture and climate, staffing and professional development, curriculum and instruction, and student outcomes.

PART I: REVIEW OF MODELS FOR ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

WestEd conducted a review of models for alternative education through literature reviews to mine the research, studied promising practices in California that can also serve as a model for SCCOE, and identified a model for assessing school and student performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Alternative education is a developing and fragmented field, both in terms of verified research knowledge and implementation. Defining alternative education is a challenge in and of itself (Aron, 2006). Alternative education programs and schools typically target youth who are “at-risk,” for academic or behavioral reasons (Aron, 2003; Ruiz de Velasco et al., 2008). These programs and schools vary widely in their structure, but they are generally designed to meet the needs of their target population and often have teacher to student ratios that are smaller than those found in traditional schools (Ruzzi & Kraemer, 2006). Within California, alternative education is primarily provided through continuation high schools. Since 1965, state law mandates districts with more than 100 12th graders provide continuation programs or schools where at-risk youth have alternatives to pursue a high school diploma.

Contextual factors seem to contribute partially to the disjointed nature of alternative education. Martin and Brand (2006) examined the federal, state, and local roles in supporting alternative education and they found challenges on all three levels. Federally, there is no one agency whose primary responsibility is to oversee alternative or non-traditional education. While several agencies provide programs that are connected to alternative education, they do not coordinate with one another to build a cohesive support network to serve the needs of at-risk youth. Additionally, there is no funding earmarked for alternative education. There is little federal funding for secondary education in general and available funds are limited in what they can be applied to due to categorical allocations.

State and local structures for alternative education are also relatively disjointed according to Martin and Brand (2006). States, which are primarily responsible for funding and defining alternative education, vary on how effectively they exercise this responsibility through policy. There is little guidance from states on how to implement quality programs, and alternative education programs are seen as one means to increase graduation rates. LEAs typically allocate funding for alternative education. Yet, local funding streams are often not aligned with one another.

Ruiz de Velasco et al., (2008), in a descriptive study of California continuation high schools, found conditions similar to those discussed in Martin and Brand (2006). The state and local accountability framework for these high schools are often ambiguous. Overarching county and district priorities typically shape the operation of continuation high schools and not necessarily the critical needs of the students they serve. There is wide variety in how schools function across the state, which leads

to lost opportunities and resources. Additionally, faculty and staff need more professional development support.

There is relative consistency in the characteristics of students served by alternative education programs and schools. As previously noted, these students are usually at-risk for not completing school due to academic and/or behavioral problems. Issues they face are involvement in the juvenile justice system, teen pregnancy, alcohol and substance abuse, and expulsion/suspension from mainstream school systems (Aron, 2003; Ruiz de Velasco et al., 2008). The 115,000 high school students that annually attend one of California's 519 continuation schools share these factors plus a few others (Ruiz de Velasco et al., 2008). They are usually Latino or African-American, English Learners (ELs), more likely to be involved in physical violence (as either a victim or perpetrator), and more frequently live in foster care or with relatives other than their parents (Ruiz de Velasco et al., 2008). In regard to academic performance, alternative education students need more supports to achieve than students in traditional schools.

Considering the contextual factors and the profile of students served, emerging research indicates that successful alternative education programs and schools exemplify certain characteristics and employ particular best practices (Aron, 2006; the National Alternative Education Association [NAEA], 2009; Ruiz de Velasco et al., 2008). The following outlines a list of these characteristics and practices:

- *Leadership* – Principals are strong local leaders with high expectations for faculty, staff, and students. Districts provide adequate funding and administrative oversight to support the implementation of quality programming. All levels of leadership clearly communicate the mission and vision to stakeholders. Administrators recruit, hire, and train qualified and experienced staff and faculty.
- *Safe and supportive environment* – There are established behavioral guidelines, clear structure, safety is maintained, and facilities are clean and aesthetically pleasing. All staff and faculty are positive in their affect. They hold high expectations for students and perceive them as teachable and capable of learning and achieving. A sense of community exists at the site.
- *Strong academic program* – Highly qualified teachers with experience working with students in alternative education schools and programs implement the academic program. Every student has an individualized learning plan to meet their instructional needs. Faculty and staff receive consistent and regular professional development. Formative and summative student assessments are used to inform program improvements. There is a low teacher/student ratio.
- *Collaborative partnerships* – Successful alternative education programs and schools work closely with the local community, students' families, the juvenile justice system, and other institutions that can provide supports to students. Local employers, mental and physical health providers, and social services are just a few of the possible partners these programs work with to coordinate connections to resources for students.

Not surprisingly, many of the practices employed by successful alternative education programs and schools are also connected to positive youth development outcomes. The National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (Eccles & Gootman, 2002) identified eight areas that are linked to youth development. These areas are:

- Physical and psychological safety
- Appropriate structure
- Supportive relationships
- Opportunities to belong
- Positive social norms
- Support for efficacy and mattering
- Opportunities for skill building
- Integration of family, school, and community efforts

Maintaining a safe and supportive environment provides supports in many of these areas. Building collaborative partnerships provides students support in the integration of family, school, and community.

The importance of program quality was reinforced by the NAEA when it released its listing of exemplary practices for alternative education programs that cover 10 areas (2009). There is the overlap between the principles promoting positive youth development and NAEA's indicators. Furthermore, Ruiz de Velasco et al.'s (2008) research findings are consistent with the work in this area. The 10 NAEA areas of exemplary practice for alternative education programs are:

- Mission and purpose
- Leadership
- Culture and climate
- Staffing and professional development
- Curriculum and instruction
- Student assessment
- Transitional planning and support
- Parent/guardian support

- Collaboration
- Program evaluation

WestEd’s assessment of SCCOE’s AEP was aligned to much of the literature cited above. Specifically, some of NAEA’s exemplary practices emerged during the preliminary site visits and community forum as areas to study further. As such, data collection and this report were organized around key exemplary practices. For example, mission and purpose, leadership, transitional planning and support, and collaboration fell under the report section titled *Organization and Administrative Environment*. Parent/guardian support folded into the report section titled *Culture and Climate*. Both *Staffing and Professional Development* and *Curriculum and Instruction* constitute their own sections in this report. As well, student assessment is covered in the *Student Outcomes* section.

CALIFORNIA PRACTICES

The Educational Options Best Practices Demonstration Project is a coordinated effort with the SDCOE, CDE’s Educational Options Office, and the El Dorado County Office of Education that examines best practices in court, community, community day schools, and other alternative education programs throughout California. Identified through peer review, the project invites districts and county offices of education to apply for a “best practices” designation, with the results disseminated through the Educational Options Office and via the SDCOE website.

On a yearly basis, the Best Practices Demonstration Project examines and rates applications in four general areas:

- Curriculum, instruction, and educational technology
- Student support, retention, and transition
- Leadership and staff development
- Assessment, evaluation, and data management

To become a best practices school, evidence of student success on either state testing results (STAR and/or CAHSEE) or the ASAM was required. In 2009, the project reviewed successful applicants to ascertain the common elements of effective programs rated as incorporating best practices. Exhibit 4, included for purposes of comparison, is a listing of best practices drawn from the project’s *Common Elements Study* (Dixon, Callahan, Johnson, & Morrill, 2009).

Exhibit 4: Best Practices from Common Elements of Effective Programs

Theme	Practice
Engagement	Connection
	Buy-in
	Student interest
	Shared language and vocabulary
	Rapport
	Enthusiasm
School Culture	Encouragement
	Communication
	Caring
	Staff availability to student
	Reciprocity (for staff and students)
	Commitment
	Concordance/shared goals and priorities
	Collaborative/collegial relationships
	High expectations
	Administrative Environment
	Deep implementation
	Monitoring
	Data-driven decision making
	Team model
	Cooperative partnerships
	Top-down enabling
	Shift of locus of control to “street-level” program
	Teacher-led design and change
	Support for experimentation by central administration
	Stable implementation
	Leveraging existing resources
	Developmental model of program change over time
	Concordance
	Sustained development and continuity
Responsive development to student need and outcome	
Change in Student Horizon and Perspective	Teaching student to look beyond immediate
	Education as investment vs. consumption
	Connection to career or college
	Development of necessary language and vocabulary
	Relevance & practical application
	High expectations
	Change in student status
	Engaging differently
	Being assigned more personal responsibility
Building confidence and efficacy	
Feel school is there for them	

Additionally, as part of this assessment, WestEd studied the best practices of county-run alternative education programs that included SDCOE, OCOE, and SJCOE. Administrators in “best practice” counties reported three critical factors or practices that were required for program quality:

- A strong, supportive relationship with county probation, including a reciprocal involvement in program planning and development.
- A system of teacher recruitment that ensures only well prepared, experienced teachers with an understanding of the at-risk population are hired as teaching staff. In two of the model counties, no teacher is hired on a permanent basis unless they have worked a minimum of two years as a substitute.
- Development of planning and coordination mechanisms with district pupil service staff, as well as non-profit and city or county agencies. Bi-monthly meetings with all players were seen as a minimum requirement, as well as development of a shared understanding that the county office of education must rely on districts and others as partners, not competitors, in providing services.

Further, in 2004 the Santa Clara County Alternative Schools Collaborative, an officially appointed committee of the SCCOE Board of Education, produced a report to help the development of a comprehensive alternative schools plan for SCCOE. The report cited four elements of effective programs, taken from the *Alternative Education: From a "Last Chance" to a Proactive Model* publication (Leone & Drakeford, 1999). The four elements were:

- *Clear focus on academic learning* – combines high academic standards with engaging and creative instruction
- *Ambitious professional development* – stimulating, ongoing professional development activities that help teachers to maintain an academic focus, enhance teaching strategies, and develop alternative instructional materials
- *Strong level of autonomy and professional decision-making* – effective schools provide autonomy that builds trust and loyalty among staff; giving staff a voice in decision making promotes creativity and instructional excellence
- *Sense of community* – students and staff share expectations for learning and students are encouraged to take a variety of courses and activities that enable them to pursue their interests and aspirations (Santa Clara County Alternative Schools Collaborative, 2004, pp. 9-10)

There is overlap between the best practices from the *Common Elements Study*, the best practices reported by counties running quality alternative education programs, and the four elements identified by the Santa Clara County Alternative Schools Collaborative. Students need to be the focus of programming. Teachers need adequate skills and regular development to maintain quality supports for students. Counties need to collaborate and leverage existing resources in the community to reduce costs for running an alternative education program, but also to tap into local expertise. All involved parties need to be respected and trusted to best serve students.

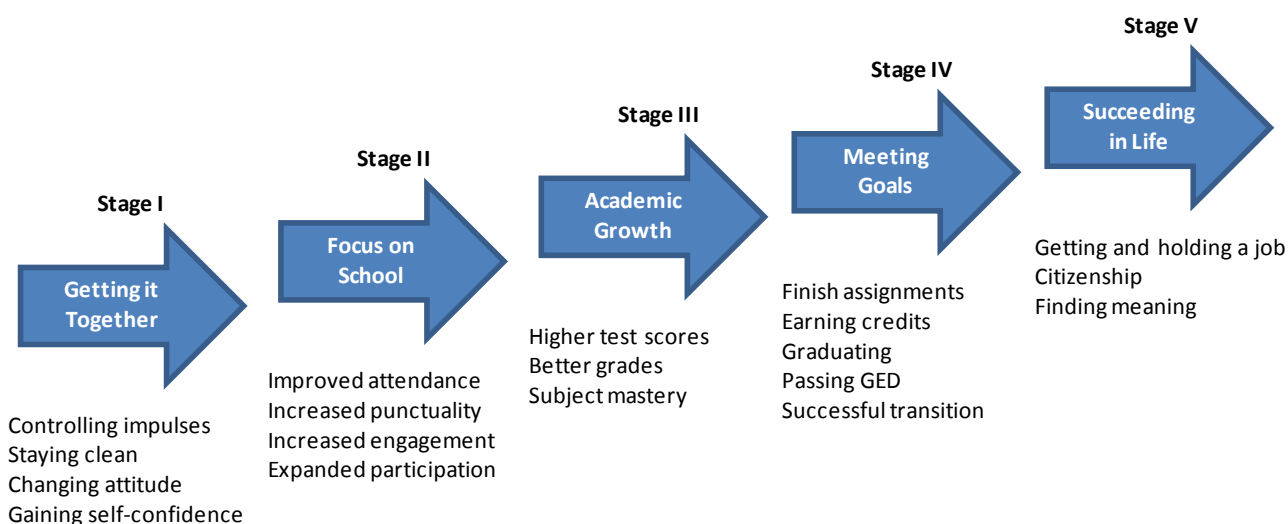
DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL FOR SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

For SCCOE students, academic and cognitive achievement is most likely when schools focus both on academic achievement and upon precursors such as attendance, behavior, and student follow-through. Research literature and field experience both suggest that the various precursors to learning are aspects of a student's overall engagement in school and the learning process (Austin, Lee-Bayha, & Hanson, 2004). If a student's level of engagement can be increased, they are significantly less likely to drop out or behave inappropriately, and more likely to attend regularly and improve academically (Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2003).

It should be added that improving behavior and student engagement is seen by most practitioners as central to the specialized mission of alternative schools. To a much greater extent than traditional schools, therefore, the primary role of an alternative school is to address both a student's learning readiness as well as to provide academic instruction. One way to characterize the differences between traditional and alternative schools is to group educational goals into five approximate stages or overarching types of educational objectives. A developmental model for characterizing alternative education goals into five stages was created and published in *Options and Issues for Development and Implementation of an Accountability System for Alternative Education Programs* (2000).

The first objective in the characterization "getting it together" is to simply bring students into the classroom and ensure that they are healthy, non-disruptive, and ready to participate in learning. Once this is accomplished, a second stage objective "focusing on school" requires that students attend regularly, participate, and complete assignments. Building upon these behaviors, a third stage objective "learning" focuses upon more traditional academic learning and student achievement. Outcomes of this third stage objective are most commonly measured by grades, standardized achievement tests, and in-class assessments. A fourth stage objective "meeting goals" builds upon basic learning. As students accumulate sufficient competencies and learning mastery, they are seen as meeting educational goals, including amassing credits, graduating and/or becoming eligible for other educational programs. Finally, the ultimate objective of any educational program "succeeding in life" prepares students for post-secondary education and work, become involved productive citizens, and define personal meaning. Exhibit 5 illustrates the stages of student development and desired behavior or outcome.

Exhibit 5: Stages of Student Development and Desired Behavior Outcome



In this simplified model, the school interventions in dealing with students in Stages I and II attempt to impact students' learning readiness—getting the student into the classroom, emotionally, physically and behaviorally ready to concentrate on educational activities. Learning and academic achievement, as typically defined and measured, are Stage III objectives. Goal attainment and follow-through, presupposing improvements in academic achievement, are the focus for students at Stage IV. Not all students who improve their mastery of academic subjects or test scores, for example, manage to show gains in their ability to complete assignments, pass courses, or satisfy requirements for promotion or graduation.

While activities promoting all of these objectives are common across every type of school, the nature of students served by alternative education programs tends to place a significantly greater emphasis on promoting behavior described in Stages I, II, and IV. This fact has great implications, both for the structure and operation of alternative education programs and for efforts to assess their performance.

Using the developmental model as a way to look at school and student outcomes rather than only looking at API and AYP can help assess program growth. Exhibit 6 below maps the various stages of the model with data that could be used to assess school and student progress toward life success.

Exhibit 6: Developmental Stages, Indicators of Growth, and Data to Assess Growth

Stage	Indicator	Data
Stage I	Controlling impulses Staying clean Changing attitude Gaining self-confidence	CHKS: Alcohol and Other Drug, Violence, & Suicide Module, Resilience Module CSCS
Stage II	Improved attendance Increased punctuality Increased engagement Expanded participation	CHKS: Resilience Module
Stage III	Higher test scores Better grades Subject mastery	API AYP CAHSEE ASAM
Stage IV	Finish assignments Earning credits Graduating Passing GED Successful transition	Graduation and retention rates
Stage V	Getting and holding job Citizenship Finding meaning	

PART II: APPRAISAL OF CURRENT SCCOE PROGRAMMING ELEMENTS

The SCCOE AEP runs 11 schools—7 community schools and 4 institutional schools. The following list identifies SCCOE schools and the grade levels served:

Community Schools:

- Redemption Community School (Grades 7-12)⁵
- Novo Community School (Grades 9-12)
- Odyssey Community School (Grades 7-12)
- Pathfinder Academy Community School (Grades 7-12)
- Santa Clara School (Grades 6-12)
- Stonegate Park Community School (Grades 6-8)
- View Side Academy School (Grades 7-12)

Institutional Schools:

- Alternative Placement Academy (APA)
- Blue Ridge at James Ranch (Grades 9-12)
- Muriel Wright (Grades 7-12)
- Osborne at Juvenile Hall (Grades 7-12)

The community schools primarily serve students within closest proximity. For example, View Side Academy School serves students in the north of the county and Odyssey Community School serves students in the south of the county. However, there are exceptions to this pattern, particularly when students have been expelled from one school and need to attend another school further from their residence or when gang affiliation is considered in a student's placement.

WHO ATTENDS SCCOE SCHOOLS?

Placements in SCCOE community schools are typically expelled students, those on probation, and/or students with severe behavioral or discipline problems. In general, information available from CDE indicates that a large majority of community school students are of high school age. For example, data from the CBEDS indicate that in October 2009, 20 percent of community school students were in grades 6 through 8, while 80 percent were in grades 9 through 12.⁶ CDE testing

⁵ SCCOE Alternative School Directory provided by the deputy superintendent, June 2010

⁶ CDE, CBEDS 2009-2010 Grade-Level Enrollment Data

data from the same year, which does not include 12th grade students, showed a roughly similar percentage (21 percent) of students in grades 6 through 8.⁷ While these sources are generally consistent regarding the grade levels of students served, there are significant differences in the total number of students reported during the October CBEDS data collection period and during the April STAR testing window. County enrollment data for October 2009 reported 214 enrollments, compared to the CBEDS count of 211. School enrollment data for May indicated a total of 335 enrolled students, a figure that contrasted with both the lower October enrollment and STAR testing counts which showed a total of 365 students tested.

In general, SCCOE community schools, like those throughout California, experience a significant enrollment gain during the year, and show a much higher average enrollment than is reflected by the CBEDS. These differences are partially accounted for by the period in which students are referred. Since most community school referrals are for expulsion, behavior that leads to such sanctions has a greater chance of occurring after the CBEDS October census date. There is also the belief that districts throughout the state may refer troubled and low-performing students to community schools just prior to state testing to not adversely affect the referring district’s API scores.

SCCOE CHARACTERISTICS COMPARED WITH BEST PRACTICE COUNTIES

As discussed earlier in the report, WestEd collected data from three California counties—SJCOE, SDCOE, and OCOE—for purposes of comparison with SCCOE. Although serving similar types of students in county-operated programs, significant differences exist between the demography and the characteristics of educational programs offered by each of the comparison counties. Exhibit 7 describes the characteristics of SCCOE and best practice counties. During 2009-2010, the combined K-12 enrollment ranged from 135,778 in SJCOE to 502,275 in OCOE. The number of K-12 students enrolled in SCCOE public schools (265,543) was midway between these figures.

Exhibit 7: Characteristics of Comparison Counties

	SCCOE	SJCOE	SDCOE	OCOE
Total K-12 county enrollment	265,543	135,778	496,995	502,275
Growth in county K-12 enrollment over 2000-2001	4.5%	11.0%	1.8%	1.4%
Number of districts	32	14	42	27
Enrollment in county schools	1,770	1,906	4,025	7,717
Percent of K-12 enrollment in county operated programs	0.7%	1.4%	0.8%	1.5%

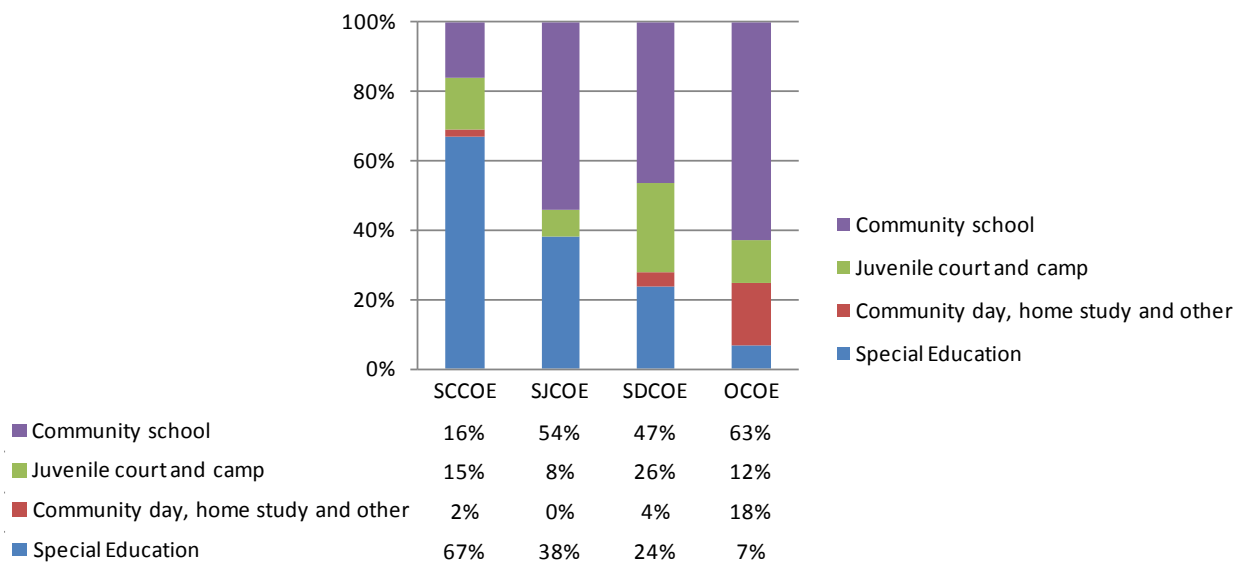
Source: CDE: DataQuest/CBEDS 2009-2010

⁷ CDE, 2010 STAR Test Results

As of 2009-2010, SCCOE had 32 districts operating within its county boundaries, compared to 14 in SJCOE, 42 in SDCOE and 27 in OCOE. Enrollment in county-operated programs also differed in the number of students served and the proportion of the K-12 population represented within the county. SJCOE, which showed a CBEDS October 2009-2010 enrollment count of 1,906 students in county programs, served approximately 1.4 percent of the county’s K-12 population. SCCOE, which reported a roughly similar enrollment count (1,770), served only about half that percentage (.7 percent) of the county’s K-12 population.

