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AN ASSESSMENT OF AN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR AT-RISK DELINQUENT YOUTH

STEPHEN M. COX

Evaluations of alternative schools have generally found that these programs have failed to produce positive evidence of effectiveness in reducing delinquent behaviors. Using an experimental design with a one-year follow-up, the present study assessed the effectiveness of one alternative education program in changing students' school-related attitudes, academic performance, and self-reported delinquency. The study found that the program was able to produce short-term effects on grade point average, school attendance, and self-esteem. These effects were not observed at the one-year follow-up. The conclusions focus on the need for more rigorous research that focuses on program implementation issues.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention first promoted alternative education programs for delinquency prevention in the 1980s. The Delinquency Prevention through Alternative Education Initiative was based on the premise that schools could play a significant role in curbing youth crime (Gottfredson 1987). Alternative schools could remove disruptive students from traditional public schools and provide them with a chance for success in a smaller and more supportive environment (Garrison 1987).

Although no standard models for alternative school programs exist, they are generally designed to create a more successful learning environment through low teacher:student ratios, individualized and self-paced instruction, noncompetitive performance assessments, and less-structured classrooms (Raywid 1983). A self-paced curriculum and an informal classroom structure allow students to work independently and afford staff more time for individualized instruction. Alternative school students are under less pressure to perform at the same level as other students because success is measured by individual achievements rather than by comparison to the entire class (Gold and Mann 1984).

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Theoretically, students feel comfortable in this environment and are more motivated to attend this type of school. Students attending alternative schools are believed to have higher self-esteem, more positive attitudes toward school, improved school attendance, higher academic performance, and decreased delinquent behaviors than when they attended traditional schools. Based on these beliefs, many alternative education programs have targeted delinquent youth (Arnove and Strout 1980; Gottfredson 1987).

More recent research has supported alternative education models by consistently finding causal relationships between several school-related variables and delinquent behavior. These include school performance (Cohill 1991; Farrington 1992; Jarjoura 1993; Tracy, Wolfgang, and Figlio 1990), school attendance (Fagan and Pabon 1990; Thornberry, Moore, and Christenson 1985), and attitudes toward school (Cernkovich and Giordano 1992; Loeber et al. 1991; Mak 1991).

**REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

*Definition of an Alternative School*

Alternative schools are difficult to define because there are many types of alternatives to traditional schools. In general, alternative schools can be described as specialized educational programs taking place outside of the mainstream school system. Smith (1974) suggested that an alternative school is any school that provides alternative learning experiences beyond those provided by the traditional schools within its community and is available to every student at no extra cost.

Raywid (1983) defined alternative schools using three criteria. First, for a school program to be defined as an alternative, it must have a separate administrative unit with its own personnel and not be a special class or series of classes in a traditional school. Second, alternative schools should be voluntary and available to every student in the school district. Third, community participation and responsiveness are important in the development and maintenance of the alternative school.

*Effectiveness of Alternative Schools*

Evaluations of early alternative schools generally found that these programs failed to produce positive evidence of effectiveness (Raywid 1981). The lack of effectiveness of the delinquency-related programs appeared to be attributable to school officials’ improper use of the alternative schools.
(Arnove and Strout 1980). For instance, many alternative schools were used as a form of punishment for troublesome students in the traditional school. Alternative schools were commonly viewed as a vehicle to remove problem students from the traditional school with little regard for providing programming for these students. Hence, students with severe problems were being “dumped” into alternative schools that did not have the available resources to provide necessary services for them (Arnove and Strout 1980).

Moreover, alternative education programs were “too little, too late” for seriously delinquent youth (Arnove and Strout 1980). Little attention was given to the careful selection of an appropriate target population for these programs. School officials tended to be more concerned with getting the troubled students out of their schools than selecting students who may have benefited from the alternative school experience.

In addition, reviews of alternative education studies have noted common methodological shortcomings that have limited the generalizability of the findings (Duke and Muzio 1978; Hawkins and Wall 1980). The problems commonly identified were:

1. A lack of control or comparison group data,
2. failure to randomize when sampling from populations of students,
3. a tendency to eliminate data on program dropouts from aggregate statistics or final data analysis, and
4. a lack of follow-up data on students who leave early or graduate from alternative schools.

The limited positive effects and the methodological shortcomings were also observed in a meta-analysis of 57 alternative education evaluations (Cox, Davidson, and Bynum 1995). The principal findings of this study were that these programs can have positive effects on school performance, school attitude, and self-esteem. However, alternative schools did not significantly change participants’ delinquent behavior.

Two additional findings from the Cox et al. (1995) review were significant. First, alternative schools for low academic achievers or delinquent youth produced larger effects than schools that were not intended for a target population. The more successful programs had a curriculum and structure centered on the needs of a designated target population. Programs that were not as successful did not identify a target population and lacked the necessary resources to benefit problem students. Second, less rigorous research designs consistently resulted in more positive effects than did experimental designs. For instance, pre-post research designs without a control group produced positive results more often than did comparison group designs. Consistent
with earlier reviews, Cox et al. (1995) pointed out that methodological shortcomings continued to plague the alternative school literature. These problems centered on a lack of true experimental research designs and the lack of extended follow-ups. Few evaluations of alternative education programs have included a long-term follow-up component; hence, literature reviews have been unable to assess long-term effects of these programs.

The present study assessed the utility of an alternative school as a delinquency intervention program. The research presented here addressed the methodological deficiencies described in the literature by employing a true experimental design with a follow-up component. This study evaluated the effect of an alternative school on students' attitudes toward school, self-esteem, self-reported delinquency, grade point averages, standardized academic test scores, and school attendance. Data were collected prior to the beginning of the program, immediately following program completion, and one year following program completion.

