

From Dropped Out to Checked In: A Snapshot of Alternative Education

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Abstract: Many high schools today employ a conventional model of schooling for students in grades 9-12. This model includes traditional, lecture-style classes that follow a typical schedule of two semesters (four, nine-week terms), midterms, and finals. Although many students are able to conform to this model, for those who do not, research shows that alternative education can meet their needs. The purpose of this study was to determine the structure and effects of an alternative high school in a small, but growing, Midwestern school district. After a review of the literature, researchers completed a case study of this high school in order to review its history, necessity, student population, structure, and effects. This research encompassed both qualitative data (student surveys and principal/superintendent interviews) and quantitative data as it sought to determine why these students were in alternative schools as well as their outcomes. The results of this research may help pinpoint the continued need for these types of environments in districts and how they can be used effectively to serve nontraditional students as they find success. Keywords: dropouts, alternative education, nontraditional students, school structure

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