A significant difference that emerged between comparison counties was the percentage of students served in special education programs, community schools, and juvenile court schools. Exhibit 8 shows county enrollment by type. Excluding charter schools, more than two-thirds (67 percent) of students receiving SCCOE services are enrolled in special education programs. This percentage contrasts sharply with the roughly one third (38 percent) of SJCOE students, and the one-quarter (24 percent) of SCCOE’s students, who are special education. In OCOE, only 7 percent of students served are enrolled in special education.

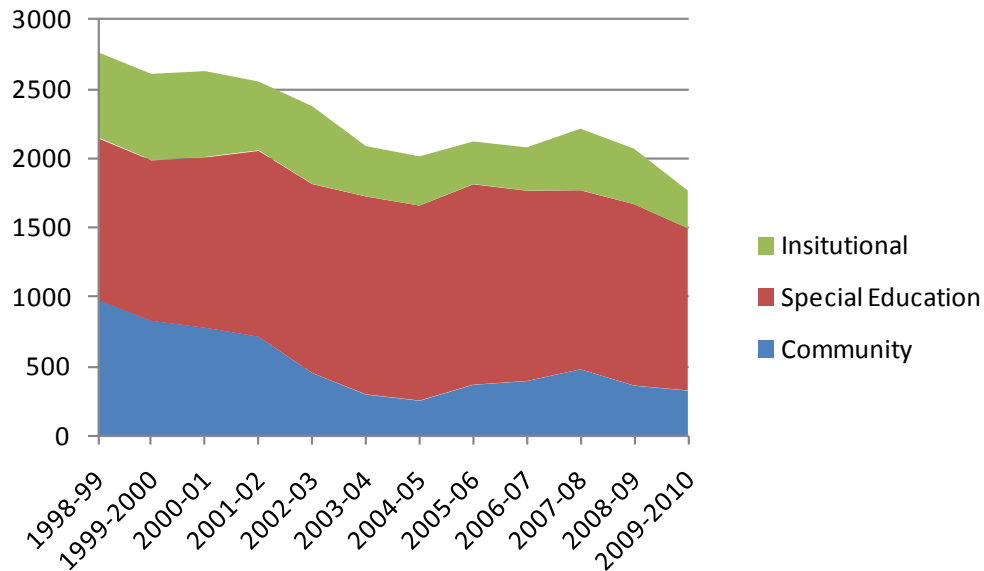
Exhibit 8: County Office Enrollment by Type



During 2009-2010, California special education students comprised roughly 11 percent of the total K-12 enrollment. Within SCCOE, OCOE, and SJCOE, slightly over 10 percent of county K-12 enrollees were reported as special education students to CDE. SDCOE reported just fewer than 12 percent. Exhibit 9 presents CBEDS enrollment figures for SCCOE schools. Given the relatively similar percentage of special education students in these counties, the wide variances in the proportion of students served by county offices—as opposed to district programs—are a product of historical decisions by local and county boards to operate special education programs. This typically reflects long-established partnerships between districts and county offices of education regarding

where such students will be served. The number of special education students, as a proportion of all students served by the SCCOE, has been historically high.

Exhibit 9: CBEDS Enrollment Figures for SCCOE Schools, 1998-2010



Special education students constitute two-thirds (67 percent) of those enrolled in county programs. Roughly 1,179 special education students attend a SCCOE school, but constitute only 4.4 percent of the almost 28,000 special education students in SCCOE. Thus, while this population is an extremely large percentage of SCCOE’s workload, only a small portion of the county’s special education students is served by SCCOE schools. For purposes of comparison, the SJCOE serves a similar percentage (5 percent) of that county’s special education students, while SDCOE and OCOE serve significantly smaller proportions (2 percent and 1 percent, respectively).

Although further discussion of special education is beyond the scope of this review, the high percentage of special education students SCCOE serves dictates that most resources are expended in areas other than alternative education. Interviews with SCCOE administrators confirmed that of its \$200M budget, special education has a \$100M budget to cover the 180 sites across the county. The remaining \$100M is split between alternative education, migrant education, child development, and occupational training programs.

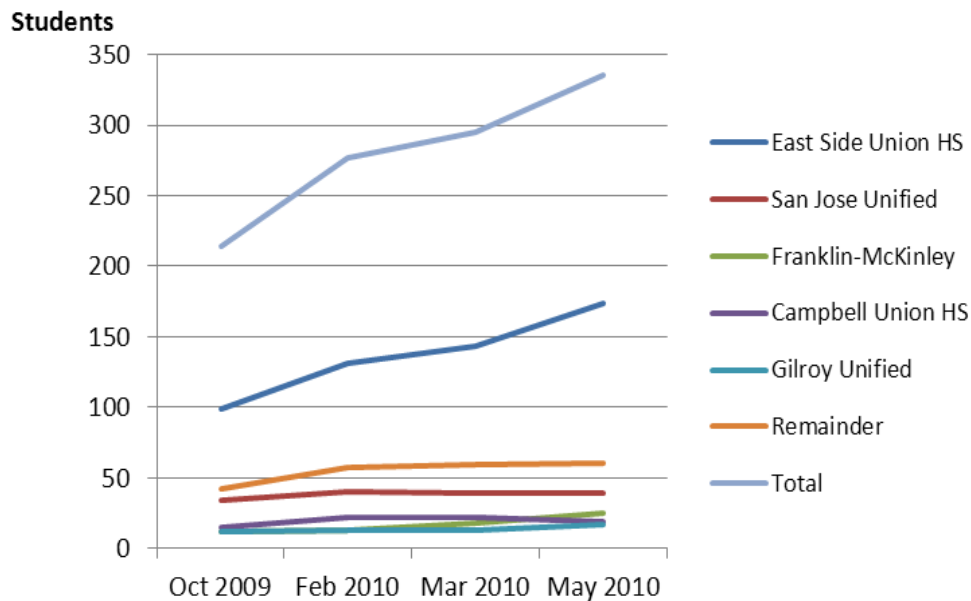
REFERRING DISTRICTS IN SANTA CLARA COUNTY

District referral policies vary significantly and are partially driven by local board decisions to either create their own or join in consortiums with nearby districts to establish an alternative school. In practice, such policies are greatly affected by three factors: (1) the grade level of students served, (2) program availability, and (3) perceptions of quality services.

During the 2009-2010 school year, 22 of 32 districts in Santa Clara county referred students to one of SCCOE’s seven community school sites. In May 2009, students referred from high school districts accounted for roughly two-thirds (66 percent) of community school enrollees, with an additional one-quarter of enrollees (25 percent) referred from districts serving K-12 students. Less than 10 percent of enrolled students were referred from districts serving only elementary and middle school students.

Approximately half of the students at SCCOE’s community schools are from a single district—East Side Union High School District. Exhibit 10 provides a view of SCCOE community school enrollment by referring districts. While numbers increase over the year, the proportion of this district’s SCCOE community school enrollment stays relatively constant across the school year, rising only slightly from 46 percent in October to 52 percent in May.

Exhibit 10: SCCOE Community School Enrollment by Referring Schools for Selected Months



The next highest districts in terms of the average annual proportion of SCCOE community school enrollment are San Jose Unified (13.6 percent), Campbell Union High (7 percent), Franklin-McKinley (6.1 percent), Gilroy Unified (4.9 percent), Morgan Hill Unified (4.6 percent), and Milpitas Unified (3.6 percent). Enrollments from the remaining districts that referred students to SCCOE community schools each account for less than 3 percent of the total SCCOE enrollment.

A number of districts primarily serving elementary students neither referred to SCCOE community schools nor purchased subsidized slots. Elementary or elementary-middle school districts not referring students in 2009-2010 included Loma Prieta Joint Union, Los Altos, Luther Burbank,

Moreland, Orchard, Saratoga Union, and Sunnyvale. Districts serving high school students that did not refer students include Cupertino Union High and Palo Alto Unified.

ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL PLACEMENTS

For those districts serving primarily elementary-aged students, the placement of expelled students is difficult. Most elementary or elementary-middle school districts do not have sufficient expelled students to justify establishment of a separate program. Nevertheless, in SCCOE almost one-quarter (23 percent) of the 430 expulsions reported to CDE in the 2009-2010 CBEDS were from elementary school districts. Given SCCOE's focus on high school, and to a lesser extent middle school-aged students, a majority of these students were either referred to district programs or to programs operated by a consortium of districts. Significantly, however, elementary districts purchased approximately 16 percent of the subsidized slots available at SCCOE community schools. Collectively over the year, elementary districts had an average of about 40 enrolled students—approximately 14 percent of all community school enrollments.

District difficulty in serving younger expelled students outside of SCCOE's community schools has been exacerbated by the loss of district Community Day Schools (CDS) funding. In 2007-2008 most state categorical programs were consolidated into block grants, with a subsequent and significant reduction in general fund support. By statute, CDS gave admissions priority to expelled students or those under disciplinary sanction.

Of the seven CDS in SCCOE still listed as active in CDE's 2010-2011 School District Directory, only three serve non-high school-aged students. These include San Jose Community Middle (grades 6-8), Campbell Union Elementary (grades 6-8), and Oak Grove Elementary (grades 5-8). The remaining four schools serve students in 9th through 12th grades. Conversations with staff in several referring districts indicated that most CDS schools had closed or were scheduled to close in 2011-2012. The increasing inability of districts to serve younger students may present a significant challenge to SCCOE's AEP because of the likely increase in numbers of unserved students and the lack of available alternatives.

HIGH SCHOOL PLACEMENTS

Alternative placements for expelled high school students or those with severe discipline problems are slightly less difficult than for younger students. Districts serving 100 or more 12th graders are required by statute to do one of the following: (1) establish a continuation school, (2) enter a consortium with other districts, or (3) develop a contract with a county office of education to provide services to students 16 years and older.⁸ While a primary function of continuation schools is

⁸ Sections 48431 and 48432, Education Code (EC). Additional EC sections that provide for continuation education include Sections 44865, 46170, 48400-48438, and 51055. Districts with 100 or more seniors must operate at least one continuation high school providing a minimum instructional day of 180 minutes. Districts with fewer students or where transportation costs are excessive may request a CDE waiver and/or contract with other districts or county agencies to provide these services.

to provide remedial services and to encourage high school completion, such schools are often used as placements for students with behavioral or discipline problems (Austin et al., 2008).

In addition, districts may establish what are termed “alternative schools” or “independent study programs” that are intended to serve a population similar to that of continuation schools, but are not limited by the requirement that students be 16 years or older. Whether or not formally designated as “alternative,” the function of these schools and programs is to service students at-risk for educational or behavioral failure. Larger districts frequently have multiple examples of alternative schools. San Jose Unified, for example, has at least five continuation and two alternative schools, as well as an independent study program.

Because of local boards’ decisions regarding the establishment and use of district alternative and continuation schools, as well as independent study programs, referral patterns for high school-aged students vary sharply across districts, both in terms of the number of students and the proportion of students referred to either a district or SCCOE placement. Exhibit 11 shows the patterns of alternative school enrollment in Santa Clara county districts serving high school-aged students. For Santa Clara county districts, the percentage of high school-aged students served in a district alternative school ranges from a high of 16 percent in Gilroy Unified to a low of less than .1 percent at Fremont Union.

Exhibit 11: Patterns of Alternative School Enrollment in Santa Clara County Districts Serving High School-Aged Students*

District	Total Students 9th-12 th Grade	Number Served in District Alternative Schools	Percent High School Students Enrolled in District Alternative School
Gilroy Unified	3,137	503	16.0%
San Jose Unified	9,897	1,291	13.0%
Santa Clara Unified	4,289	497	11.6%
East Side Union High	25,995	1,687	6.5%
Milpitas Unified	3,066	200	6.5%
Morgan Hill Unified	3,005	161	5.4%
Mountain View-Los Altos Union High	3,656	157	4.3%
Campbell Union High	7,726	317	4.1%
Palo Alto Unified	3,709	20	0.5%
Fremont Union High	10,318	11	0.1%
Los Gatos-Saratoga Joint Union High	3,174	**	**

* 2009-2010 CBEDS data

** Enrollment unavailable. District operates the NOVA alternative school but enrollment was not reported in 2009-2010 CBEDS.

Statewide, districts that refer a large percentage of their high school-aged students to their own district alternative schools or programs tend to refer correspondingly fewer students to county-operated community schools. As illustrated in Exhibit 11, Santa Clara Unified serves as an example of this inverse relationship, being the third highest district in the percentage of high school students referred to its own alternative schools (11.6 percent) and having a very low SCCOE referral rate (.14

percent). East Side Union High is an example of the other side of the same relationship. As illustrated in Exhibit 12, East Side Union High has both the highest monthly average referrals (137), the highest referral rate relative to its high school enrollment (.53 percent) and a relatively low percentage of students referred to its district-operated alternative schools (6.5 percent). For other districts, however, the pattern is less clear.

Exhibit 12: Comparison of Referral to SCCOE Community Schools from Santa Clara County Districts Serving High School-Aged Students*

District	Average Monthly Enrollment in SCCOE Community Schools	SCCOE Enrollment as Percent of District High School Enrollment	Percent High School Students Enrolled in District Alternative School	Number Reported Expelled
East Side Union High	137	.53%	6.5%	35
San Jose Unified	38	.38%	13.0%	78
Campbell Union	20	.25%	4.1%	65
Gilroy Unified	14	.44%	16.0%	0
Morgan Hill Unified	13	.43%	5.4%	26
Milpitas Unified	10	.33%	6.5%	27
Santa Clara Unified	6	.14%	11.6%	55
Mountain View-Los Altos Union High	3	.08%	4.3%	0
Palo Alto Unified	0	0%	0.5%	7
Fremont Union High	0	0%	0.1%	25
Los Gatos-Saratoga Joint Union High	0	.01%	n/a	8

* 2009-2010 CBEDS data

** Enrollment unavailable. District operates the NOVA alternative school but enrollment was not reported in 2009-2010 CBEDS.

Diversity in district policy for referring expelled students to SCCOE is also illustrated by the lack of a significant relationship ($r^2=.02$) between the number of expulsions reported to CDE and the number of students referred. San Jose Unified, for example, expelled the highest number of students (78) in 2009-2010, and had a relatively high referral rate (.38 percent) to SCCOE community schools. In contrast, Santa Clara Unified, which expelled 55 students, referred a monthly average of only 6 students to SCCOE, a rate equal to only .14 percent of its high school-aged students.

REFERRAL PATTERNS AND TYPES OF STUDENTS REFERRED

District respondents painted a similar picture regarding the kind of student likely to be referred to a SCCOE community school. Typically, such students are expelled, or in the case of adjudicated youth, may have attendance at the county community school stipulated by the juvenile court as part of their probation. According to one district representative, “These students have usually committed one of the big five offenses requiring a mandatory expulsion or one or more of the quasi-mandatory offenses.” Other students are referred because of severe or violent behavior or because a district panel of student service professionals and others determined the student would be better served in a more structured, smaller environment. In a very small number of cases, students are referred at the

request of parents or guardians, usually because the family has experienced the SCCOE program with another child.

In addition to those who are expelled, students referred to SCCOE lack academic credits and often exhibit behavioral misconduct. One district representative said, “[Students] are typically academically deficient, have a combination of discipline problems, and often some kind of gang problem...and usually come with severe attendance issues.”

In districts where other placements such as continuation or alternative schools exist, students are almost always referred there prior to referral to a SCCOE community school. With one exception, respondents indicated that district policy was to refer students first to a district school or program. Reasons for keeping students in district programs included budgetary concerns (the need to capture as much average daily attendance (ADA) as possible), as well as concerns over retaining district program control and providing service continuity. One district representative said, “We know these kids. We have seen most of them and their parents over the long term and can provide a rehabilitative environment.” In some cases, stability and the chance to stay in their home community was seen as an important reason for keeping student in a district alternative school. Students referred to SCCOE tend to have typically exhausted their other educational options.

REFERRING DISTRICTS’ GEOGRAPHY AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Other factors impacting referral patterns are the size and geographic distribution of wealth and demography, as well as the availability of public transportation in the county. There is a sharp contrast between district profiles that have high referral rates to SCCOE schools and those with low referral rates. Exhibit 13 illustrates the demography of districts with high and low referral rates to SCCOE community schools. Districts with higher referral rates have larger percentages of poor students. For example, the proportion of students eligible for a free or reduced price lunch (FRPL) in the four districts with the highest referral rates are striking, and include Campbell Union High (19 percent), East Side Union High (38 percent), San Jose Unified (46 percent), and Gilroy Unified (58 percent). In contrast, percentages of students eligible for a FRPL in the four districts with the lowest referral rates are significantly lower, including Mountain View-Los Altos Union (15 percent), Fremont Union High (12 percent), Palo Alto Unified (8 percent), and Los Gatos-Saratoga Joint Union (1 percent).

With the exception of Campbell Union High, which may refer students because of a high expulsion rate, districts with the highest referral rates also appear to have the highest EL rates. Roughly one-quarter of these districts’ students are enrolled in EL programs. Low referral districts have 10 percent or fewer EL students, with Los Gatos-Saratoga Joint Union having only 1 percent. Unsurprisingly, the percent of Hispanic student enrollment closely parallels the proportion of EL students served.

Exhibit 13: Demography of Santa Clara County Districts with High and Low Referral Rates to SCCOE Community Schools*

		Average Monthly Referrals	Percent Free Lunch Eligible	Percent ELL	Percent Hispanic
High Referral District	East Side Union High	137	38%	23%	48%
	San Jose Unified	38	46%	25%	52%
	Campbell Union High**	20	19%	8%	31%
	Gilroy Unified	14	58%	28%	70%
Low Referral Districts	Mountain View-Los Altos Union High	3	15%	7%	23%
	Palo Alto Unified	0	8%	9%	11%
	Fremont Union High	0	12%	10%	14%
	Los Gatos-Saratoga Joint Union High	0	1%	1%	6%

* 2009-2010 CBEDS data

** In 2009-2010 Campbell Union High expelled the second largest number of student (65), just under one percent (.84 percent) of its enrollment.

In SCCOE, geography is also associated with demography and referral practices. Positioned at the north end of the county, three of the highest-wealth, low-referral districts—Mountain View-Los Altos Union, Palo Alto Unified, and Fremont Union High—are more or less contiguous. The lack of a large number of referrals from these districts has meant a lack of sufficient numbers of students to justify operation of either district alternative schools or a permanent SCCOE community school.

Historically, the situation has resulted in at least two approaches: establishment of multidistrict collaborative schools or subsidizing a SCCOE community school. In operation, the choice of approach appears to fluctuate depending upon funding availability, need, and SCCOE board policy. Among administrators in these districts, the impetus behind establishing collaborative programs is a shared perception that, given travel distances and lack of transportation, it is unproductive to send students to more centrally-located schools. One district representative said, “By far, the most successful model has been a multi-district collaborative school, which in some years works well.” The collaborative school involving these northern districts was dissolved in 2008-2009 because it had become cost prohibitive. By one account, costs reached “\$450,000 for less than 50 kids, in addition to loss of our ADA.” District representatives shared concerns about the stability of these arrangements, referring to a lack of continuity where consistency has been distinctly problematic. In a district representative’s view, “There is a need for the county board to *want* to provide services in the northern part of the county, instead of us either having to beg for services, provide them ourselves, or buy them.”

PART III: EMERGING THEMES

This report section discusses and is organized around the themes that emerged during WestEd’s assessment of SCCOE’s AEP: (1) *Organizational and Administrative Environment*, (2) *Culture and Climate*, (3) *Staffing and Professional Development*, (4) *Curriculum and Instruction*, and (5) *Student Outcomes*. The perspectives included in this section are drawn from both external and internal SCCOE AEP stakeholders. External stakeholder perspectives include staff from the three California counties, referring districts, and community members, as previously presented. The internal stakeholder perspectives include SCCOE board members, administrators, principals, teachers/education assistants, other site staff, as well as students and parents. Additionally, analysis of CHKS, CSCS, API, CAHSEE, and ASAM, as well as graduation and retention rates are included. What follows is a synthesis of the trends found during the study.

ORGANIZATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE ENVIRONMENT

The organizational and administrative environment of an alternative education program consists of several components cited in literature that make up an educational environment:

- *Mission and purpose* (NAEA, 2009)
- *Leadership* (Aron, 2006; Ruiz de Velasco et al., 2008; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; NAEA, 2009)
- *Transitional planning and support* (NAEA, 2009; Eccles & Gootman, 2002)
- *Collaboration* (Aron, 2006; Ruiz de Velasco et al., 2008; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; NAEA, 2009)

Each of these components contributes to the way an alternative education program is organized. This subsection presents WestEd findings on these areas.

MISSION AND PURPOSE

An exemplary alternative education program develops a guiding mission and purpose that drives the program, with stakeholders sharing in its development and implementation (NAEA, 2009). Factors such as communication, establishing a clear organizational mission, and involving staff in planning and policy development are functionally interrelated. SCCOE administrators developed, shared, and began implementing their mission and purpose at the beginning of their tenure two years ago.

Interviews with county administrators running quality alternative education programs suggested the following practices as key ingredients to their success:

- High levels of internal two-way communication
- A consultative planning and decision-making process

- An organizational focus or mission agreed upon by all levels within the county

Respondents in all three comparison counties described as essential that all services ultimately be kid-focused and that the organizational mission statement is clearly stated and understood by all staff members. The emphasis on mission statements was striking, although the mission statements themselves varied greatly in terms of specificity. Most specific was the mission statement of SDCOE, which is phrased in terms of “high expectations, social justice, and equality for all students...striving to eradicate institutionalized racism and discrimination in all forms.” That statement continues:

Our priority is to eliminate the achievement gap between students of color and white students...through the delivery of culturally and linguistically responsible standards-driven instruction, courageous and advocacy-oriented leadership, and relevant professional development.

Other counties’ mission statements are less specific, speaking in general terms of providing “standard-based skills in safe learning environments,” and highlighting the county’s role in “serving as a connecting agency among...school districts, community college districts, local, state, and federal governmental agencies, and community organizations.”

While respondents from all agencies frequently referenced mission statements when discussing agency goals, SDCOE’s stated goal of providing “linguistically responsible” instruction appears to have assumed a central place in program planning and development. For several years, the agency has conducted a language training program that provides access to Rosetta Stone materials and strongly encouraged staff to complete several levels of Spanish language training within the Rosetta Stone system. Estimates of staff completion range from 75 to 85 percent. Important in providing non-Latino staff some linguistic familiarity, such efforts were seen as having even more importance in shaping, defining, and communicating the agency’s organizational goals and focus.

Interviews with SCCOE administrators indicated that prior to the current administration’s arrival, SCCOE did not have a mission or vision of the AEP, nor of what students should gain by attending one of the schools. It appears that over two years ago, common agreement on teacher’s job descriptions, definitions of student success, and instructional approaches to use did not exist. In the words of one administrator, “I think that some of the major things we’ve done is we’ve actually set a vision. The brochure [on SCCOE services] was an early on decision to say ‘here is what we can do for kids.’”

In SCCOE, survey responses from principals, teachers/education assistants, and school office coordinators indicated that, “SCCOE’s mission is clear” (3.2, 2.6, and 2.6, respectively). Further, each respondent group believed that SCCOE provides valuable services. Principal ratings of items related to the AEP’s mission and purpose were generally higher than those of teachers/education assistants and school office coordinators.

Administrators from referring districts noted positive changes relative to SCCOE's mission. In particular, respondents reported a shift away from the earlier SCCOE "mindset that focuses only on students in its detention facilities." Many district administrators perceived SCCOE to be making an effort to improve the community school program. One noted, "The vision laid out now is incredible, but only time will tell whether it works... The proof is in wanting to make it happen."

LEADERSHIP

Exemplary practices in leadership in alternative education programs include administrators that are passionate, competent, convey the program's mission, and provide adequate supports to schools and staff, including financial and instructional resources. WestEd interviewed administrators from referring districts as well as SCCOE administrators, principals, and teachers. Additionally, WestEd elicited information regarding leadership by surveying principals, teachers/education assistants, and school office coordinators.

County Leadership

The perception that SCCOE is improving is shared by various stakeholders, including district administrators, SCCOE administrators, principals, teachers, and parents. Changes in both county administration and school staffing were seen as primary reasons for improvement. A district staff said, "The new superintendent has come to grips with the realization that kids who need alternative programs are the fastest growing segment of the student population, and that it has become more and more difficult to place these students." The new superintendent was seen by several respondents as "saying good things" and "making changes that needed to be made." Another district representative added, "I trust their intentions... [The superintendent] is doing a lot of good, but will need to battle a lot of ghosts still floating around from the past. It will be a tough battle." A SCCOE administrator said, "We now have compliant programs, which over a year ago were not in compliance. Our programs are getting better."

Replacement of the AEP director in the latter part of 2010 and a general reorganization were also seen as important. Descriptions of the previous environment included terms such as "terrible," "untruthful," "unresponsive," and "indifferent." One district representative said, "SCCOE is much more attentive and responsive than it was three years ago... It is doing things much more efficiently and quickly." Another district staff added, "There has been an important shift in staff, but also a philosophical shift in mindset." In addition to overseeing the AEP, the new director was also assigned as principal to one of the community schools.

The deputy superintendent was mentioned by several district representatives as being "somewhat responsible for these changes." Previously, one respondent noted, the administration staff at SCCOE was seen as "unresponsive," with another adding that "there was never any follow-through," and a third commenting on the need to "keep a notebook of what was said... to try to filter enough so I could understand the truth." In contrast, the deputy superintendent was described as "very different" and a "man of his word."

Still another positive development seen by several district administrators was the recent appointment of the chief schools officer. Described by district staff as “an absolute step in the correct direction,” this appointment was seen as a hopeful sign of change. In the words of one observer, “What has been absent has been a clear commitment from the board on down...I am now cautiously optimistic.”

Overall, principals believed that they received adequate support from SCCOE and that the AEP was improving. When asked about the type of support received from SCCOE, principals reported that they received curriculum, technology, and supplies. One principal reported receiving, “a huge amount of support both personally and professionally from the county office. They are very quick to say, ‘What do you need?’” The principal acknowledged that while SCCOE at times promised more than they could achieve, this principal believed it came from a “good-hearted place.” In particular, principals valued the services provided by the educational services branch. One principal stated, “Without the assistance of the educational services branch, we could not implement professional learning communities (PLCs).” Another principal described that staff from the educational services branch observed classes at his/her school, and then debriefed their observations.

Yet, principals also described the pressure of being under intense scrutiny due to being in PI Year 4 and attributed it to a lack of coherence at SCCOE. One principal articulated this point in the following quote:

Because we are in PI Year 4, we’re very high profile in the county office as a department. Everyone’s looking at our department. The multitude of programs that we’re rolling out all at once...the time [commitment] is just huge. And then time for staff to actually get together at their school site. There are so many meetings as a department...we need more coherence in terms of the overall program and more focus. It would be ideal to do a few things really well versus doing many things mediocre.

Another principal echoed the frustration of being under such pressure, which resulted in the efforts and contributions of staff across the AEP going unrecognized:

We have good people working in alternative education, yet our lack of clear leadership allowed us to be used as a leverage during board meetings. The board has an agenda with our leaders. Alternative education, because of its lack of coherence, became an exaggerated item that was constantly on the board agenda of every single board meeting...The good that is in the department does not get a chance to be shared. It is difficult to go to meetings where all the bad things about the department are being shared. There are really good people working in alternative education.

These data provide evidence that while principals believe that the AEP is improving, the effort to reform may be occurring in a manner that is incoherent and requires more effective leadership. It is also evident that morale among principals is varied and inconsistent.

Principal Leadership

School-level leadership is critically important to a school's success. Principals set a school's priorities and determine whether teachers and students perceive a site to have high academic expectations of students and students feel motivated to learn (Austin, Dixon, Bailey, & Berliner, 2008; Ruiz de Velasco et al., 2008). WestEd interviewed SCCOE administrators and principals, conducted focus groups with teachers and other school staff, and administered surveys to principals, teachers/education assistants, and school office coordinators to understand perspectives toward and practices related to principal leadership.

Most teachers and other school staff positively perceived their principal's leadership and commitment to the school's program and students. The most common characteristic that staff appreciated about their principals was a feeling of support. In particular, staff appreciated principals who listened to their concerns. For example, a teacher at one community school stated, "Whenever you approach him [principal] with a situation, he is willing to brainstorm ideas for helping us work through things." A teacher at another school site described the principal in the following way, "He is really easy to talk to. You almost feel like you're on the same level. Some principals just don't have the time for you."

A principal's time and availability was another issue that teachers and other school staff identified as significant to effective leadership. Teachers felt supported when their principals made time for them and were accessible, even if the principal may not be physically on site. Teachers noticed when principals spent extra hours on campus. For example, teachers at one site said the following about their principal's commitment to the school, "He puts in the time. He's here early." Teachers at an institutional school stated, "He's here at the end of the school day." Staff was also impressed when principals were present for meetings with families and students. At one school, staff indicated that the principal was consistently present for intakes and individualized education plan (IEP) meetings. The following quote illustrates the teacher's sentiment:

It's unusual for a principal to want to be here to meet with parents, with any students. Whenever we have a new kid, he makes it a point to be there. At other schools, they don't even tell the principal when an intake takes place.

Site visits found the practice of principals being present at intakes and/or IEP meetings at three of the 11 AEP sites.

There were modest but significant differences among teachers working in institutional schools and those of teachers working in community schools in survey responses to items related to principal supports. Teachers in institutional schools were somewhat more positive. For example, institutional school teachers (2.9) reported greater principal consultation with staff before making decisions than community school teachers (2.7). Institutional school teachers (2.5) also reported greater agreement to receiving support to meet student needs than community school teachers (2.3).

Teachers respect a principal who is knowledgeable about curriculum and instruction. For example, teachers at one community school reported that their principal's previous teaching experience was beneficial to them and the school, such as the principal's ability to provide effective feedback to teachers during classroom walkthroughs and evaluations. A teacher articulated this point in the following quote, "[Principal] was a teacher for so long, she often has really good feedback." Another teacher at this same school echoed this sentiment, "[Principal] knows what she's doing. She was a teacher of the year at a different district. Not all principals have experience in the classroom." Teachers at another community school reported that their principal was very involved with curriculum development, and further stated, "[Principal] has given a lot of her time to make sure these programs [curricular programs] are appropriate for these students."

Other leadership characteristics highlighted by teachers may fall in the category of attitude. For example, teachers at one community school described their principal as "enthusiastic." Another staff member at this same school used the expression "die hard," and further added, "I have never seen such a dedicated principal in my life." Teachers at an institutional school described their principal as "compassionate." Additionally, some teachers discussed that it was clear to them when a principal cared about students. And of course, it was also important to teachers when a principal demonstrated caring about staff. Overall, teachers and other school staff valued a principal who demonstrated positive affective personal characteristics with staff and students. Teachers had more favorable perceptions of a principal who manifested a positive attitude in their leadership style.

The cases where teachers and other school staff expressed uncertainty about a principal's leadership and commitment tended to be at schools where the principal was relatively new. We may further speculate that this was more the case when a principal was new to the position. It was clear that principal turnover had a negative impact on teacher morale. For example, a teacher at one community school expressed his frustration regarding principal turnover:

We focus on an idea from a principal. Then when he's gone, we have to focus on a new idea. When the position is not filled, honestly, I don't know how you can run a school without a principal on site. That was ridiculous that they assumed that one principal can run multiple sites. They would only put out fires here and there.

Teachers also expressed dissatisfaction and a lack of support when their principal did not advocate on their behalf to SCCOE administrators. Teachers wanted a principal who was "on top of it" when it came to tough issues and tough questions. For example, a teacher at one school articulated:

I would like if he was willing to take our fight to the county. It would be good for him to fight for what we believe or at least get us answers regarding the extended day. We're not sold on it. It would be good for our principal to take up our battles.

The use of traveling principals resulted in what some termed "administrative inattention." One long-term staff person said that within the last five years, her school site has seen a new principal every year and suggested, "It's almost like recreating the wheel every year." Under the current administration, there is now one principal at each site in an effort to improve schools. One SCCOE

administrator said, “We’re getting the right leadership in place...I mean having a principal at each site is just a huge cost but also a way to get a school back to doing the right things.”

TRANSITIONAL PLANNING AND SUPPORT

In good practice, transitional planning and support in alternative education programs provides clear criteria and procedures for transitioning students from the traditional school setting to the alternative school setting, ensuring timely access to support services (NAEA, 2009). Further, students are assigned to schools using a fair and equitable process, free of arbitrary features, which is supported by written and adopted policy (Almeida et al., 2010). WestEd interviewed administrators from referring districts, SCCOE administrators—including the transfer coordinator—principals, students, and parents about the transfer practices in the AEP.

In SCCOE, the transfer process is a one-person operation. A transfer coordinator, employed in this position for nine years and housed in an office at one of the school sites, manages the placement of students referred from feeder districts to one of the seven community schools. According to the transfer coordinator, having her office at a school makes families feel welcome. She said, “I’m the first person that the families meet. I’m the first impression that families have. At one point, they [SCCOE administrators] wanted to move me up to the county office, but I want families to feel comfortable.” The sending district contacts the transfer coordinator to refer a student. The transfer coordinator then meets with the student and family to determine school placement.

While the transfer coordinator does not speak Spanish—and many of the families with students in community schools are monolingual Spanish speakers—districts contact her in advance if the families need a meeting in Spanish. At that point, the transfer coordinator schedules the families for a meeting on a day when the Spanish-speaking counselor or education assistant is at the school. However, if the transfer coordinator is out sick—which occurred a few times within the last years, for weeks at a time—the formal placement process comes to a halt. Nonetheless, the transfer coordinator meets monthly with district representatives and at the end of the year to discuss which students went back to their districts.

District respondents knew who to contact and the procedures through which a student could be transferred to a SCCOE community school. Several volunteered the view that “intake coordination is excellent” and that intake staff is “willing to work with us and with families.” There was general agreement that the stability of the referral process, its timeliness, and experienced personnel were valuable resources for districts that refer students. According to district staff, when students completed their expulsion and satisfied their rehabilitation contract, community schools were frequently requested to review student performance, both academically and behaviorally. SCCOE was seen as providing lots of information to the referring district and the family. Another respondent added, “When information is requested, it is provided on a timely basis, but more information is needed...especially when a student is not doing well. They should let us know without having to ask.”

District representatives expressed some concern regarding the level of communication about a student's actual attendance and performance after enrollment. Some district staff reported high levels of communication with lots of information provided on the referred student, while others report receiving little or no information. Where districts saw students as likely to return, there was a greater concern over communication about student status and performance. Where such a return was seen as less likely, there was less interest in receiving status reports or information. Some noted that progress reports on students are available, not formally, but said, "You do have to ask." Another added, "This [lack of information] is our fault, just as much as the county's. We haven't put in place a way to track those kids because they've been so few."

While communication about the transfer process is relatively clear for referring district personnel, it is not clear for community school staff, parents, and students. According to school staff, parents, and students with whom we spoke, there was limited knowledge of the transfer and placement process. In fact, some did not know a transfer coordinator existed, at least not someone with that title. This lack of information across several respondent groups indicates that there is little information communicated from SCCOE to the schools and parents about this critical process. According to SCCOE staff, students referred to community schools are often "habitually truant" from traditional schools, so they may not attend the initial meeting with the transfer coordinator. School office coordinators reported varying levels of communication regarding student transfers. The coordinators reported collaborating with SCCOE (2.7) in transferring students, yet also reported that their schools could do more to work closely with other alternative schools to ensure services are coordinated (2.3).

Parents reported low levels of communication from both the referring school and SCCOE schools. One parent described an instance when their child was out of school for three months because the referring school failed to respond to the parent's requests for assistance in placing their child. On another occasion, the referring school provided the parent with inaccurate information stating that their only choice was an online alternative school. After contacting the district, the parent discovered the community school was also an option. A parent at an institutional school reported being unaware that their child was attending a school at all. The parent stated, "I didn't even know [there was a school] until yesterday. I knew there was some kind of classroom, but I wasn't updated with his grades, his teacher, his behavior in the classroom."

In 2004, the Santa Clara County Alternative Schools Collaborative produced a report with a vision of best practices in the county indicating, "The program, from intake and assessment through the educational experience, should recognize and build on each student's strengths" (2004, p. 11). In fact, one of the collaborative's recommendations was to "Improve outreach and placement services for all alternative school programs" (Santa Clara Alternative Schools Collaborative, 2004, p. 15). WestEd found that there was no formal process for matching a student's strengths or interests with a particular community school. While there are assessment coordinators that give students diagnostic tests and identify if a student has an IEP, the process for matching a student to a school site is primarily based on proximity to the home and gang affiliation. In many cases, the district will tell the

transfer coordinator about a student's gang affiliation so that the student may be placed at a school with similar students. This process takes place to avoid violence and, ideally, to facilitate learning.

COLLABORATION

Quality collaboration in alternative education programs consists of establishing authentic partnerships with community resources based on trust, open communication, clearly defined goals, and shared responsibility that links the family, school, and community (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; NAEA, 2009). Local employers, mental and physical health providers, and social service agencies are but a few of the many partnerships that can be established to support wrap-around services for students (Aron, 2006; NAEA, 2009; Ruiz de Velasco, et al., 2008). WestEd spoke with administrators from three California counties, administrators from referring districts, Santa Clara county community members, and SCCOE administrators about the collaborative practices for alternative education programs that highlighted both the internal and external relationships that need to exist to support students. WestEd found there was a need for better coordination and collaboration internally between the county and the sites, between the county and the districts, and among the school sites.

County Collaboration

Overall, school staff perceived the guidance and communication from SCCOE as inconsistent, which created a disconnect between the central office and the sites. Staff perceive that SCCOE administrators make decisions about programming and implement new policies without due diligence at the site level, nor awareness of the structures previously in place. This sentiment is explained by a SCCOE staff member:

My biggest concern, as a 20-year employee, is that everyone who is in a position of making decisions is brand new. I'm all for change. Change is good. We always need to evolve. But I think changes are being made without knowledge of history and why we do things. This county is different than any other county. It's a huge county, very diverse, very rural...I feel that my opinion is respected by the new administration. They appreciate what I do. Not that I need to be consulted on everything, but the reason why we do things the way we do. I don't really feel connected, but I don't see that as a negative thing.

Other SCCOE staff of various levels and across several schools shared similar concerns about the SCCOE administration's decision-making process that did not include those most closely working with students. In the open-ended survey item that asked, "*What can SCCOE do to improve school services that support student performance and wellbeing at your school?*" all respondent groups commented on the lack of collaboration between the county office and school sites. One said, "New administrators implemented policies without awareness of structures in place." Another added, "SCCOE administrators can and should listen to the staff at the schools who know exactly what transpires at the site." Further, another suggested, "More coherence and vision from the top. The disconnect between county office leadership and school sites is getting worse rather than improving." The

hiring of the chief schools officer and the AEP director was needed to bridge the disconnect between central office and sites.

Further, school office coordinators, often the longest-standing employees at a school, report a lack of sufficient coordination with both other county schools and with referring districts. Survey results indicated that school office coordinators do not agree that SCCOE collaborates well with schools in transferring students or that schools work closely to ensure services are coordinated. Interview data corroborated the inconsistency in coordination. WestEd heard reports that some sites provide breakfast and lunch to all students and others do not, despite the number of students qualified for FRPL.

District Collaboration

District staff responsible for student referrals generally rated SCCOE community schools as “adequate” or “good” in helping students to remedy academic deficiencies and in providing guidance and counseling services. According to district staff, such ratings would not have been as positive in previous years. Several described informational meetings SCCOE conducted every other month as helpful and providing useful information. District staff perceived these meetings as more frequent than in previous years and the tone as more open to discussing collaboration and coordination.

There was a sense that SCCOE staff was making greater efforts to provide information and coordinate with districts. In the past two years, observed one respondent, “SCCOE district relations—the whole thing—got a remake, which was really needed.” Another added, “County presentations are now very helpful in letting us know what’s going on at the community schools.” A third district staff noted, “Even though I’ve never visited a school site, I feel I now understand what they’re doing.” It should be observed that roughly one-quarter of those evaluating the SCCOE program had never actually visited a community school site. These and other respondents relied upon a variety of information sources, including “levels of parent satisfaction telling me that they are okay with the program,” or “hearing positive things from people in other districts.” SCCOE’s outreach efforts mentioned above were the most frequently cited source of information.

While changes in SCCOE district communication have been well-received, several respondents also voiced a sense of caution. One district staff said, “We need to wait and see...[the new SCCOE staff] are still learning and need at least a year to really have an understanding of the district-county landscape.” Another added, “Information about SCCOE’s plans remains critical, since we are concerned about the possibility of a realignment of staff in response to the budget...[and] the possible closing of the smaller schools is very worrisome.”

In an era of budget shortfall and change, communication between SCCOE and district staffs was seen as especially important. One district staff said, “At the district level there seems to be a lot of planning that is already in place, and it would be good to know where the county is going.” Districts and county offices are currently required to develop and submit to the state a comprehensive county

plan to provide services to expelled students. Updates, approved by district boards, are submitted to the superintendent of public instruction every three years. Slightly more than half of the district respondents felt that a county-level plan for the AEP developed jointly by SCCOE and the districts made sense for increasing communication and coordination. Such a plan could establish a continuum of service and help coordinate district-county policies and programs. Another respondent added:

The county office isn't optimizing the use of all its resources. There is a need for more wrap-around services. A plan might be a good way to shift away from the parochialism paradigm of trying to do everything yourself.

