GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA

EXTRA SESSION 1994

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HOUSE BILL 181

Short Title: Alternative Schools Required.	(Public)
Sponsors: Representatives Black; Alphin, Bowman, Burton, Cummings, Cu McCrary, Nichols, J. Preston, Russell, Sexton, and Wainwright.	nningham,
Referred to: Education.	

February 14, 1994

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO REQUIRE LOCAL SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS TO ESTABLISH ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL PROGRAMS AND TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS FOR THOSE PROGRAMS.

Whereas, an escalating number of students are engaging in violent behavior, are unable to make successful transitions from school-to-school and school-to-work, and are dropping out of school; and

Whereas, national high school dropout statistics paint a grim picture for the dropouts themselves and for the State; fewer than 50% of dropouts find jobs after leaving school, they earn \$500,000 less than high school graduates over their lifetimes, four out of five dropouts use drugs on a regular basis, 80% of prison inmates are high school dropouts, and 60% of adults on welfare are dropouts; and

Whereas, poor attendance, behavior, and achievement among students, the lack of community schools and safe havens for students, the absence of parental involvement, the lack of training and preparation for students entering the work force, minimal support and guidance for students when they make transitions between schools, and the lack of community and family empowerment support all contribute to the inability of young people to succeed in school and lead productive lives; and

Whereas, communities can best identify the needs of children within that community and develop strategies to meet those needs; and

Whereas, communities recognize the necessity of collaborating within their communities to develop and implement solutions that include the active participation by schools, business leaders, and the community; and

Whereas, communities and schools must work together to develop and operate a sustained infrastructure that will address the long-term needs of students and the community; and

Whereas, social services resources do exist in communities, but there is limited coordination at the school site to leverage available resources, develop relations with service agencies, assist with the implementation of services, target services and improvement strategies directly to students; Now, therefore,

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

Section 1. Chapter 115C of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new Article to read:

"<u>ARTICLE 9A.</u> "ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS.

"§ 115C-148.1. Purpose; goals.

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- (a) The purpose of this Article is to ensure that all students are equipped with the resources, skills, knowledge, and motivation necessary to avoid violent behavior, to stay in school, and to make successful transitions from school-to-school and school-to-work, through the establishment of alternative school programs in each local school administrative unit. These alternative schools shall be community and school collaboration projects designed to meet the needs of students who are at risk of academic failure in a standard classroom setting and of students with behavioral disabilities.
 - (b) The goals of the alternative school programs shall be to:
 - (1) Reduce the school dropout rate through improved student attendance, behavior, and educational achievement;
 - (2) Expand the use of schools as community centers and safe havens open outside of normal school hours; and
 - (3) Increase successful school-to-work transitions for students through educationally linked job internships, mentored job shadowing experiences, and the development of personalized education and career plans for participating students.

"§ 115C-148.2. Coordination of services to alternative school programs at the State level.

- (a) The Department of Public Instruction and the Department of Human Resources shall collaborate to offer technical assistance and other services to alternative school programs in local school administrative units.
- (b) The Department of Public Instruction shall coordinate the efforts of its specialists in the areas of dropout prevention, drug abuse prevention, in-school suspension, and children with special needs so it can provide coordinated assistance to the alternative school programs in local school administrative units.

"§ 115C-148.3. Establishment of alternative school programs in each local school administrative unit.

(a) Each local board of education shall establish an alternative school program to meet the needs of students who are at risk of academic failure in a standard classroom setting and of students with behavioral disabilities. The projects shall integrate

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 community support services, leveraging and coordinating community resources in a nonduplicative, cost-effective, and accountable manner at the program site, and mobilizing public and private resources to support participating students and their families.

- (b) Each alternative school program should:
 - (1) Collaborate with local law enforcement officials and existing youth service organizations to carry out alternative school activities;
 - (2) Promote character development by:
 - a. Emphasizing to each student that attendance in the alternative school program is a privilege and that an atmosphere in which all students can learn must be maintained at all times:
 - <u>b.</u> <u>Placing increased emphasis on developing self-esteem through personal achievement; and</u>
 - c. Emphasizing citizenship skill training, community service work, responsible decision making, respect for cultural diversity, listening and communication skills, nonviolent methods for resolving conflict, including peer mediation;
 - (3) Emphasize a holistic approach with individualized instruction, flexible scheduling, and personalization, caring, cooperation, and acceptance to each student;
 - (4) Organize the program so there are low student-staff ratios and a low number of participating students;
 - (5) Have staff who volunteered to work at the alternative school and who have participated in staff development activities on children with different learning styles and on training in positive discipline techniques;
 - (6) Increase student and parent involvement in decision making; and
 - (7) Provide training in parenting to the parents of students in the program and to students who have children.

"§ 115C-148.4. Funding for alternative schools.

- (a) The allocations of dollar allotments and position allotments for students who participate in alternative schools and the allocations of funds for exceptional children for students who participate in alternative schools shall be used to provide the alternative school program for those children.
- (b) State funds allocated for drug prevention and dropout prevention may be used to provide the alternative school program.
- (c) Local departments of social services, health departments, and area mental health, mental retardation, and substance abuse authorities shall use funds within their budgets to collaborate with local boards of education on providing community-based services for students enrolled in alternative schools and their families.
- (d) Local boards of education shall collaborate with local governmental and nongovernmental agencies that provide services to school-age children, including at a minimum, schools, law enforcement, local government, youth services agencies and organizations, job training organizations, mental health, and health care providers, so as

to avoid duplication and effort and expenditure of unnecessary funds. Local boards of education shall also identify community matching funds that may be committed to alternative schools.

"§ 115C-148.5. Evaluation of alternative schools.

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- (a) Local boards of education shall collect baseline data and on an annual basis that will be used to evaluate the success of alternative schools in achieving performance standards over a five-year period. The baseline data shall include student attendance rates, dropout rates, student test scores, incidences of disruptive behavior in schools, incidences of juvenile crime, and the rate of successful transition from school-to-school and to employment or college.
- (b) The Department of Public Instruction shall evaluate alternative schools on an annual basis and shall report the results of the evaluation to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee."
- Sec. 2. There is appropriated from the General Fund to Aid to Local School Administrative Units the sum of twenty-five million dollars (\$25,000,000) for the 1994-95 fiscal year for the operating expenses of alternative schools.
 - Sec. 3. This act becomes effective July 1, 1994.