Others were more skeptical about such a process. One said, "Over time, development of a countywide plan would probably be a good idea, but I suspect that there would be considerable resistance, at least at the beginning."

Community Collaboration

Student success in alternative education programs depends upon both program quality and the services out-of-school agencies provide. As such, there is great county-to-county variability across California in how education programs coordinate with external services (Austin et al., 2008; Ruiz de Velasco et al., 2008). WestEd explored the collaborative practices of three California counties. Further, WestEd also asked Santa Clara county community members, SCCOE administrators, and principals about the partnerships that exist to provide students services.

According to administrators at the comparison counties known for running quality alternative education programs, the types of external relationships required for creating and maintaining a quality program were wide-ranging, strong, supportive, reciprocal, and ongoing. Without exception, respondents emphasized the need for strong relationships with local referring districts and the office of probation. While details and procedures differed, all counties reported developing effective planning and coordination mechanisms that routinely involved district pupil service staff, as well as personnel from county, non-profit, and city agencies.

The unanimity of remarks regarding the continual involvement of probation staff in alternative education was striking across all counties. A strong reciprocal relationship focusing on program planning and implementation was considered absolutely crucial by most respondents, as was the need to build on-going, pro-active consultative relationships with county health, social welfare, and mental health programs. Respondents reported that bi-monthly meetings with all stakeholders, not just education agencies, were a minimum requirement. One respondent noted that stakeholders needed to work together saying, "[There needs to be a] shared understanding that the county office of education must rely on districts and others as partners, not competitors, in providing services."

Community forum participants representing various community organizations and referring districts believed it was important to have strong partnerships between SCCOE and schools, non-profits, and local agencies, like probation. However, the overwhelming majority of participants believed

SCCOE's relationships with community agencies were weak. A summary of expectations for community schools shared at the community forum included, "Community Day Schools need to have social services in place for their students and families (ex. Alum Rock Counseling, EMQ, & MACSA) and Community Day Schools need to have programs and counseling in place to address issues such as gang involvement, drug usage, and teen dating" (Sanchez & Ortiz, 2010).

WestEd's data collection process suggested a weak relationship between SCCOE and probation. For example, to gain access to interview students at institutional schools, probation required WestEd to provide rationale and documentation for the study. Despite efforts to comply, probation did not grant WestEd permission to use interview data from students at institutional schools. Further, SCCOE staff was not too familiar with probation's request of WestEd and its process for granting permission. A SCCOE administrator commented that the previous AEP director had a good relationship with probation and since leaving the post over a year ago, SCCOE's relationship with probation has not been the same. However, the SCCOE administrator noted that this relationship is improving.

Interviews with SCCOE administrators and principals indicated that partnerships do exist, for example with San Jose State University's (SJSU) sociology department that is linked to the writing curriculum, with the Miri Center that provides counseling services at schools, with the San Jose police department that provides an officer on site, with the CYO that has a former gang member at every site and counsels students, as well as with Fresh Lifelines for Youth, that teach leadership on site and identify students that need additional supports. A SCCOE administrator said that since two years ago, there are more adults on sites and this practice will support students and schools. The administrator said, "Our philosophy is that the more adults that you have on campus, the more models kids will see, the more opportunities kids will have to talk to someone, and the better chances they will have to succeed." While partnerships exist, there appears to be agreement among all SCCOE stakeholders that these partnerships can grow to better support student success.

CULTURE AND CLIMATE

An exemplary culture and climate in alternative education programs maintains a safe, caring, and orderly climate and culture that promotes collegial relationships among students, parents/guardians, school staff, and county administrators (NAEA, 2009). Further, there exists a safe and supportive environment with appropriate structures for student physical and psychological safety (Aron, 2006; Ruiz de Velasco et al., 2008; Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Examples of indicators WestEd studied to assess the culture and climate in the AEP include rules and behavior expectations that are clearly written and that staff communicates high expectations for teacher and student performance, to name a few of the indicators. WestEd spoke with principals, teachers, parents, and students⁹ and also surveyed principals, teachers/education assistants, and school office coordinators to understand the culture and climate in the schools.

⁹ Student interview data represent only the perspectives of students at community schools.

STUDENT AND FAMILY PERSPECTIVES

Focus group interviews with community school students revealed that students were generally satisfied with their community school experience. Most students had positive perceptions of their classes, teachers, principal, and the overall school environment. Also, students reported that school staff had positive expectations of them. Students believed their schools were helping them be successful. Furthermore, most students indicated that at least one adult at school showed that they cared about them. Parent focus group data revealed that parent perspectives were similar to those of students. At the same time, both students and parents believed that there was room for improvement in their community schools.

WestEd examined 2009-2010 CHKS data for SCCOE community school students¹⁰ and compared these to the results of students from three best practice counties, as well as the results of 11th grade students in California high schools. Findings indicated that focus group data was more favorable than the CHKS results regarding school climate. More specifically, CHKS data shows that SCCOE students reported less positive school climate conditions compared to the three comparison counties and 11th graders across the state. While students in SCCOE community schools reported satisfaction with school climate during focus groups, their reports are not as positive as those of students in comparison counties. Students may have compared their circumstances in community schools with those they had in traditional schools and believe school climate is more positive.

The CHKS reported results for the SCCOE community schools that resonate with student focus group responses. For example, despite the fact that almost half (49 percent) of student respondents report being unhappy “to be at this school,” most also report relatively high scores on selected measures relating to a positive school climate. Results from the 2009-2010 CSCS of teachers and staff showed a slightly more positive picture, but had results remarkably similar to those students reported. Exhibit 14 shows a comparison of 2009-2010 CHKS and CSCS survey responses. Both teachers and students felt that SCCOE staff care about students, set high expectations, want students to do their best, listen when students have something to say, and believe that students can and will be successful.

¹⁰ 2009-2010 CHKS data was not reported for institutional schools in SCCOE.

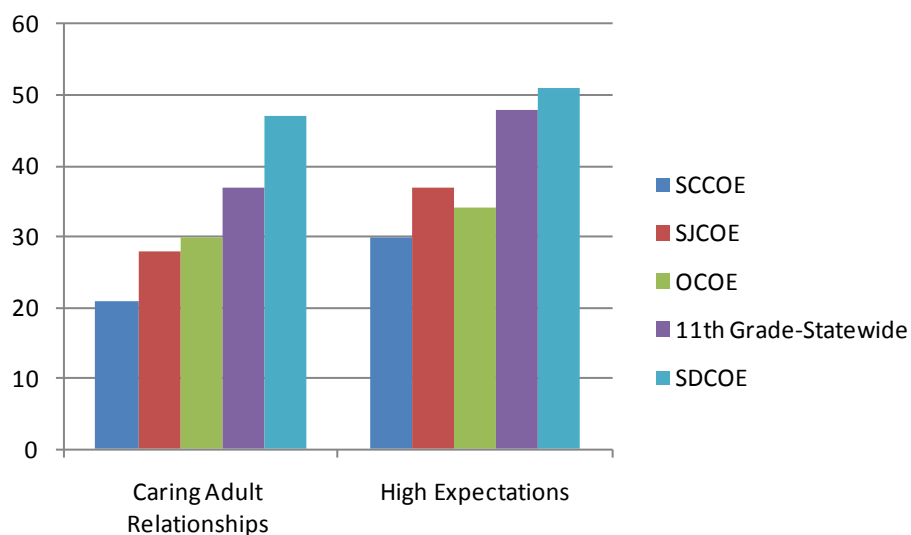
Exhibit 14: Comparison of 2009-2010 CHKS and CSCS Responses

	Teachers	Students ¹¹
Adults care about all students	3.5	3.0
Teachers set high expectations	3.4	3.3
Want students to do their best	3.6	3.5
Listen when students have something to say	3.6	3.1
Believe students can/will be successful	3.6	3.3

Scale 1-5, with 5 being “strongly agree” and 1 “strongly disagree.” Scales recalculated to permit comparison.
Source: CDE CHKS and CSCS 2009-2010

Yet, summary results for the three best practice counties and for all California 11th graders show that, by comparison, students rank SCCOE schools less highly. For example, while 20 percent of SCCOE students reported “very high” levels of caring adult relationships among staff, this percentage was significantly lower than comparison counties and among 11th graders statewide.¹² Exhibit 15 illustrates school environment measures of SCCOE, best practice counties, and statewide 11th graders.

Exhibit 15: School Environment Measures for SCCOE, Best Practice Counties, and Statewide 11th Graders



¹¹ Student responses were originally collected on a 4-point agree-disagree scale, while the adult survey used a 5-point scale. (High and low values ran oppositely). To permit comparison, scales were recalculated, with 5 being “strongly agree” and 1 being “strongly disagree.”

¹² CHKS statewide data for 11th graders was collected over the 2007 to 2009 period and included students enrolled in traditional as well as alternative schools.

While roughly 30 percent of SCCOE students agreed “very strongly” about the existence of high expectations among school staff, students in other county schools—in particular SDCOE—showed still higher levels of agreement. Thus, while student focus group data indicated students thought staff had high expectations of them, they may have compared current circumstances to their previous experience at a traditional school.

During focus groups, students discussed their thoughts regarding classes, staff, and the overall school environment. Students named at least one course they enjoyed. Not surprisingly, many students indicated that they particularly enjoyed elective and physical education classes. The elective classes mentioned by students included computer graphics and construction. Yet, students also liked core subject area classes. A significant factor impacting whether students liked a course seemed to be the teacher’s ability to engage them. Students liked being in the classes of teachers who had a sense of humor and those who treated them with respect. For example, students at one school stated that their teacher made learning fun, which motivated them to complete their schoolwork.

In general, students understood what their teachers and other school staff expected of them. The most commonly cited expectations were showing respect and “doing your work.” Students interpreted showing respect in the following ways: good behavior, acting mature, no swearing or “talking back,” and not being “obnoxious.” Many of the students interviewed articulated that as long as they did their work and stayed out of trouble, they were meeting teachers’ expectations. Students from two schools described a behavior reward system, which granted privileges to students with good behavior and high attendance. Students understood that staff expected them to comply with certain social norms, such as staying sober and clean and in some cases, wearing a clean, pressed uniform. Students also indicated that teachers wanted them to be successful in school. Some students stated that their teachers wanted them to succeed by transitioning back to “normal” school. One student articulated this sentiment in the following quote, “I guess it’s [community school] kind of helping me with getting back in regular school. Before I went here, I didn’t really do work. I was more like a slacker.” Other students stated that their teachers wanted them to graduate and go on to college. Parent focus groups confirmed these student statements regarding teacher expectations.

Most students reported that their schools were helping them be successful. Most commonly, students appreciated the small school environment and the individualized attention. The following quote illustrates a student’s comparison of the community school setting with a regular comprehensive high school, “Regular school has so many kids. They [teachers and staff] don’t get to know you. You’re just another number to them.” On the other hand, SCCOE’s community schools fostered students’ personal and academic growth through a more personalized environment that was appreciated by both students and their families. For example, one student stated, “My mom likes it [community school], because...not as much kids; not as much problems.” One student remarked that her teachers even knew her nickname. During focus groups, parents reported being pleased with the small school environment and that students were having more personalized interactions with teachers. One parent stated, “It’s a smaller group in the classroom. Teachers have more time to pay attention.” Students appreciated having individualized attention from teachers and education

assistants as well as small group instruction when needed. Some students shared proudly during focus group interviews that their grades improved since attending community school. One student stated, “*En esta escuela he tenido los grados mas altos.*”¹³

The majority of students identified at least one adult at their school whom they trusted. Students mentioned teachers, education assistants, and even their principal. For example, students at one school stated that they liked their principal because “he doesn’t judge us.” Students provided numerous examples of the ways in which staff at their schools showed they cared about them. For example, students at one school stated, “[Teacher] cares because he’ll tell us that he notices when we do good things.”

SCCOE 2009-2010 CHKS data assessed community school students’ connectedness and engagement to school. Items included whether they feel that they are a part of this school, if teachers treat students fairly, and whether they feel safe at school. In addition, students were asked whether anyone notices when they are not there, if they did interesting activities at school, and whether they made a difference at school. Exhibit 16 includes these items for SCCOE students and students from three comparison counties.

Exhibit 16: Measures of School Connectedness and Engagement from CHKS Responses

	SCCOE	SJCOE	OCOE	SDCOE	11th Graders Statewide
Specific Responses					
Percent reporting “Strongly agree”					
Feel I’m part of this school	10%	7%	9%	21%	15%
Teachers treat students fairly	18%	16%	22%	27%	20%
Feel safe at school	17%	14%	14%	26%	16%
Percent reporting “Very much true”					
Someone notices when I’m not there	27%	29%	31%	50%	32%
Do interesting activities at school	17%	16%	14%	33%	17%
Make a difference at school	15%	13%	12%	23%	14%
Summative Measures					
Percent “High” on this scale					
Opportunities for meaningful participation	18%	19%	18%	22%	47%
School connectedness	24%	24%	27%	40%	42%

Source: County office summaries of CHKS 2009-2010. 11th grade statewide data 2007-2009 *Summary Report*.

Only a relatively small proportion of SCCOE students strongly agree that they are part of the school they attend (10 percent), teachers treat students fairly (18 percent), or that they feel safe at school (17 percent). While low, these results are roughly comparable with those of students in best practice counties and with statewide results for 11th graders in all schools. Just over one-quarter (27 percent)

¹³ This quote loosely translates as: “In this school my grades have been better.”

of SCCOE students reported that a school staff member noticed when they were not at school. This percentage compares with student responses from all counties except SDCOE, which showed that half (50 percent) felt their absences were noticed by teachers and staff. This questionnaire item is one of three that have a strong relation to school academic performance on STAR tests. Other questionnaire items include being listened to by adults and feeling that staff had high expectations for them (Austin et al., 2004). Students reported doing interesting activities at school (17 percent) and making a difference at school (15 percent). With the exception of SDCOE, which again scored substantially higher on both engagement-linked items, these responses were roughly similar to both comparison schools and to the statewide 11th grade results.

Students at one school stated that staff talked to them individually to address behavioral issues and deter a problem from escalating. One student stated, “If you’re doing something wrong, they’ll pull you out [of class] and talk to you.” A student discussed how one of his teachers helped him complete job applications. Another student described how a staff person at his school, a CYO, drove through his neighborhood “scoping things out” after the student reported that he and his younger brother were being harassed on their way to school. Students at one school believed that their teachers “care more about our safety than their own safety.” They described an incident where on their way to the bus stop after school, students from a rival gang attacked them. Their teachers ran out to the scene and dispersed the fight. The students acknowledged that their teachers could have gotten hurt.

Parents agreed with students that staff at SCCOE’s community schools care about student success and safety. Numerous parents reported that teachers expect students to learn and work to their full potential. One parent stated, “Teachers are giving kids options and choices to make them men and women, to better their future for their career.” Parents also acknowledged that their students don’t feel as rejected in community schools as they did in regular school. One parent stated, “Our kids are here because they got in trouble at their regular school. Teachers here would suspend them but show them that love when they come back.” Parents reported teachers also show they care by providing students with advice and encouragement and watching over student safety. Parents mentioned numerous occasions when teachers put themselves in harm’s way to defuse gang tensions on and off campus.

CHKS responses from 2009-2010 addressed activities that would make a student feel unsafe or physically vulnerable at school. Items included whether in the past 12 months while at school, students had been threatened or injured with a weapon, seen someone else threatened, had property damaged or stolen, or were offered illegal drugs. With the exception of one cluster of questions, CHKS results for SCCOE students are generally higher than the three model practices counties and the statewide 11th grade results. During that period, students now enrolled in a SCCOE school were more likely than those in comparison counties to have either possessed such a weapon or to have seen someone else threatened. Exhibit 17 shows the CHKS results on measures of school environment. While these reports are relatively high, they speak more to the high level of student need to be in an environment that makes students feel safe.

Exhibit 17: Measures of School Environment from CHKS Responses

	SCCOE	SJCOE	OCOE	SDCOE	11th Graders Statewide
School Environment – Past 12 months					
Seen someone threatened with a weapon	52%	38%	41%	39%	25%
Been threatened/injured with weapon one or more times	35%	20%	25%	18%	6%
Had property stolen or damaged	28%	23%	27%	19%	23%
Offered illegal drugs at school	56%	40%	47%	45%	33%

Source: County office summaries of CHKS 2009-2010. 11th grade statewide data 2007-2009 *Summary Report*.

Students also identified ways in which their community schools could improve. When asked, “What could your school do to help you be more successful?” students made various suggestions. The most commonly cited suggestions were: (1) more food and better food, (2) more sports, and (3) more computers and more time on computers. Some students indicated that they were hungry and could not afford the school lunch. For example, one student stated, “I always come to school with an empty stomach, so I can’t focus.” Several principals indicated that they purchased and stored food for students who regularly asked for food. A couple of principals also stated that the processing of the FRPL applications was taking significantly more time in the 2010-2011 academic year than in the past. One principal stated that it took approximately six weeks to process a student’s FRPL application. Students also desired to play more sports, such as handball and wanted sports competitions with other schools. Furthermore, students were eager to use computers at their schools. Some students complained that their school did not have enough computers, while other students stated that despite having a computer lab, they were not allowed to use computers as often as they liked.

Students expressed concerns about other areas. Some students wanted more help with homework and tutoring to be available after school. Simultaneously, some students stated that they wanted harder homework, while others stated that they simply did not have enough homework. Parents echoed student sentiments about homework and expressed concern that their students would have a difficult time completing homework should they return to a regular school. In addition, some parents reported that their students received below grade-level work and were not challenged enough. Students also remarked about the quality of their books, indicating that they would like better books.

Other concerns were lack of consistency regarding school and classroom rules and desiring more respect from teachers and other school staff. For example, students at one school indicated that they received mixed messages regarding standards of conduct. The following quote illustrates students’ frustration with inconsistent rules, “The principal comes in and makes new rules everyday.” Students also complained about teachers yelling at students and not treating them with respect. For example, a student at one school perceived that his teacher did not show respect for any of the students. When asked for an example, he stated, “Like when [student’s name] couldn’t see the t.v. monitor, he

asked her to move it closer. She said ‘No,’ and he got pissed off and got sent out of class.” Parents at one school also reported disrespect between teachers and students.

STAFF PERSPECTIVES

Among school staff, however, morale is low. Principals, teachers, and school office coordinator survey responses indicated there was high staff turnover, that teachers’ responsibilities were extensive, and they received little support. Teachers spoke to the myriad roles they perform such as, “Teachers instruct more than one subject;” “Our teachers serve on curriculum committees;” “Teachers are also responsible for piloting new programs (of which there are many);” “Teachers are also expected to help develop the plans for implementation.” Teachers acknowledged that they also perform many of the responsibilities for other adults at the school when they are not present.

Further, interviews corroborated that changing SCCOE practices contributed to a low sense of morale among SCCOE staff because they feared more change in the midst of difficult circumstances. It must be noted that less than half of the teachers and education assistants (46 percent) completed the survey. Further, of those who completed the survey, average responses fell between disagree and agree, reflecting neutral opinions about programming. Some teachers opted to contact WestEd anonymously to share their experiences offline. These respondents were concerned about speaking out, indicating a climate of fear and potentially a lack of trust in how data may be shared.

Additionally, several SCCOE staff across levels and schools who spoke to WestEd site visitors acknowledged feeling hesitant to openly share their experiences in SCCOE. In fact, some became emotional during conversations and described feeling emotionally distraught because of the negative climate in which they worked. It is clear that there is tension among school staff and between school staff and SCCOE administrators. One respondent shared concerns about the accusations that reach the Board of Trustees and affect not only a staff member’s reputation, but also morale in SCCOE. The respondent said:

The current administration is getting blamed for a lot of stuff...I think we’ve had a few disgruntled employees that have had their [Board of Trustees] ears, and it has evolved into what we’re seeing right now. Because of a few people, I’m constantly having to justify myself. They’re [few disgruntled employees] listened to and the board takes it in as if it’s the truth...It’s a lot of time and energy spent on having to justify what you do...It’s so exhausting. I’d rather just do my job.

These actions are symptoms of a larger climate problem related to communication, coordination, and a sense of not receiving acknowledgement for services provided. Several staff spoke of the close personal relationships between SCCOE administrators that inhibited staff from reporting concerns for fear that they would not be taken seriously. While still very much a part of the current administration’s climate, much of this tension existed long before they took leadership. Attempts to contest decisions from the previous administrators were, in the words of a respondent, “laughed at.”

Further, parents and teachers believe there is a need for greater acknowledgement and encouragement for positive student behavior and commendable teacher results. Parent focus groups surfaced concern that students do not receive sufficient emotional and educational support and encouragement from adults in school. Teachers reported that it would be beneficial for students to have a rewards system in place that would encourage positive behavior changes and academic growth. Additionally, teachers wanted to be rewarded for good work.

STAFFING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Staffing and professional development are key components identified by alternative education literature as leading to successful programming for student achievement (Aron, 2006; Ruiz de Velasco, 2008; NAEA, 2009; and Leone & Drakeford, 1999). WestEd asked administrators from three California counties, SCCOE administrators, principals, teachers, and other school staff about the staffing and professional development practices.

STAFFING

Given the difficulty of working with high-risk students, especially those in a less-restrictive community school setting, recruitment, training and retention of experienced teachers was seen as an important factor in determining program quality. Respondents noted significant challenges faced by county offices of education in development of a teacher recruitment system which ensures that only well prepared, experienced teachers with an understanding of the at-risk population are hired as teaching staff.

Exhibit 18 below compares the length of service of SCCOE teachers to the three comparison counties. While overall years of teaching experience is 12 years or longer for all comparison counties, there are differences in the percentage of staff with two or less years of service. Just over 15 percent of SJCOE teachers were hired within the past two years, a percentage that falls to under 10 percent (9.8 percent) for SDCOE and to less than 1 percent (.3 percent) for OCOE. By comparison, just under one-fifth (18.2 percent) of SCCOE’s teaching staff was hired within the past two years.

Exhibit 18: Teachers’ Length of Service Across Counties, 2009-2010

	SCCOE	SJCOE	OCOE	SDCOE
Average years of service	12.3	12.5	16.2	12.9
Average years at county office	7.4	9.4	13.8	9.5
Percent 1st or 2nd year staff	18.2%	15.1%	0.3%	9.8%

Source: CDE: CBEDS Professional Assignment (PAIF) data 2009-2010

Staff in two model counties noted that teaching experience alone in other types of schools was not sufficient to ensure the ability to work well with the high-risk populations served by county juvenile hall and community schools. To be effective, a comparison county administrator said, “[Teachers must] understand the kind of student they are dealing with and be willing to work in a non-

traditional school environment.” Several respondents voiced the sentiment that to be successful, teachers need to like working with troubled kids or enjoy the challenge of going against the odds.

The need was for “some kind of farm team” to provide teachers with “on-the-ground experience and at least some in-service training” before hiring them on a permanent basis. Development of a large substitute pool appeared to be one response to this concern. In two of the comparison counties, to the extent possible, no teacher is hired on a permanent basis unless they have worked a minimum of two years as a substitute.

Changes in Staffing

SCCOE was characterized by changes in staffing in 2010. These changes occurred in the entire realm of positions—from teachers to principals to the AEP director. Also, SCCOE added new positions intended to provide intervention services to students in crisis. Yet, staff expressed mixed reviews regarding staffing issues and the support provided by SCCOE.

SCCOE schools experienced changes in teaching and leadership positions. For example, at one school approximately three of the four teachers were new to the school. In several schools, principals were in their first or second year in their position. In fact, of all the AEP principals visited, only one had more than three years of experience as a principal.

Changes in staffing that were described as successes or a “step in the right direction” included the addition of new support staff in the schools. More specifically, SCCOE assigned a Miri counselor to every alternative school. According to the Miri Center website, intern counselors work at schools to “provide individual and group therapy to students, and also offer evening support groups to parents. When the counselor is not meeting with the students, s/he spends time in the classroom building rapport and helping out where needed.”¹⁴ Staff reported that the Miri counselors helped students with anger management, drug counseling, and overall crisis intervention.

Additionally, every school now has a CYO staff person. According to the CYO website, the mission of the organization reads, “California Youth Outreach is dedicated to reaching out to all gang impacted youth, families and their communities by means of education services, intervention programs and resource opportunities that support a positive and healthy lifestyle.”¹⁵ The website further describes CYO staff as “bilingual/bicultural staff members” who have themselves “undergone rehabilitation and successfully overcome gang lifestyles.” According to a community school principal, the CYO position was previously funded by a grant from the Mayor’s Gang Prevention Task Force called Bringing Everybody’s Strengths Together, and is now funded by

¹⁴ The Miri Center, which is located in San Jose, is a professional psychological corporation:
http://miricenter.com/services_at_schools

¹⁵ California Youth Outreach, which was founded in 1981, has five locations in California: San Jose, Fresno, Oakland, Salinas, and Santa Rosa: <http://www.cyoureach.org/01/index.html>

SCCOE. Staff expressed overwhelmingly positive perceptions of the CYO staff persons. One principal described the CYO at her school as a “Godsend.”

Further, staff referred to the addition of intern counselors from SJSU who began to staff the sites in fall 2010. These intern counselors were intended to provide academic support and would supplement the work of SCCOE’s three guidance counselors. Principals, teachers, and parents perceived that guidance counselors were spread thin over multiple sites, which meant that they allocated a limited amount of time to any particular school. One parent stated, “The counselor comes here every Monday and it’s hard to talk to her just once a week.”

Teacher survey results indicated that while teachers reported improvements in the last two years regarding the availability of guidance counselors’ help, there were large differences between community (2.9) and institutional (2.1) teachers’ reports of these improvements. In fact, when data were disaggregated between community and institutional teachers, this item had the largest difference in responses. Furthermore, when data were disaggregated by number of years at the school, reported improvements differed between institutional and community school teachers. Teachers at institutional schools for two years or less (1.8) reported fewer changes regarding guidance and counseling staff than teachers on site for three years or more (2.1). The opposite can be said for teachers at community schools, where teachers on site for two years or less (2.9) reported more improvements than teachers there for three or more years (2.4). This indicates that while community school teachers agree that improvements in guidance counseling occurred in the last two years, teachers with longer tenure tend to disagree.

Staff had mixed perceptions regarding SCCOE’s staffing issues. Staff was pleased, for example, with SCCOE’s decision to provide new support staff positions, such as the Miri and CYO staff. Teaching staff and principals at the schools were pleased that students had increased systems of support. These services would ideally lead to positive student outcomes such as higher attendance and improved behavior. At the same time, staff voiced their dissatisfaction regarding the lack of experience or expertise among teachers and principals. For example, teachers at one school stated that there are very few teachers in SCCOE with expertise in math or science. One science teacher described his frustrating experience on the science curriculum committee, “Of the eight people in the room, four of them didn’t have science degrees. They’ve been tapped to teach it, yet don’t necessarily want to do it.” A principal at another school expressed his concerns regarding the lack of veteran staff in alternative education, and furthermore, that even staff who had experience in comprehensive schools or classrooms ineffectively tried to implement strategies from those settings “without knowledge of our population.” Alternatively, teachers spoke positively about SCCOE’s efforts to hire single-subject credentialed teachers as well as the Verification Process for Special

Settings (VPSS) program, which enabled existing staff to become highly qualified at the secondary level.¹⁶ Several teachers discussed the benefits of being enrolled in this program.

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS REGARDING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In 2010, SCCOE increased its teacher professional development offerings to support the changes in curriculum and instruction. According to SCCOE's AEP 2010-2011 Professional Development Plan, the focus of the current professional development activities is to address PI Year 3 status and complete the WASC Accreditation process for SCCOE institutional and community educational programs. SCCOE offered professional development in a number of areas, including English Language Development (ELD), English/language arts (ELA), Math, and behavior modification.

Teachers reported participation in various professional development activities offered by SCCOE. The most commonly mentioned was Edge training, which is both an ELA and ELD intervention program. Teachers also participated in MY Access training, a writing program, and ALEKS training for mathematics. Both of the latter programs are supplementary online programs and require computer technology for implementation and utilization. Additionally, SCCOE teachers participated in a recently introduced behavior modification program called Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS).

SCCOE teachers and principals also take part in PLCs and school site staff meetings. SCCOE has PLCs for each of the core subject areas: English, math, history, and science. According to SCCOE's AEP 2010-2011 Professional Development Plan, SCCOE's goal for the PLC's is to "support school staff in focusing on learning rather than teaching, work collaboratively on matters related to learning, and be accountable for the kind of results that fuel continual improvement" (p. 4). School site staff meetings took place once per month. The topics discussed during the monthly meetings at the schools included: curriculum—such as Edge, Character Based Learning (CBL), Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces (ALEKS), MY Access—standardized testing, IEPs, scheduling, departmentalization, and concerns about students. Teachers at one school stated that they always begin staff meetings by having everyone say "something positive."

Teachers throughout community and institutional schools agreed that SCCOE provided a great deal of professional development in 2010. In fact, teachers reported that SCCOE had expanded professional development opportunities over the last two years (2.7). However, many teachers expressed that it was too much. Teachers described feeling "overwhelmed" by the amount of time they spent on professional development activities. Teachers expressed concerns regarding the quantity, the quality, and the fast pace of the professional development. The following quote illustrates a teacher's concerns regarding SCCOE's professional development expectations:

¹⁶ VPSS is a state-approved advanced certification process by which secondary teachers in "special settings" have an additional option to become compliant with No Child Left Behind legislation. Completion of VPSS will allow eligible teachers to become "Highly Qualified" without taking high stress tests or spending long hours on college coursework. It incorporates specific subject matter knowledge with practical application targeted to hard-to-staff settings.

I feel overwhelmed with all the different professional development...They throw out a whole bunch of different things. I don't think anyone actually gets the whole meat of it. It's kind of like trial by error. We don't go deep enough into our training. There are a handful of people who go to training and then come back and talk to everyone else. But if I'm not really learning how to do it myself, how can I come back and tell everyone how to do it?

A specific concern echoed by many teachers, in both interviews and the survey, was the desire to have more in-depth and ongoing training and discussion regarding the new programs SCCOE introduced in 2010. Teachers described participating in professional development activities in which the trainers conducted "only an overview" of the topic, and then the following week, teachers were expected to participate in another training on a different topic.

Responses on the survey indicated that teachers desired more extensive training in technology. In particular, teachers wanted to learn how to properly use the new technology purchased by SCCOE. Survey results showed teachers do not feel better prepared to use technology for instruction than they did two years ago, especially teachers who have been at the school for three or more years (2.1) versus two years or less (2.4). Furthermore, while a significant amount of new technology equipment was purchased, site level staff needs increased technology support to use the equipment. For example, during a focus group interview one teacher articulated, "They put a \$4,000 whiteboard in my room that I don't know how to use." In other cases, teachers reported having new software curricular programs but inadequate technology hardware. For example, teachers at one school stated that they were unable to implement MY Access and ALEKS because the school did not have a computer lab.

Survey responses provided overall evidence regarding staff's "below average" satisfaction with the professional development. Teachers rated staffing and professional development survey items lower than other themes, with a mean score of 2.5, indicating that they do not necessarily agree that training was useful, that SCCOE provides sufficient follow up to in-service training, and that they receive sufficient support to meet student needs. Principal ratings of these survey items were not much higher. However, school office coordinators viewed professional development as the most favorable of all the themes (3.0), indicating they see more professional development taking place for teachers than in previous years.

The amount of time teachers dedicated to professional development activities provided by SCCOE meant that teachers had less time to meet with their site-level colleagues and principal. However, teachers in community schools were generally more likely than teachers in institutional schools to report that SCCOE provided sufficient follow up to in-service training (2.4 and 2.1, respectively). Teachers believe that monthly staff meetings on site did not provide sufficient time for necessary discussion and processing of the new programs SCCOE introduced. Teachers also believed that if they had more time to meet with their colleagues at school, they would be better able to resolve student problems before situations escalated to involve the law. Teachers craved more time to work with one another, which they believed would help their development and ultimately lead to increased student learning. Community forum participants believed that for the AEP to be

successful, teachers needed a network for sharing practices. On a related note, teachers want to be at the center of developing assessments to evaluate the effectiveness and performance of instruction, which they believed would lead to teacher buy-in for implementation of the new programs. These sentiments are aligned with best practices in alternative education literature that suggests staff voice in decision making, be it for assessments or professional development, promotes creativity and instructional excellence (Leone & Drakeford, 1999).

Other concerns expressed by staff were insufficient sensitivity training and education assistants not participating in professional development. Staff were concerned that, as a whole, they did not have sufficient sensitivity training to support students in alternative school settings. This includes responding to students' social-emotional needs, receiving cultural sensitivity training, addressing attendance and discipline issues as well as identifying drug use and induced behaviors to more effectively teach students. Education assistants and teachers were disappointed that due to cutbacks, education assistants were no longer able to participate in professional development provided by SCCOE. Education assistants voiced that they would like to receive training on programs such as MY Access and PBIS so that they could be "on the same page" with teachers. Further, community forum participants shared their concerns about staffing in SCCOE's AEP. One participant said, "I see a lot of teachers give up, overworked, tired, [thinking] 'What can I do for these kids?'" Other community forum participants echoed the sentiment that staff needs training on how to deal with students because they believe many come ill-equipped to deal with such intense situations, both related to academic need and behavior management.

Results from the 2009-2010 CSCS of teachers and staff further demonstrate teacher need for additional training (Exhibit 19). Teachers reported wanting professional development to address the needs of diverse populations, especially to serve ELs (100 percent) and to close the achievement gap (80 percent). Eighty percent of teachers reported needing training to meet the social, emotional, and developmental needs of youth. This result is consistent with the previously mentioned teacher concern about insufficient sensitivity training. In addition, more than two thirds of respondents (70 percent) indicated wanting professional development to meet academic standards and provide evidence-based methods of instruction.

Exhibit 19: SCCOE Teacher Professional Development Needs

(N=10) Percent Yes	
Instruction & School Environment	
Meeting academic standards	70%
Evidence-based methods of instruction	70%
Positive behavioral support and classroom management	40%
Creating a positive school climate	50%
Addressing Needs of Diverse Populations	
Working with diverse racial, ethnic, or cultural groups	50%
Culturally relevant pedagogy for the school's student population	67%
Serving English language learners	100%
Closing the achievement gap	80%
Providing Support Services	
Serving special education (IEP) students	60%
Meeting the social, emotional, and developmental needs of youth	80%

Source: CDE CSCS, SCCOE 2009-2010

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

An indicator that an alternative education program has quality curriculum and instruction is high academic expectations across various programming elements that integrate creative and engaging curricula. Further, instructional methods and student plans are relevant to individual student needs (Aron, 2006; Ruiz de Velasco et al., 2008, and NAEA, 2009). WestEd interviewed SCCOE administrators, principals, and teachers and also surveyed principals and teachers/education assistants about the curricular and instructional practices in SCCOE.

Over the past year and a half, SCCOE has made several changes to curriculum and instruction in the AEP. Many of these changes were implemented by the superintendent and deputy superintendent who created a strong instructional program in the previous county they led, where districts in the county began using the county's curriculum in their summer program. The most significant change implemented in SCCOE was the adoption and implementation of Edge, a new curriculum intervention program in ELA and ELD. SCCOE also adopted other supplementary curricula for ELA, My Access, and mathematics, ALEKS. Additionally, SCCOE purchased a variety of technologies intended to enhance classroom instruction. SCCOE's progress in making curricular changes can be partly attributed to curriculum committees organized around each of the core subject areas.

In 2010, SCCOE began implementing a new intensive reading intervention program called Edge.¹⁷ The program, initially adopted approximately a year and a half ago, is intended to address the needs of struggling students and ELs. Students who test two or more grade levels below in reading will receive instruction through the Edge curriculum. According to the new AEP director, approximately 80 to 85 percent of students countywide are not reading at grade level and will place into Edge.

¹⁷ Edge is the high school version of the intervention program. Inside is the middle school version of the program.

What this has meant for the SCCOE community and institutional schools is the administration of a new diagnostic assessment to students upon admission to determine placement in one of Edge four levels. Furthermore, the transition to Edge has necessarily required schools to revise their master schedule to accommodate a 90-minute block for Edge.

SCCOE adopted the Edge program to comply with state mandates. First, as a result of SCCOE's status as in PI status, Corrective Action required SCCOE to provide an ELA intervention program to address the needs of students performing below grade level. The state also found that SCCOE did not have a curriculum in place for EL students. Edge is an intervention program that addresses the needs of students in both categories. Thus, beginning in Spring 2010, SCCOE offered Edge training to all the AEP teachers and particularly those who teach ELA.

Up until 2010, SCCOE community and institutional schools used a board-adopted curriculum, CBL, as their primary and sole ELA curriculum. A Santa Clara University professor, well known for his expertise in alternative and special education, developed the curriculum. The professor has had a long-standing relationship with SCCOE. According to one principal, SCCOE adopted CBL approximately 15 years ago. CBL, a theme-based literacy program, involves students reading and then discussing novels of high interest. This same principal noted, "When used with fidelity, CBL is the best program for alternative kids." Some principals believed that Edge would replace CBL, since they anticipated that the majority of their students would place into Edge. Yet, the AEP director indicated that schools would continue to use CBL along with Edge as appropriate. Students who are at grade level in reading will continue to receive CBL instruction. The AEP director said, "The emphasis across alternative education is to improve the reading comprehension of all our students, so students will be able to access standard grade level instruction...[thus]...we have to provide a grade level ELA program for them."

The curricula used in the other three core subject areas—mathematics, social studies, and science—vary by school. In some cases, principals were unable to articulate which curriculum their teachers were using in one or more of these subject areas. Furthermore, we learned that some teachers developed their own curricula. For example, in an attempt to provide credit for students who needed it to graduate, one high school teacher developed his/her own physical science curriculum. The principal described the decision to do this:

Our district is focused on life science this year and then [will] do physical science next year. But between the science teacher and myself, we said 'We just can't do this, because we have students who need physical science credit to graduate.' So now he's doing one period of physical science with curriculum that he created himself.

The AEP director acknowledged that, "There are a variety of textbooks being used to support the content in these other areas; whereas CBL is the common curriculum in ELA. The content is the same, but the instructional materials that teachers are using to teach the content are different."

SCCOE also adopted technology-based curriculum to supplement instruction in the core subject areas. In particular, staff mentioned ALEKS for mathematics and MY Access for ELA. ALEKS, a

“web-based, artificially intelligent assessment and learning system” (ALEKS, 2011) based on knowledge space theory. ALEKS is available for use in several settings including higher education, K-12, and independently. ALEKS offers a variety of math course products for middle and high school-level instruction. MY Access is a self-guided online program designed to improve students’ writing skills. According to the MY Access school edition website, “The program’s powerful scoring engine grades students’ essays instantly and provides targeted feedback, freeing teachers from grading thousands of papers by hand and giving them more time to conduct differentiated instruction and curriculum planning” (Vantage Learning, 2011).

SCCOE purchased various types of technological equipment to enhance instruction in the AEP. In their survey responses, teachers ranked technology as the most significant improvement in SCCOE compared to two years ago, citing that technology was more available for instruction. However, teachers indicated that they needed more support to use the technology appropriately. For example, during site visits to the schools WestEd observed several cases where smart boards were locked in closets because teachers did not know how to use them. Furthermore, teachers stated that at times they are unable to use the technology for teaching and learning due to technical problems. Teachers need more support to ensure that the technology is being maintained so that it functions properly. Responses in the teacher survey suggested that only three AEP staff maintain 700 computers and smart boards in SCCOE, which limits the ability to make use of these resources for instruction.

Staff identified various challenges related to curriculum and instruction. One challenge was teaching multiple subject areas. For example, one teacher stated that teaching five subject areas was one of the most challenging aspects of teaching in the AEP. Another teacher described student apathy as a major challenge. The following quote conveys this teacher’s sentiment, “I think the biggest challenge is student apathy toward learning. A lot of these kids have been checked out of the classroom for years. It’s a challenge to revive the curiosity for learning.” An education assistant discussed the challenge of providing assistance to multiple teachers. S/he indicated that at one time, every teacher in the AEP had an education assistant. Currently, s/he is the only assistant, besides the RSP staff, who provides support in the classroom at her/his school. The education assistant observed:

There were more aides here before. Every teacher had an aide...It’s challenging to know where I need to be...I can’t help my teachers at all times. Those kids need a lot of help. It is too hard for one person to do it all.

Principals and teachers had mixed perceptions of the changes in curriculum and instruction. One principal stated that the SCCOE’s efforts to broaden curriculum and instruction were unrealistic. The principal believed that SCCOE was trying too hard to make alternative schools too much like comprehensive high schools. A teacher at an institutional school echoed this sentiment, stating:

The biggest change is that we went from an alternative education teaching environment to more of regular education. It means that alternative education was more about healing the whole person, giving them tools to survive on the outside when a student was released. Help make sure they feel valued. Now it’s more about test scores and data. Seems less about the student and

more about expectations from outside, like the state and federal government. Our challenge is not to lose the kid in all that.

Yet, other staff saw the changes as necessary. For example, teachers acknowledged that not all teachers taught CBL with fidelity in the past. Some teachers used CBL, while others did not. Furthermore, teachers acknowledged that teachers' expectations of students varied as well. Some teachers prioritized student learning and student achievement, while others did not. The following quote exemplifies a teacher's impression of the changes in accountability since the new superintendent:

For many years, whether students were learning or not was not considered important. It used to be if a student was maintaining in school and not killing anyone, then we're good. If the teacher felt like teaching, they would teach. If the teacher felt like entertaining, then they would do that. Moves may be abrupt or insensitive in terms of the timing, but it's leading to high expectations. Teachers are having to change their expectations. If your students are producing little, then someone is watching. Teachers are going to have to raise their expectations of students.

Survey findings indicated that teachers in community schools were more likely than teachers in institutional schools to report that their school received sufficient curriculum and instructional support (2.7 and 2.2, respectively) and that they regularly made use of resources available through the Learning Multimedia Center (2.3 and 1.8, respectively).

Areas of improvement noted by referring district staff were the adoption of standardized "block schedules," and increased staff training in "ELA and research-based reading intervention." At least two respondents noted the value of increasingly standardizing curriculum and instruction across schools, particularly the increased coordination between juvenile hall and community school instruction. One district staff added, "These kids are by nature unstable and don't do well when things are disorganized or there are conflicting methods or approaches." When asked about specific areas of improvement, district staff provided several examples including, the concentration on providing IEPs for all students was seen as a great step, as was a new focus on increasing the rigor of instruction.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

An exemplary alternative education program assesses and monitors students to measure achievement and identify specific learning needs. Ideally, a program would use multiple assessments to continually monitor academic progress, as well as student behavioral, emotional, and life skill development and use these data to inform instruction (NAEA, 2009; Ruiz de Velasco et al., 2008). Objective measures of assessing program success may include attendance, course completion, accrual of academic credits, decreased behavior problems, reduced levels of credit deficiency, and graduation or general equivalency diploma (GED) pass rates.

SCCOE's alternative education programs share two key attributes that sets them apart from traditional schools. First, in addition to assigning students to schools based on residential proximity, students are assigned to school based on past disciplinary behavior or court action. Second, enrolled students are generally at very high risk for academic and behavioral failure and frequently have health, social, legal, family, and other problems that impede learning. Students tend to be significantly below grade level in language and math skills, have severe high school credit deficiencies, and have a history of behavioral problems and sporadic school attendance. Thus, what defines the mission of institutional and community schools most clearly are the differing behavioral, attitudinal, and experiential characteristics of high-risk students. Further, there is a need to help students develop academically and learn positive attitudes and behaviors that will support them as they grow into young adults.

Accurately assessing the performance of alternative education schools and students is difficult for both technical and procedural reasons. High levels of student mobility and the short length of time that most students attend—especially in the institutional schools—mean that California's STAR tests have highly questionable validity and are of marginal value, especially for assessing overall school performance. For test scores to be included in calculating a school's API, students must be enrolled without significant interruption from the October CBEDS census through spring testing. In SCCOE institutional schools, for three of the past four years, there were not a sufficient number of students tested to compute an API. The number of valid test scores in community schools fall far below the number of students actually served and provide a limited picture of student performance.

STAR tests, a major component of the API, are highly inaccurate for this student population. This inaccuracy results from two factors: (1) No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements restrict testing to age-related grade levels; and (2) there are great ELA and math deficiencies among these students. The interaction of these factors means that even when a sufficient number of scores exist to calculate an API, it has relatively little validity. For example, the results of testing a high school junior reading at the third grade level using an 11th grade test reflects an inability of that student to meet grade-level reading expectations. It does not accurately measure current reading proficiency, nor does it reflect any student gains made during the enrollment period.

While state and federal statutes will continue to require annual student assessment and the reporting of API, proficiency, and AYP scores, current test-based measures will provide only a partial assessment of overall school performance. As a goal, improvement of student and school performance on these measures is necessary and valuable. Institutional and community schools will usually rank well below most district schools and will be more likely to receive federal sanctions as low-performing schools.

A more complete view of the performance of SCCOE schools is desirable—a view that includes academic test results but also focuses on school performance in improving students' learning readiness by addressing the multiple risk factors discussed above. A variety of outcome indicators are available. While these indicators are imperfect, they are important because they provide a

somewhat more complete picture of school performance and success levels than API and AYP alone.

DRUG USE AND VIOLENCE

A primary school function is to ensure students regularly attend classrooms, are healthy, non-disruptive, and ready to participate in learning. CHKS data can highlight the progress a school is making toward reducing risk behaviors that threaten student learning. CHKS data from 2009-2010 for SCCOE community school students assessed students' self-reports of alcohol and other drug use. As is the case among alternative school students statewide, these data show relatively high rates of on-campus alcohol and drug use and violence-related behavior. Helping students learn to stay clean and to control violent impulses are two goals of alternative school programs. Exhibit 20 shows responses from SCCOE and comparison counties to items that measure alcohol and other drug use and violence-related behavior.

Exhibit 20: Measures of Student Behavior from CHKS Responses

	SCCOE	SJCOE	OCOE	SDCOE	11th Graders Statewide
On Campus Usage - Last 30 days					
Used alcohol	21%	18%	19%	14%	7%
Used marijuana	21%	22%	21%	16%	6%
Used illegal drug or pill	17%	12%	16%	11%	4%
Personal Behavior - Last 12 months					
Been in one or more fights	49%	38%	44%	40%	16%
Damaged school property on purpose	38%	22%	29%	20%	13%
Carried a gun one or more times	31%	15%	21%	12%	4%
Carried weapon (not a gun) one or more times	52%	26%	32%	29%	8%
Drunk or high on school property – one or more times (no time limit)	70%	42%	58%	52%	22%

Source: County office summaries of CHKS 2009-2010. 11th grade statewide data 2007-2009 *Summary Report*.

Students in SCCOE schools appear to have success rates slightly lower than the three model practice counties in avoiding alcohol and drugs. With the exception of SDCOE, which had the lowest rates, roughly one-fifth of students in the three comparison counties and SCCOE reported using alcohol or marijuana on campus during the past 30 days. This period likely corresponds to most or the entire student enrollment in a community school and provides a reasonable measure of school success in addressing substance abuse problems.

Significantly greater problems exist in self-reported violence-related behavior over the previous 12 months. Unlike alcohol and drug survey items, which measure usage during the previous 30 days—a period for which it is reasonable to infer that the student was enrolled in a SCCOE school—questions relating to violence-related behavior ask about the previous year. While this period may coincide with part of a student's enrollment at a SCCOE school, the high rate of student mobility

suggests the one-year period likely included time before that enrollment. In this sense, responses to questions relating to on-campus fighting, weapons possession, or destruction of school property may be more an indication of high levels of student need, rather than a measure of school success in behavior prevention.

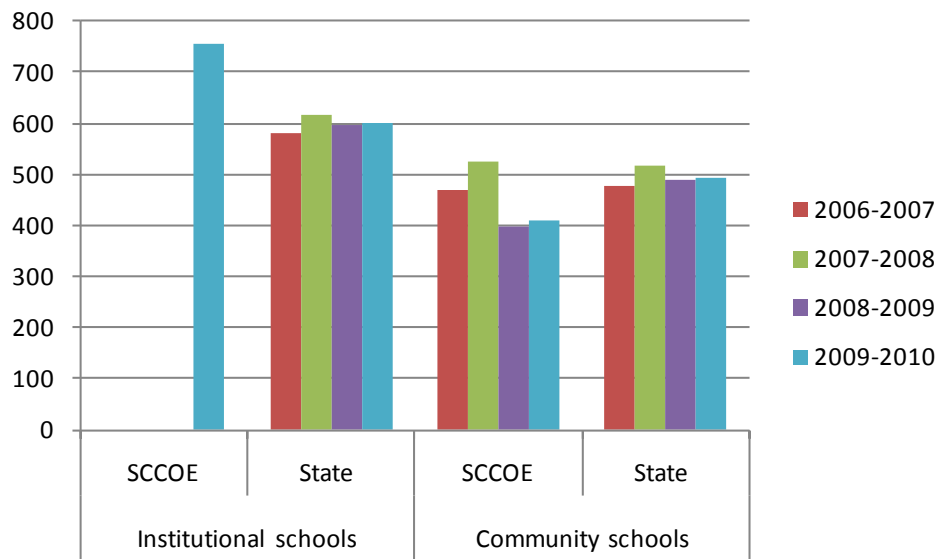
ACADEMIC GROWTH

Traditional school accountability systems focus almost exclusively on academic growth as a measure of school performance. In California, the metric of a school's academic performance is an API score. Until recently, when graduation rates were added in response to NCLB requirements, API was based entirely on aggregated student scores on the STAR. In the last two years, aggregate results from the CAHSEE have been added to API calculations. Where results are available, SCCOE schools' performance on these exams is discussed below. Through 2009-2010, CDE also collected data on at least two additional measures of academic growth—course completion rates (for students in grades 6-8) and high school credit gain. These measures were part of the ASAM. With the exception of 2006-2007, SCCOE schools participated in the ASAM. Available data are also presented below.

STAR, API, and AYP Scores

California's primary metrics for accountability, the API and AYP indicators, are both problematic as measures of the academic performance of community and institutional schools. County-operated schools, which serve many of the state's lowest performing students, frequently fail to receive either an API or AYP score. Score availability for SCCOE schools reflect these limitations, as demonstrated in Exhibit 21.

Exhibit 21: API of SCCOE and State Average for Institutional and Community Schools, 2006-2007 to 2009-2010



For SCCOE’s institutional schools, API results are available for only one of the past four years. Both SCCOE’s institutional and community schools operate as separate schools, but for accountability purposes, SCCOE’s institutional and community schools each annually receive a single API score. The combined performance of the community school was roughly comparable to other county community schools in California between 2006-2007 and 2007-2008, but fell below the average for similar schools for 2008-2009 and 2009-2010. In 2008-2009, the community school had a base API of 397, and in 2009-2010 a growth API of 410, an increase of 13 points. Last year’s improvement met the 2010 API growth criteria.

Over the same period, SCCOE institutional schools fulfilled the requirements for AYP only once. In 2006-2007, the institutional school met percent proficiency requirements of 22 percent of students in ELA, and 21 percent in math, and met the requirements for AYP. However, the school had fewer than 11 valid STAR test scores, and did not receive an API score. As a result of both the lack of scores and the inability to show satisfactory API growth, SCCOE is now in PI status.

STAR and API Limitations as a Measure of Alternative School Performance

As currently calculated, the API is flawed as a measure of academic performance for alternative and institutional schools. A primary flaw is the inappropriateness of testing academically deficient students using test instruments developed for age-specific grade levels. Federal requirements under NCLB preclude out-of-level testing.

Valid STAR test results are available for only a very small subsample of students, given the high rates of mobility in community and institutional schools and the requirements that scores are included in the API only for students enrolled continuously between October CBEDS and spring

testing. In most cases, this subpopulation on which an alternative school API is based approximates 10 to 15 percent of total yearly enrollment or less.

While a period of student enrollment is necessary before a school should be required to take responsibility for changes in academic or other performance measures, the small size and non-representativeness of the valid test scores used to calculate the API means either that an alternative school will not receive an API, or that the API will be of limited validity. As noted earlier, SCCOE's institutional school received an API for only one of the past four years. Court schools in other California counties received even fewer. Between 2005-2006 and 2009-2010 more than two-thirds (69 percent) of institutional schools in California received one API or less.

Community schools, given a marginally less mobile student population with longer periods of enrollment, are more likely to receive an API. SCCOE's community school has received an API yearly. Statewide, only about one-third (37 percent) of community schools did as well, with the average school receiving an API in about half the years between 2005-2006 and 2009-2010.

In addition to problems related to the small number of students receiving a valid STAR score, the growth calculation is based on aggregate comparisons, rather than on actual year-to-year individual student growth. At the present time, STAR scores are aggregated at the school and grade level and compared with aggregated test results from previous years. In schools with high mobility, such as those operated by SCCOE, few if any students included in one year's results will be included in that school's second year outcome. Compounding this problem is that community and institutional schools are frequently impacted by events that radically change a school's composition from one year to the next, making meaningful comparison unlikely. For example, in interviews district school staff recounted instances in a particular year where gang or drug-related activity led to a large number of expulsions from a single district, resulting in a large year-to-year change in SCCOE student characteristics and needs.

SCCOE School Performance on the CAHSEE

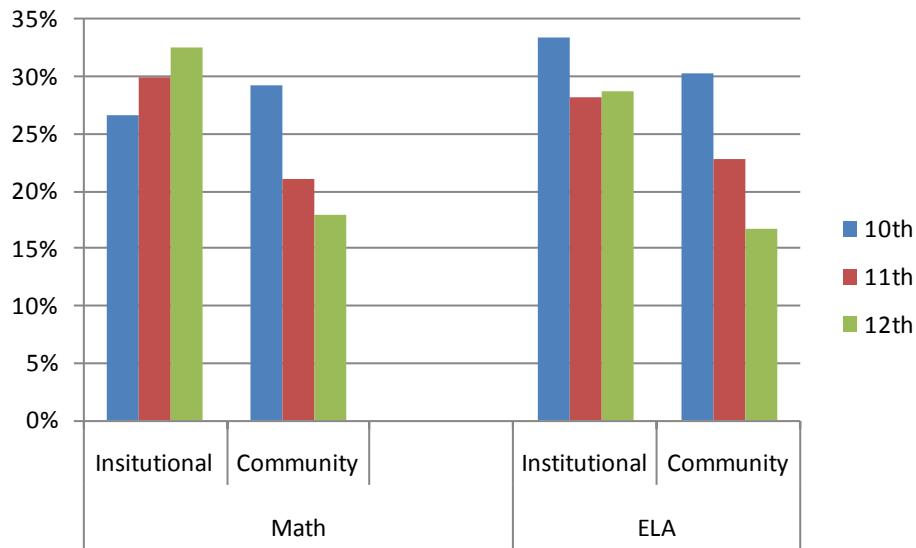
CAHSEE provides another measure of student achievement. Unlike state achievement tests, performance on the CAHSEE has demonstrable consequences and is taken more seriously by students to whom it is administered. For the high-risk students, this is a critical consideration and affects students' willingness to engage and participate meaningfully in the testing process (Weis, L.W. et al., 2006). In contrast to the STAR, CAHSEE results are both included as part of the API calculation and reported separately for schools with 11 or more valid test scores, regardless of when students enrolled. Given high mobility rates among alternative school students, over the past five years only half of alternative schools had sufficient numbers of valid tests to receive API scores. A significantly higher proportion of these schools receive CAHSEE performance reports than receive either API or AYP ratings (WestEd, 2009).

California students first take the CAHSEE in the 10th grade. Statewide, 81 percent of these students passed both the ELA and math portions of the exam. Pass rates among students designated as

socio-economically disadvantaged averaged 72 percent and 73 percent, respectively (WestEd, 2009). In comparison counties, along with credit completion and attendance, the CAHSEE was more directly relevant for evaluating community school outcome than most other measures. Reasons cited by comparison county administrators included, “Because it is a high stakes test, students take CAHSEE more seriously than the STAR” and “Because it is administered repeatedly during the school year.”

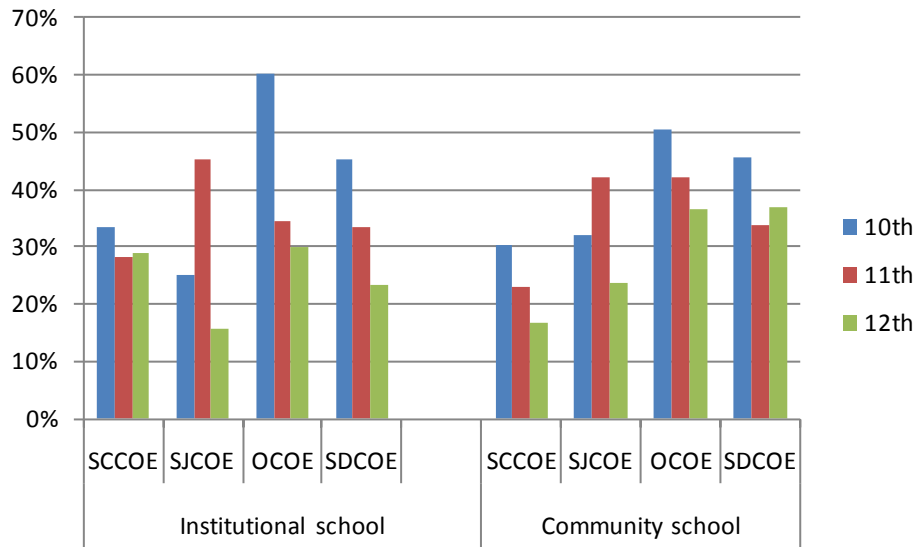
SCCOE schools 10th grade CAHSEE pass rates are significantly lower. Exhibit 22 shows SCCOE pass rates by grade. Across all test administrations, the community school showed a 30 percent ELA pass rate and a 29 percent pass rate in math. Institutional schools showed similar results—33 percent in ELA and 27 percent in math.

Exhibit 22: SCCOE CAHSEE 2009-2010 Pass Rates by Grade



Because students in these types of school are severely deficient academically, these rates approximate those for community and institutional schools elsewhere. They are somewhat lower than 10th grade pass rates for two of the best practice counties, as Exhibit 23 illustrates.

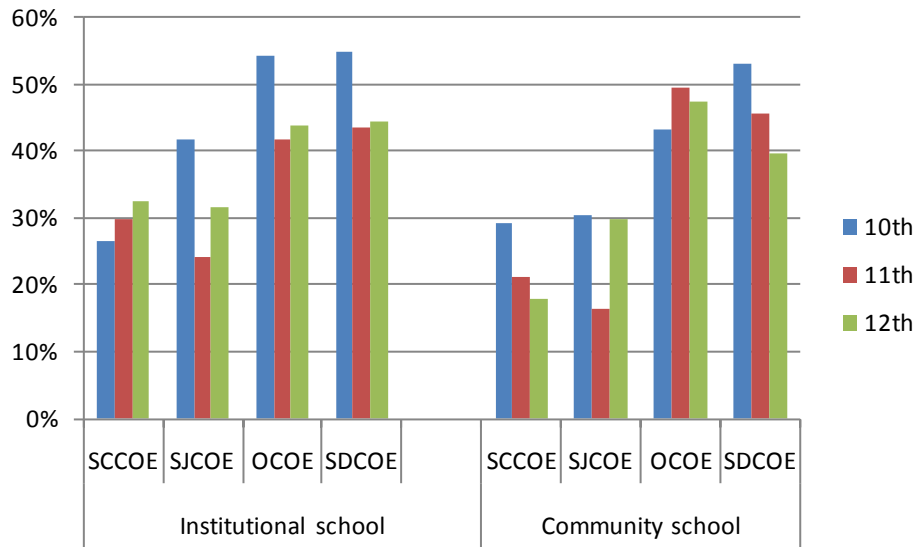
Exhibit 23: SCCOE and Comparison County CAHSEE ELA Pass Rates



Tenth graders who fail the CAHSEE are allowed to retake the exam during several testing windows that occur in the 11th and 12th grades. Because 11th and 12th graders taking the CAHSEE have already failed the exam at least once, success rates for older students is typically lower than for 10th graders. Statewide, for all schools including traditional high schools, the pass rate for 11th graders is 39 percent in ELA and 38 percent in math. For 12th graders, the statewide pass rate is lower, 27 percent in ELA and 29 percent in math.

In math, SCCOE institutional schools show a somewhat atypical pattern of pass rates across grade level. Exhibit 24 shows CAHSEE math pass rates for SCCOE and comparison counties. The percentages of student who passed the mathematic portion of the exam increased from 27 percent in 10th grade, to 30 percent in 11th, and 33 percent in the 12th grade. ELA results for the institutional school were more typical, with a higher rate of 10th grade pass (33 percent) than for students in either the 11th (28 percent) or 12th grades (29 percent).

Exhibit 24: SCCOE and Comparison County CAHSEE Math Pass Rates



SCCOE’s community school showed a pattern of pass rates more similar to statewide results. In both ELA and math, pass rates were highest in the 10th grade, lower in the 11th, and still lower in the 12th grade. For example, ELA pass rates fell from 30 percent for 10th graders to 17 percent among 12th graders. In math, 30 percent of 10th graders passed, compared to only 17 percent of 12th graders. CAHSEE pass rates in two of the best practice counties exceed those for SCCOE schools. Both OCOE and SDCOE are among higher scoring counties statewide, and show higher pass rates at all grade levels.

One observation that emerged from interviews in model program counties concerned the centrality of CAHSEE for the educational mission. In these counties, as in SCCOE, a majority of placements in both institutional and community schools either failed CAHSEE while enrolled or transferred having already failed the exam. Assisting those students to pass the CAHSEE became a major focus of classroom activity and program planning. While official CDE policy restricts the number of times a student can take CAHSEE in each grade level, many of these schools required students to take the exam each time it was offered, which may have partially accounted for their higher CAHSEE pass rates.

SCCOE School Performance on ASAM Measures

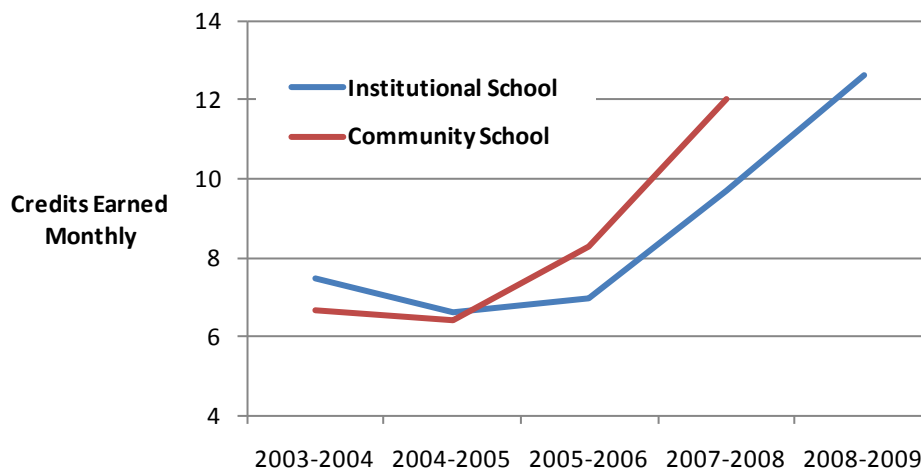
SCCOE schools participated in the ASAM since 2001-2002. Mandated in 1999 as part of California’s Public Schools Accountability Act, ASAM has provided information on school performance intended to supplement California’s API accountability system.

From a list of State Board of Education (SBE) approved indicators, local boards of participating districts choose performance indicators that most closely relate to the needs of, and services provided to, the high-risk student populations they serve. For SCCOE, community school indicators

included school attendance rate, rate of course completion (for students in grades 6-8), and monthly high school credit gain. Institutional school indicators were pass rate on the GED and monthly high school credit gain. In addition, institutional schools submitted data on locally-adopted and administered pre-posttests in reading and mathematics achievement.¹⁸

To be included in ASAM reporting, students had to be continuously enrolled at least 90 days—a requirement that severely limited, although not as severely as the STAR requirements, the number of students included in the yearly reports. Based on a 220 credit graduation requirement common to most California schools, the average number of credits a student in a traditional school needs to earn monthly during four years of enrollment is approximately 6.1. Exhibit 25 shows the average credits earned monthly by community and institutional schools.

Exhibit 25: Average High School Credits Earned Monthly



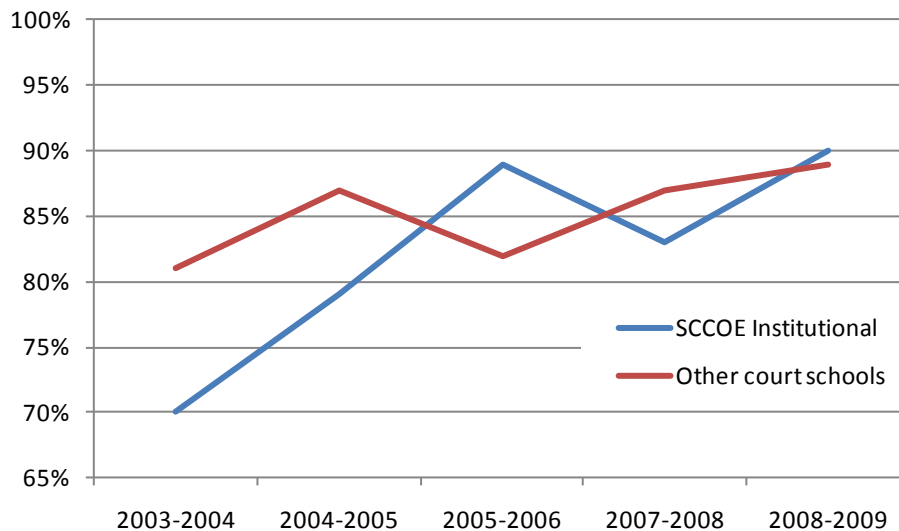
Given the severe credit deficiencies common to many community and court school students, one critical role of alternative schools is to assist in the process of accelerated credit accumulation and to help students offset their often severe unit deficiencies. Between 2003-2004 and 2008-2009, the last year for which ASAM data is available, credit accumulation rates at both SCCOE institutional and community schools appeared to be above those of students in traditional schools. Over that same period, accumulation rates have increased to approximately 12 credits monthly, roughly double their 2003-2004 level.

A second ASAM measure the SCCOE board selected for the institutional school was the pass rates for sections of the GED examination. For students far behind grade level in credit accumulation, earning a diploma through the GED is frequently the only realistic and available option. GEDs are regularly administered to institutional school students. Exhibit 26 demonstrates GED section pass

¹⁸ As of the 2007-08 sixteen subject-specific achievement assessments had received approval from the California SBE.

rates for institutional schools. This indicator reflects the percentage of GED sections passed by students in a school in each reporting cycle. Schools adopting this measure collect data on the total individuals enrolled 90-days or more and successfully complete sections of the GED exam.

Exhibit 26: GED Section Pass Rate for Institutional Schools



For purposes of computation, students who took a given exam more than once are counted only once. GED tests must be administered by a certified GED test center. Partially because of these requirements, statewide, only institutional schools selected this indicator. Between 2003-2004 and the 2008-2009, the last year for which ASAM data is available, there was a marked improvement in SCCOE institutional school students' GED section pass rate. The rate moved from more than 10 percentage points below the state-level average for reporting schools in 2003-2004, to 1 percentage point above in 2008-2009.

MEETING GOALS

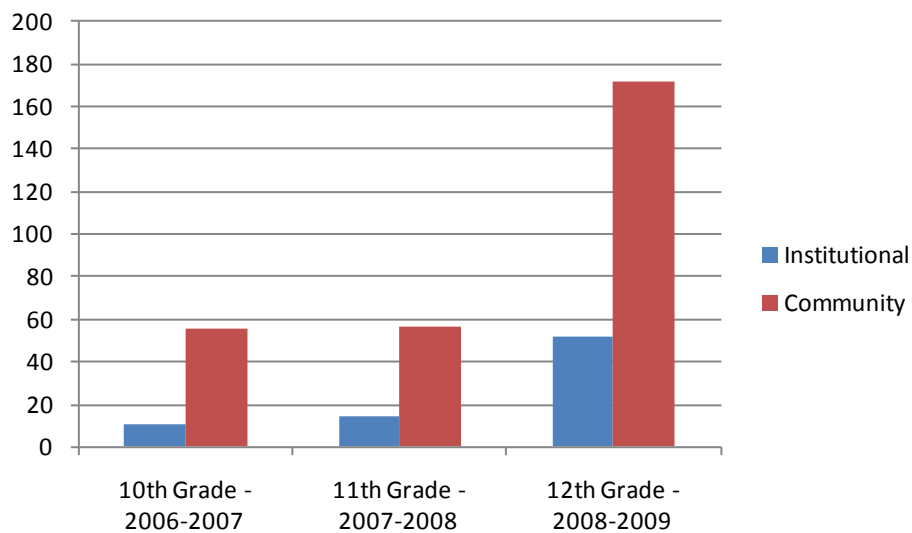
Graduation and dropout rates (or retention rate) are widely used for traditional schools as measures of completion and goal attainment. In principle, these are critical indicators of alternative and court school performance. In practice, providing accurate school-level data poses both technical and policy-related challenges. In 2008-2009, the last year for which CDE has posted certified data, SCCOE's institutional and community schools graduated a total of 33 students, 11 from community and 22 from institutional schools. CDE shows the NCLB graduation rates for these schools as being 12.5 and 7.2 percent, respectively.

Student mobility in institutional schools is extremely high, with the average stay in California county court schools varying between 4 and 20 days. This level of mobility suggests a limited possibility that a student will complete graduation requirements during their incarceration. While varying by district policy, most students who have not yet graduated are referred back to the school they attended prior

to their arrest and incarceration and are consequently not reflected in court school graduation rates. If the returned student stays in school and graduates, their data is included within the district high school graduation statistics.

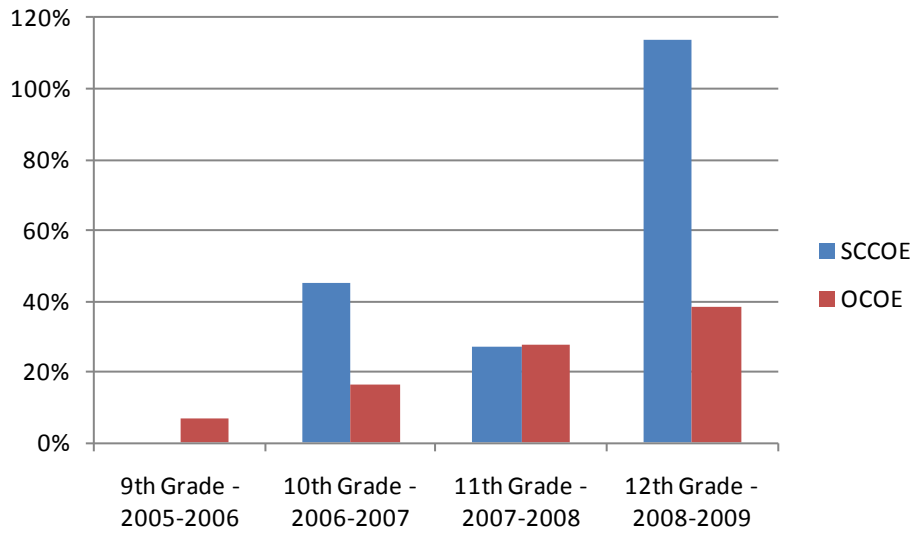
Community schools across California generally fall into one of two patterns regarding graduation policy. In some cases, such as OCOE and SDCOE, it is expected that students who enter a community school will graduate from that school. They will not be returned to the referring district. In others, including SCCOE, students are typically returned to the referring district at the end of their expulsion period. Neither SCCOE nor the referring district anticipates that students will remain in a county-operated community school. The difference in policy shows starkly in respective graduation rates. In 2008-2009, OCOE had a community school graduation rate of 50 percent graduation, four times higher than SCCOE's. SDCOE, which reports results from several community schools individually, shows even higher graduation rates. These range from 40 to 75 percent, with an approximate average in the high 50 percent range, as Exhibit 27 shows.

Exhibit 27: Grade Level of Dropouts from 2005-2006 Cohort of SCCOE Schools



In absence of an operable state-level student tracking system, accurate dropout rates are also difficult to compute. Raw numbers, however, are available. In 2008-2009, CDE data showed that among 9th grade students in 2005-2006, a total of 362 were dropouts, 77 from the community school and 285 from the institutional school. Another way to show relative dropout rates is to compare CBEDS yearly grade-level enrollment with the number of dropouts reported for that year, as illustrated in Exhibit 28. While student mobility precludes accuracy, this measure provides a striking example of the differences in outcome between community schools, such as OCOE, that have a policy to retain students until graduation, and those that refer them back to their original school.

Exhibit 28: Community School Dropout as Percentage of 2005-2006 Cohort



The assessment measures presented in this section provide an approach to assessing student growth. While neither measure alone provides a complete view of a student or school's progress toward meeting academic performance targets, combined, these measures provide a more complete view of the various factors at play in alternative education programs. The use of these data can support planning efforts for all levels of the AEP.

Recommendations

WestEd conducted an extensive review of SCCOE's AEP that included the perspectives of SCCOE board members, administrators, principals, teachers, education assistants, counselors, school office coordinators, other key staff, students, parents, and members of the community that are heavily invested in the supporting student success. Combined, these perspectives highlighted areas of growth for the AEP. While creating change and seeing results often takes time and focused effort, WestEd's recommendations can be stepping stones toward creating a best practice AEP. WestEd recommends the SCCOE Board of Trustees and administrators consider key actions in this report as steps to improve the AEP.

For SCCOE's AEP reform to be successful, reform should proceed from the ground up and be teacher based. Without teacher buy-in, all of the efforts devoted to change may prove unsuccessful. Garnering the support and leadership of a small number of teachers, respected by their colleagues, to be change agents for the AEP would respond to teacher and community members' desire to have teachers more involved in decision-making. Teachers can drive curricular change and other changes, such as creating more time for teacher collaboration. This may also help improve teacher morale in SCCOE.

SCCOE should spearhead the coordination of services among a greater number of community agencies and individuals invested in improving circumstances for alternative education students. Various stakeholders with extensive knowledge of services to support young people would like to work with SCCOE. Developing a steering committee representing the several key agencies—including probation—that convenes a summit to discuss a specific topic each month and identify action steps in response to that topic is essential to informing the direction of the AEP.

WestEd suggests that SCCOE develop a coordinated system of service delivery so that all staff, students, parents, and referring districts are aware of the supports available. The responsibility to intake, track, and produce reports on all students who enter the AEP may need to go beyond one person. For SCCOE to measure its impact in sending students back to their home districts, in graduating students, or in failing students, the county needs to have a consistent mechanism for gathering this information. One step toward this coordination is the creation of a team that reviews student records and identifies learning, behavioral, and health needs. This team, for example, can ensure each student is appropriately identified for an individualized education plan, matched to a school based on specific criteria, and referred to community agencies as needed.

SCCOE should create a stronger sense of community in its AEP. Reports of connectedness to SCCOE and schools were varied among staff. Full implementation of a reward system, such as the Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support model, for student growth—both for academics and behavior—at each school may support student connectedness. Recognizing staff for hard work and for going above and beyond their role is another step toward creating community. Additionally,

SCCOE administrators can hold quarterly “community meetings” to engage with staff, students, and parents and discuss concerns about and progress of the AEP.

To ensure fidelity of curriculum implementation, SCCOE should consider slowing down the training and implementation schedule of the new curriculum. While there was general agreement for the need to adopt a new curriculum, teachers are overwhelmed by the amount and intensity of training. Teachers need more time to process the information and also need more guided information about implementing the curriculum. Teachers and principals expressed the desire to have more time for on-site staff meetings to discuss professional development, the new curriculum, as well as the challenges and successes of implementation. These minor changes may have a lasting impact on practice.

SCCOE needs to create more positive relationships among staff and between staff and students. SCCOE hired many new staff in the last two years. There is the sense that many teachers are not prepared to work with alternative education students who often have severe academic deficiencies and behavioral problems. Further, it is perceived that SCCOE teachers and administrators do not understand students’ lives. Training in youth development approaches and sensitivity to work with students of color can benefit all SCCOE staff to ensure relationship building with students. Additionally, SCCOE can establish a shadow program for teachers to learn from those who have positive rapport with students.

WestEd strongly encourages SCCOE to develop a plan based on some of the findings and actionable recommendations presented in this report to guide the AEP efforts moving forward. A steering committee can establish goals, indicators of progress and success, a timeline for meetings and products, and responsibilities for each of the participating individuals or agencies. Further, progress of these developments should be regularly communicated to the community to increase transparency between SCCOE and the various stakeholders.

References

- Almeida, C. Le, C., Steinberg, A., & Cervantes, R. (2010). *Reinventing alternative education: An assessment of current state policy and how to improve it*. Retrieved from Jobs for the Future website: <http://www.jff.org/publications/education/reinventing-alternative-education-assess/1126>
- Aron, L. Y. (2003). *Towards a typology of alternative education programs: A compilation of elements from the literature*. Retrieved from The Urban Institute website: <http://www.urban.org/publications/410829.html>
- Austin, G., Dixon, D., Bailey, J., & Berliner, B. (2008). *Continuation high schools and their students: What the data tell us*. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.
- Austin, G., Bailey, J., & Dixon, D. (2007). Comparison of traditional and nontraditional school students on selected CHKS risk behavior and school performance indicators. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.
- Austin, G., Lee-Bayha, J., & Hanson, T. (2004). Ensuring that no child is left behind: How student health risks and resilience relate to the academic progress of schools. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.
- Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces. (2011). Retrieved from www.aleks.com/about_aleks
- California Department of Education. (2000). Options and issues for development and implementation of an accountability system for alternative education programs: Report presented to the Advisory Committee for the Public Schools Accountability Act. Sacramento, CA: Author.
- Dixon, D., Callahan, S., Johnson, S. & Morrill, S. (2009). *Common elements study, best practices in educational options research project*. San Diego County Office of Education.
- Eccles, J., & Gootman, J. (2002). *Community programs to promote youth development*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative researchers*. Chicago, IL: Aldine Transaction.
- Leone, P.E., & Drakeford, W. (1999). *Alternative education: From a "last chance" to a proactive model*. Retrieved from The National Center on Education, Disability and Juvenile Justice website: http://www.edjj.org/Publications/list/leone_drakeford-1999.html
- Martin, N., & Brand, B. (2006). *Federal, state, and local roles supporting alternative education*. Washington D.C.: National Center on Education and the Economy.
- National Alternative Education Association. (2009). Exemplary practices in alternative education: Indicators of Quality Programming. Greenwood, AR: Author.
- Rossi, P., & Freeman, H. (1993). *Evaluation: A systemic approach*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

- Ruiz de Velasco, J., Austin, G., Dixon, D., Johnson, J., McLaughlin, M., & Perez, L. (2008). *Alternative education options: A descriptive study of California continuation high schools*. Issue Brief. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.
- Ruzzi, B., & Kraemer, J. (2006). Academic programs in alternative education: An overview. National Center on Education and the Economy. U.S. Department of Labor.
- Sanchez, G., & Ortiz, R. (2010). *What a community school should be*. East Side Union High School District, Office of Student Services.
- Santa Clara County Alternative Schools Collaborative. (2004). *Alternative Schools Collaborative Final Report*. Retrieved from www.capitalworkforce.org/youth_jobs/Pubs-AlternativeSchools2004.pdf
- Santa Clara County Office of Education. (2010). Alternative Schools Department School Directory. Received from Deputy Superintendent on June 2010.
- Santa Clara County Office of Education. (2010). Alternative Education Department Professional Development Plan 2010-2011 School Year. Received from Deputy Superintendent on October 15, 2010.
- Scales, P.C., & Roehlkepartain, E.C. (2003). *Boosting student achievement: New research on the power of developmental assets*. Retrieved from Search Institute website: <http://www.search-institute.org/research/insights-evidence/october-2003>
- Vantage Learning. (2011). Retrieved from <http://www.vantagelearning.com/school/products/myaccess/>
- WestEd. (2009). *CAHSEE and STAR as pre-post test-based indicators of academic performance for California's alternative schools*. San Francisco: WestEd.
- Wise, L.W., Becker, D.E., Gladden, F., Schantz, L.B., Bao, H., Sun, S., & Campbell, C.H. (2006). *Independent evaluation of the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE): 2006 evaluation report*. (Vol. 1). Alexandria: Human Resources Research Organization.

Appendix A: Protocols

PROTOCOLS

CALIFORNIA COUNTY STAFF

1. What are the major challenges facing alternative education programs in your county?
2. How does your county (board, COE administrators, teachers, community) measure the success of alternative education programs? (Probe: To what extent do these stakeholders agree?)
3. What internal or external factors appear most closely linked to your county's ability to offer a successful program? What indicates to you that your alternative education program is successfully serving students and the community?
4. What other external factors are linked to student and program success? What internal factors appear most important?
5. What is the impact of fiscal constraint (loss of funding) and shifting federal and state requirements on services provided and students served?
6. How much coordination is there between the COE and schools, districts, and partnering agencies? What is the impact, if any, of coordination between agencies, or the development of cooperative partnerships? What exists? What needs to happen?
7. Within your community schools, to what extent do school site councils or parental advisory boards have active roles in developing and supporting programming?
8. How actively, and in what way, are teachers and staff involved in planning and development of policy and program?
9. What teacher and staff development efforts are in place? Which of these are viewed as most important and/or effective by teachers, staff, and/or administrators?
10. What measures are employed to communicate expectations regarding program and performance to teachers and staff? Are any of these especially effective?
11. In evaluating instructional programs, what quantifiable, outcome-based criteria are used to measure program outcome? What is your assessment of the timely and effectiveness of these measures? How has your assessment process changed, if at all, in recent years?

ADMINISTRATOR

1. How would you describe the county's overall approach and philosophy for educating alternative education students?
2. When you came to the county, what did you hope to do with the alternative education program in the county? (Probe: How successful have you been? What have been the major challenges?)
3. What is the process for making decisions about staffing and site closures? What is the process for making decisions about curriculum adoptions and student placements?
4. What major decisions have you made that changed the culture of alternative education in the county?
5. What are your primary expectations of alternative education principals?
6. How are the priorities for funding allocations for the alternative education programs determined?
7. Who are the county's primary partners in providing support to alternative education students?
8. What are the major challenges facing alternative education programs in SCCOE?
9. What are the successes that have occurred thus far in alternative education programs in SCCOE?
10. What would indicate to you that your alternative education program is successfully serving students and the community? What would we see?

TRANSFER COORDINATOR

1. Please describe your role as the transfer coordinator for the county. (Probe: Does anyone else work with you? In what capacity? Bilingual staff?)
2. Please describe how a student is transferred from a comprehensive school to an alternative school. (Probe: How are decisions made? What say do parents have? What say do students have? What say does the district have?)
3. How many slots/seats are available for each district? How are these selected? (Probe: Is there a cost attached to each seat? If so, who pays?)
4. How easily can a student move from one alternative school to another? (For example, if student gets in trouble at one site)

5. What are the challenges you encounter in transferring students to and from alternative schools?
6. How does SCCOE support students and families transferring to and from alternative schools? (Probe: What information and resources are provided?)
7. What changes has the county made to the transfer process in the last year?
8. How can the transfer process to and from alternative schools be improved?

BOARD MEMBER

1. What would indicate to you that the alternative education program is successfully serving students and the community? What would we see?
2. What is the appropriate role of the board in its oversight of the alternative education program in the county? (Probe: Where does the board get its information about programming?)
3. Since your tenure, what are the successes and challenges that have occurred in alternative education programs in SCCOE? (Probe: To what do you attribute these successes?)
4. How would you describe the county's overall approach and philosophy for educating alternative education students? (Probe: How are these aligned to current practices?)

REFERRING DISTRICT STAFF

1. District: (Completed by interviewer)
2. What is your title?
3. How long have you been in this position?
4. We understand that one of your responsibilities is to arrange the transfer of students from your district to SCCOE's community schools. Is this correct?
 Yes
 No
5. Are you the only person who has this responsibility for this district?
 Yes
 No

If no, who else has this responsibility?

6. How frequently do you refer students to SCCOE's community schools?
7. In what circumstances are students referred to your alternative school and when are they referred to the county?
8. Approximately how many students do you refer on a yearly basis?
9. What sort of situations lead to this kind of referral? (Probe: Are these students more likely to have specific kinds of problems? If so, how would you characterize them? Truant? Pregnant? Behavioral problems?)
10. If you had to guess, what percentage of the students you refer are:
 - A. _____ Expelled
 - B. _____ Referred by a SARB or attendance board
 - C. _____ Recommended by guidance and counseling staff
 - D. _____ Parental request
 - E. _____ Self-referred (student request)
 - F. _____ Other (please specify:_____)
11. Have most of these students been referred to an alternative school within the district prior to being referred to a SCCOE community school?
12. What factors do you consider when deciding between referring a student to SCCOE or referring them to a school in the district?
13. What percentage of students who are referred to a SCCOE community school ultimately return to re-enroll in one of your district schools?
14. Overall how would you rate the adequacy of SCCOE community schools for the students you refer?
15. Has this changed at all in recent years – gotten better, worse, or stayed the same?
16. Let's talk about specific services that students receive in a county alternative school. Based upon your experience, how well do SCCOE community schools provide:
 - A. Guidance and counseling help?
 - B. Assistance with academic deficiencies?
 - C. Special education services?

17. What is your assessment of other services provided by SCCOE to your students?
18. When you place a student in a SCCOE community school, do you receive information from SCCOE on whether that student actually enrolled and has attended classes?
19. Overall, how much collaboration exists between SCCOE and your district to coordinate services for high-risk youth?
20. How has the level of coordination changed over the past two or three years?
21. Is there a county-level plan for recovering dropouts and serving high-risk youth?
22. Have you or others from your school or district been involved in developing such a plan?
23. Would a county-level plan in which all Santa Clara districts participated, and that examined availability and adequacy of services to dropouts and other high-risk students be helpful? How?

PRINCIPAL

1. How long have you been the principal at this school? How long have you worked in alternative education?
2. What do you see as your principal responsibilities at this school? (Probe: What are SCCOE's expectations of you?)
3. How would you describe the school's overall approach and philosophy for educating students?
4. Briefly describe the alternative education program at your school. (Probes: Unique features, model, student population, neighborhood)
5. Please briefly describe the curriculum in the core subject areas. (Probe: Language arts, math, history, social science)
6. What are students' greatest needs? (Probe: How does the school assess student needs? How does the school use the resulting information?)
7. What kinds of assessments does your school use to monitor student progress? How often are students assessed?
8. How often do you meet with your staff? What do you typically discuss during staff meetings?
9. How would you describe student engagement at your school?

10. What are your primary expectations of students? (Probe: How do you communicate these expectations to students?)
11. Do you expect your students to graduate? If yes, why? If no, why not?
12. How would you characterize the level of parent involvement at this school? (Probe: How do you and your staff communicate with families?)
13. How is funding for your program determined? (Probe: How adequate are the funds you receive to support your students?)
14. What kinds of services are available to students who are struggling? (Probe: academic, mental health, drug treatment, conflict resolution, housing, immigration)
15. Who are your primary partners in providing support to students? (Probe: district staff, community-based organizations)
16. What kind of support do you receive from the county office? From districts? (Probe: Have you seen any programming changes in the last year?)
17. What are the major challenges facing alternative education programs in SCCOE?
18. What are the successes that have occurred thus far in alternative education programs in SCCOE?

COUNSELOR/AIDE

1. How long have you worked at this school? What areas do you support?
2. What motivated you to work in an alternative school setting?
3. What are students' greatest needs? (Probe: How does the school assess student needs? How does the school use the resulting information?)
4. What type of professional development do you receive to help you support alternative education students? (Probe: What kind of support do you need?)
5. How would you describe student engagement at your school?
6. How do you show students that you care?
7. What kinds of services are available to students who are struggling? (Probe: academic, mental health, drug treatment, conflict resolution, housing, immigration)
8. What changes have occurred with alternative education programming in the last year? (Probe: resources, technology, centralized planning, curriculum support)

9. What are the major challenges that you face working in an alternative education setting? (Probe: How do you avoid burnout?)
10. What are the successes that have occurred thus far in alternative education programs in SCCOE?

PROBATION OFFICER

1. Describe your role working with students at this site. (Probe: What services do you provide?)
2. What are students' greatest needs? (Probes: To be successful in school? To be successful in life?)
3. How motivated are students to come to school? What keeps them engaged?
4. What strategies have been successful in reaching students? (Probe: Connections to other agencies for youth? Mental health, drug rehabilitation or conflict resolution related?)
5. What are the consequences for students who do not attend school?
6. What are the biggest challenges you confront working at this site?
7. What is your overall impression of the county's alternative education program? (Probe: Have you seen any programming changes in the last year?)
8. What are some key recommendations you have for the alternative education program?

TEACHER

1. How long have you taught at this school? What subject(s) do you teach?
2. What motivated you to work in an alternative school setting?
3. Briefly describe the alternative education program at your school. (Probes: Unique features, model, student population, neighborhood)
4. What are students' greatest needs? (Probe: How does the school assess student needs? How does the school use the resulting information?)
5. How would you characterize the principal's leadership and commitment to the school's program and students?
6. How often does your school have staff meetings? What do you typically discuss during staff meetings?
7. What type of professional development do you receive to help you teach alternative education students? (Probe: What kind of support do you need?)

8. What are your primary expectations of students? (Probe: How do you communicate these expectations to students?)
9. How would you describe student engagement at your school?
10. How do you show students that you care?
11. What kinds of services are available to students who are struggling? (Probe: academic, mental health, drug treatment, conflict resolution, housing, immigration)
12. What changes have occurred with alternative education programming in the last year? (Probe: resources, technology, centralized planning, curriculum support)
13. What are the major challenges that you face teaching in an alternative education setting? (Probe: How do you avoid burnout?)
14. What are the successes that have occurred thus far in alternative education programs in SCCOE?

PARENT

1. How long has your child attended this school?
2. Do you know why your child is at this school? (Probe: Did you have a say in placing your child here? Are there language barriers to communicating with the county or school?)
3. What do you think about this school? The classes? The staff?
4. What do you know about the types of services offered by the school, district, or county? (Probe: How do you know about these services?)
5. How often do you talk with teachers, the principal, or other staff about what is happening at this school? (Probe: Are they responsive to you?)
6. What do teachers expect of students here? (Probe: What do teachers expect of you?)
7. Do you think your child will graduate? Do you know what your child needs to do to graduate? Do you think your child needs to finish high school? Why or why not?
8. What kind of support does your child need to feel more successful in school and life? (Probe: skills developed, credits earned, counseling services, relationships, drug rehabilitation)

STUDENT

1. How long have you been attending this school/home¹⁹? (Probe: Did you or your parents have a say in getting placed here?)
2. What do you think about your classes? Your teachers? Your principal? Your school/home?
3. What do your teachers expect of students here?
4. How is the school/home helping you to be successful in school and life? (Probe: skills developed, credits earned, counseling services, relationships, drug rehabilitation)
5. What could your school/home do to help you be more successful?
6. How often do you feel that you or your parents have a say in what goes on at school? (Probe: class activities, rules)
7. Do you feel your teachers and principal care about you and other students? How so? (Probe: Where do students go for help with a problem?)
8. Do you feel close to people at this school/home? Why or why not? (Probe: peers and staff)
9. Do you think you will graduate? Do you know what you need to do to graduate? Do you think you *need* to finish high school? Why or why not? (Probe: Who talks to you about your future?)
10. What do you think you will do after high school? (Probe: What do you *want* to do after high school?)
11. What do you like most about your school/home?
12. What would you like to see changed about your school/home?

SURVEYS

PRINCIPAL

1. How many years have you worked for SCCOE?
 - Less than 1 year
 - 1-2 years
 - 3-4 years
 - 5 years or more

¹⁹ WestEd used the term home when interviewing students in the institutional schools.

2. How many years have you worked as principal at your school(s)?

- Less than 1 year
- 1-2 years
- 3-4 years
- 5 years or more

3. How many years have you worked in alternative education?

- Less than 1 year
- 1-2 years
- 3-4 years
- 5 years or more

4. Below are a series of statements regarding your school, your role as principal, and the level of support you receive from SCCOE. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
SCCOE's mission is clear.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SCCOE provides valuable services to county schools and districts.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The organizational culture at SCCOE supports employee success.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SCCOE is clear about what they expect from me as a principal.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school has strong instructional leadership.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I consult with my staff before making decisions that affect our school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My staff has a high level of trust and respect in my leadership.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school has a safe and orderly culture that supports student personal development.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school has a clearly written student behavior code.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our school programs have substantial community support.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My staff and I have high expectations of students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My staff receives sufficient support to meet student needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In-service training for staff has been useful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SCCOE provides sufficient follow-up to in-service training.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Counseling staff is an important resource for helping students with attendance and discipline problems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school has a rigorous and standards-based curriculum relevant to student needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school receives sufficient curriculum and instructional support from SCCOE.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school has textbooks in every subject that are appropriate for the needs of our students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The instructional materials (including textbooks) are in good condition.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My staff makes use of resources available through SCCOE's Learning Multimedia Center.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school is very successful in improving students' academic performance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

My staff is adequately trained to assess student progress.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My teachers regularly use student assessment data to inform teaching.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student action plans guide individual student instruction.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. Below are a series of statements that describe ways SCCOE or your school has changed over the past two years. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

Compared to two years ago...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My school is more successful in improving student academic performance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school has increased the use of data to measure student progress.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our students have more access to community resources that support their wellbeing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our students feel more connected to the school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students are more able to get help from SCCOE guidance and counseling staff.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parent and community involvement has increased at my school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Facilities at my school have improved.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Special Education services have improved for our students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SCCOE has expanded professional development opportunities for teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SCCOE has made greater efforts in communicating expectations to teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SCCOE has established more timely and effective methods for evaluating student and program performance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Technology (i.e. computers, whiteboards, audio visual aids, web-based academic programs) is more available for instruction.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My teachers feel better prepared to use technology for instruction.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. What can SCCOE do to improve school services that support student performance and wellbeing at your school?

TEACHER/EDUCATION ASSISTANT

- How many years have you worked for SCCOE?
 - Less than 1 year
 - 1-2 years
 - 3-4 years
 - 5 years or more
- How many years have you worked as a teacher or education assistant at your school?
 - Less than 1 year

- 1-2 years
- 3-4 years
- 5 years or more

3. How many years have you worked in alternative education?

- Less than 1 year
- 1-2 years
- 3-4 years
- 5 years or more

4. In which type of school do you work?

- Community school
- Institutional school

5. What is your position title?

- Teacher
- Education Assistant
- Education Assistant, Special Ed
- Other (please specify: _____)

6. What subjects do you teach? (Mark all that apply):

- English/language arts
- Math
- Social studies
- Science
- Physical education
- Other (please specify: _____)

7. Below are a series of statements regarding your school, your role as teacher or education assistant, and the level of support you receive from SCCOE. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
SCCOE's mission is clear.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SCCOE provides valuable services to county schools and districts.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The organizational culture at SCCOE supports employee success.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school has strong instructional leadership.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My principal consults with staff before making decisions that affect our school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our staff has a high level of trust and respect in the school's leadership.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school has a safe and orderly culture that supports student personal development.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

My school has a clearly written student behavior code.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our school programs have substantial community support.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our staff has high expectations of students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our staff receives sufficient support to meet student needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In-service training for staff has been useful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SCCOE provides sufficient follow-up to in-service training.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Counseling staff is an important resource for helping students with attendance and discipline problems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school has a rigorous and standards-based curriculum relevant to student needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school receives sufficient curriculum and instructional support from SCCOE.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school has textbooks in every subject that are appropriate for the needs of our students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The instructional materials (including textbooks) are in good condition.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers at my school make use of resources available through SCCOE's Learning Multimedia Center.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school is very successful in improving students' academic performance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our staff is adequately trained to assess student progress.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers at my school regularly use student assessment data to inform teaching.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student action plans guide individual student instruction.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. Below are a series of statements that describe ways SCCOE or your school may have changed over the past two years. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

Compared to two years ago...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My school is more successful in improving student academic performance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school has increased the use of data to measure student progress.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our students have more access to community resources that support their wellbeing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our students feel more connected to the school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students are more able to get help from SCCOE guidance and counseling staff.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parent and community involvement has increased at my school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Facilities at my school have improved.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Special Education services have improved for our students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SCCOE has expanded professional development opportunities for teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SCCOE has made greater efforts in communicating expectations to teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SCCOE has established more timely and effective methods for evaluating student and program performance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Technology (i.e. computers, whiteboards, audio visual aids, web-based academic programs) is more available for instruction.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers at my school feel better prepared to use technology for instruction.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. What can SCCOE do to improve school services that support student performance and wellbeing at your school?

SCHOOL OFFICE COORDINATOR

- How many years have you worked for SCCOE?
 - Less than 1 year
 - 1-2 years
 - 3-4 years
 - 5 years or more
- How many years have you worked as a school office coordinator at your school?
 - Less than 1 year
 - 1-2 years
 - 3-4 years
 - 5 years or more
- How many years have you worked in alternative education?
 - Less than 1 year
 - 1-2 years
 - 3-4 years
 - 5 years or more
- Below are a series of statements regarding your school, your role as school office coordinator, and the level of support you receive from SCCOE. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
SCCOE's mission is clear.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SCCOE provides valuable services to county schools and districts.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The organizational culture at SCCOE supports employee success.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school has strong instructional leadership.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My principal consults with staff before making decisions that affect our school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our staff has a high level of trust and respect in the school's leadership.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school has a safe and orderly culture that supports student personal development.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school has a clearly written student behavior code.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our school programs have substantial community support.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Our staff has high expectations of students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our staff receives sufficient support to meet student needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Counseling staff is an important resource for helping students with attendance and discipline problems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school collaborates with district schools in transferring students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school collaborates with SCCOE in transferring students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school works closely with other alternative schools to make sure services are coordinated.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SCCOE provides budgeting guidance for my school's programming.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have sufficient support from SCCOE to ensure my school has necessary resources.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. Below are a series of statements that describe ways SCCOE or your school has changed over the past two years. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

Compared to two years ago,...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My school is more successful in improving student academic performance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our students have more access to community resources that support their wellbeing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students are more able to get help from SCCOE guidance and counseling staff.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our students feel more connected to the school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parent and community involvement has increased at my school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents feel more connected to the school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SCCOE has expanded professional development opportunities for teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SCCOE has made greater efforts in communicating expectations to staff.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Staff feels more connected to the school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Special Education services have improved for our students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Facilities at my school have improved.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The food services at my school have improved.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school has more access to textbooks.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Technology (i.e. computers, whiteboards, audio visual aids, web-based academic programs) is more available for instruction.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. What can SCCOE do to improve school services that support student performance and wellbeing at your school?

Appendix B: SCCOE Teacher/Education Assistant Survey Results

Exhibit 1: How many years have you worked for SCCOE? (N=41)

Years	Percent and Number
Less than 1 year	7.3% (n=3)
1-2 years	19.5% (n=8)
3-4 years	31.7% (n=13)
5 years or more	41.5% (n=17)

Exhibit 2: How many years have you worked as a teacher or education assistant at your school? (N=41)

Years	Percent and Number
Less than 1 year	14.6% (n=6)
1-2 years	31.7% (n=13)
3-4 years	19.5% (n=8)
5 years or more	34.1% (n=14)

Exhibit 3: How many years have you worked in alternative education? (N=41)

Years	Percent and Number
Less than 1 year	7.3% (n=3)
1-2 years	7.3% (n=3)
3-4 years	26.8% (n=11)
5 years or more	58.5% (n=24)

Exhibit 4: In which type of school do you work? (N=41)

School Type	Percent and Number
Community school	56.1% (n=23)
Institutional school	43.9% (n=18)

Exhibit 5: What is your position title (N=40)

Position Title	Percent and Number
Teacher	80.0% (n=32)
Education Assistant	17.5% (n=7)
Education Assistant, Special Education	2.5% (n=1)

Exhibit 6: What subjects do you teach? (N=39)

Subject	Percent and Number
English/language arts	64.1% (n=25)
Math	59.0% (n=23)
Social studies	35.9% (n=14)
Physical education	43.6% (n=17)
Other (Resource specialist, Health, ELD, Art, not a teacher)	17.9% (N=7)

Respondent could mark all that applied

Exhibit 7: Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
SCCOE's mission is clear. (N=39)	12.8% (n=5)	12.8% (n=5)	71.8% (n=28)	2.6% (n=1)
SCCOE provides valuable services to county schools and districts. (N=38)	7.9% (n=3)	10.5% (n=4)	65.8% (n=25)	15.8% (n=6)
The organizational culture at SCCOE supports employee success. (N=39)	7.7% (n=3)	30.8% (n=12)	61.5% (n=24)	0.0% (n=0)
My school has strong instructional leadership. (N=38)	7.9% (n=3)	23.7% (n=9)	50.0% (n=19)	18.4% (n=7)
My principal consults with staff before making decisions that affect our school. (N=39)	12.8% (n=5)	20.5% (n=8)	43.6% (n=17)	23.1% (n=9)
Our staff has a high level of trust and respect in the school's leadership. (N=39)	5.1% (n=2)	25.6% (n=10)	51.3% (n=20)	17.9% (n=7)
My school has a safe and orderly culture that supports student personal development.	7.7% (n=3)	25.6% (n=10)	48.7% (n=19)	17.9% (n=7)
My school has a clearly written student behavior code. (N=38)	5.3% (n=2)	15.8% (n=6)	52.6% (n=20)	26.3% (n=10)
Our school programs have substantial community support. (N=39)	25.6% (n=10)	23.1% (n=9)	46.2% (n=18)	5.1% (n=2)
Our staff has high expectations of students. (N=37)	5.4% (n=2)	18.9% (n=7)	54.1% (n=20)	21.6% (n=8)
Our staff receives sufficient support to meet student needs. (N=39)	17.9% (n=7)	28.2% (n=11)	51.3% (n=20)	2.6% (n=1)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
In-service training for staff has been useful. (N=39)	20.5% (n=8)	30.8% (n=12)	46.2% (n=18)	2.6% (n=1)
SCCOE provides sufficient follow-up to in-service training. (N=39)	25.6% (n=10)	25.6% (n=10)	46.2% (n=18)	2.6% (n=1)
Counseling staff is an important resource for helping students with attendance and discipline problems. (N=38)	7.9% (n=3)	21.1% (n=8)	42.1% (n=16)	28.9% (n=11)
My school has a rigorous and standards-based curriculum relevant to student needs. (N=38)	5.3% (n=2)	18.4% (n=7)	65.8% (n=25)	10.5% (n=4)
My school receives sufficient curriculum and instructional support from SCCOE. (N=39)	15.4% (n=6)	25.6% (n=10)	53.8% (n=21)	5.1% (n=2)
My school has textbooks in every subject that are appropriate for the needs of our students. (N=36)	19.4% (n=7)	22.2% (n=8)	50.0% (n=18)	8.3% (n=3)
The instructional materials (including textbooks) are in good condition. (N=39)	12.8% (n=5)	15.4% (n=6)	61.5% (n=24)	10.3% (n=4)
Teachers at my school make use of resources available through SCCOE's Learning Multimedia Center. (N=37)	24.3% (n=9)	37.8% (n=14)	35.1% (n=13)	2.7% (n=1)
My school is very successful in improving students' academic performance. (N=38)	7.9% (n=3)	21.1% (n=8)	63.2% (n=24)	7.9% (n=3)
Our staff is adequately trained to assess student progress. (N=38)	5.3% (n=2)	15.8% (n=6)	73.7% (n=28)	5.3% (n=2)
Teachers at my school regularly use student assessment data to inform teaching. (N=37)	13.5% (n=5)	35.1% (n=13)	48.6% (n=18)	2.7% (n=1)
Student action plans guide individual student instruction. (N=38)	18.4% (n=7)	34.2% (n=13)	44.7% (n=17)	2.6% (n=1)

Exhibit 8: Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement that describes ways SCCOE or your school may have changed over the past two years.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My school is more successful in improving student academic performance. (N=36)	5.6% (n=2)	25.0% (n=9)	58.3% (n=21)	11.1% (n=4)
My school has increased the use of data to measure student progress. (N=37)	2.7% (n=1)	35.1% (n=13)	54.1% (n=20)	8.1% (n=3)
Our students have more access to community resources that support their wellbeing. (N=38)	18.4% (n=7)	34.2% (n=13)	44.7% (n=17)	2.6% (n=1)
Our students feel more connected to the school. (N=37)	8.3% (n=3)	41.7% (n=15)	33.3% (n=12)	16.7% (n=6)
Students are more able to get help from SCCOE guidance and counseling staff. (N=36)	10.5% (n=4)	28.9% (n=11)	55.3% (n=21)	5.3% (n=2)
Parent and community involvement has increased at my school. (N=38)	27.0% (n=10)	37.8% (n=14)	29.7% (n=11)	5.4% (n=2)
Facilities at my school have improved. (N=37)	22.2% (n=8)	5.6% (n=2)	52.8% (n=19)	19.4% (n=7)
Special Education services have improved for our students. (N=35)	11.4% (n=4)	25.7% (n=9)	57.1% (n=20)	5.7% (n=2)
SCCOE has expanded professional development opportunities for teachers. (N=37)	10.8% (n=4)	13.5% (n=5)	73.0% (n=27)	2.7% (n=1)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
SCCOE has made greater efforts in communicating expectations to teachers. (N=36)	8.3% (n=3)	13.9% (n=5)	75.0% (n=27)	2.8% (n=1)
SCCOE has established more timely and effective methods for evaluating student and program performance. (N=36)	16.7% (n=6)	22.2% (n=8)	61.1% (n=22)	0.0% (n=0)
Technology (i.e. computers, whiteboards, audio visual aids, web-based academic programs) is more available for instruction. (N=38)	7.9% (n=3)	7.9% (n=3)	55.3% (n=21)	28.9% (n=11)
Teachers at my school feel better prepared to use technology for instruction. (N=37)	21.6% (n=8)	35.1% (n=13)	37.8% (n=14)	5.4% (n=2)