**METHOD**

**Program Description**

The alternative school was located in a large midwestern city and was operated by a nonprofit community organization. The overall goal of the program was to decrease delinquent activity through a positive school experience. Specifically, the program was intended to lower delinquency by improving academic performance, self-esteem, and attitudes toward school. The actual program consisted of classroom instruction, individual tutoring, and group and individual counseling. Students attended the alternative school the entire school day, five days a week, for one academic semester (approximately four months) and returned to the traditional school the following semester. Transportation was provided by program staff to and from the alternative school and to and from the students' homes. Other than special events, the students were completely separated from the traditional middle school.

**Sample**

The youth participating in the program were middle-school students (sixth through eighth grades) at the time they were referred to the program. Youth were referred to the alternative school by teachers, principals, and
guidance counselors from the traditional middle school. These staff were asked to refer students having behavioral and/or academic problems who were at risk of becoming involved in serious criminal activity. Administrators from the alternative school stressed the at-risk criteria to protect against the referral of students whose personal or behavioral problems exceeded the ability of the alternative school to help them. The at-risk criteria consisted of having a police contact for delinquent behavior; having behavioral problems in school resulting in a suspension, excluding students involved in numerous fights or assaults on school staff; and having at least 20 documented absences in the past nine-week school term or being at least one year behind in grade level. Students had to meet at least one of these criteria to be eligible for the program.

Once a referral list was generated, students were randomly assigned to the participation or control group. Students in the participation group attended the alternative school for one school semester and returned to the traditional middle school. Control group students remained in the traditional school.

The sample consisted of 83 students. The random assignment resulted in 41 students selected for the program participation group and 42 students in the control group. In the participation group, 28 of the students were males (68 percent) and 38 were in the seventh grade (93 percent). The average age was 13 years. In the control group, the majority of the students were males (28, 67 percent), most were in the seventh grade (37, 92 percent), and the mean age was 13 years.

**Research Design**

The research was conducted using a $2 \times 3$ repeated measures design. There were two research groups (participation and control) by three time periods (preprogram, postprogram, and one year following program completion). Data were collected prior to the random assignment into the participation/control groups, immediately following completion of the program, and one year following program completion. There were no preprogram differences between the participation and control groups.

**Data Sources**

Data for this study were collected from two sources. First, interviews were conducted with all of the students participating in the study. The interviews were conducted by graduate students from a local university and consisted of closed-ended questions pertaining to attitudes toward school, self-esteem,
and self-reported delinquency. Second, data were collected from official school records. These data consisted of classroom grades, standardized academic test scores, and school attendance.

**Interviews**

The questionnaire interview was constructed to measure the link between school-related perceptions, self-esteem, and self-reported delinquent behavior. The pool of items was obtained from studies looking at similar phenomena (Elliott, Huizinga, and Ageton 1985; Gold and Mann 1984; Hirschi 1969). The dimensions and related items are presented below. The questionnaire interview employed a structured format of 61 items. All of the items were closed ended with the exception of the self-reported delinquency items. The self-reported delinquency items asked the respondent to report the actual number of times that she or he had participated in various behaviors.

**Attitudes toward school.** This construct was based on an 11-item scale that measured perceptions of teacher support, academic prospects of success, perceptions of stigma in school, perceptions of the student role, and general attitudes toward school (Gold and Mann 1984). The responses were coded in a way that reflected the amount of positiveness of the students' attitudes.

Because not all of the items used the same number of possible responses, z scores were computed for each item by testing phase (Bohrnstedt and Knoke 1988). Average scale scores were calculated by dividing the sum of the z scores by the total number of items in the scale. The scale reliability was assessed using a coefficient alpha (Cronbach 1970). This value was .76 for each of the three occasions (pre-, post-, and one-year follow-up).

**Self-esteem.** Items pertaining to perceptions of self were operationalized using the Rosenberg-Bachman Measure of Self-Esteem (Bachman 1970). This measure contained six items and was intended to measure conscious self-esteem. Similar to the attitudes toward school scale items, the responses were coded to reflect the students' positive self-esteem. Thus, high scale scores depicted positive self-esteem and low scores represented low self-esteem. The alpha coefficients for this scale were .53 at pre-, .59 at post-, and .63 at the one-year follow-up.

**Self-reported delinquency.** The measure of self-reported delinquency was adapted from Elliott and Ageton (1980). This measure contained 28 items focusing on person, property, school, drug, weapon, and status offenses. Respondents were asked to report how many times since the beginning of the
school year or prior school semester they had committed each act during the three data collection periods.

The items in the self-reported delinquency scale were recoded as follows: 0 = never, 1 = once or twice, 2 = once or twice a month, 3 = once every two to three weeks, 4 = once a week, and 5 = two to three times a week (Cernkovich and Giordano 1992). The numerical values were formulated by calculating the implied frequency over a four-month period. The alpha coefficients for this scale were .84, .89, and .89 for each time period.

Official School Records

Grade point average. Classroom grades were collected from four core courses (math, English, social studies, and science). From these grades, grade point averages were calculated by summing the values and dividing by the number of courses. The grade point averages ranged from 0.0 to 4.0.

Standardized academic achievement tests. Academic performance also was measured using standardized test scores. The California Achievement Test (CAT) is a nationally distributed standardized comprehensive examination composed of questions in the areas of math and English. These standardized tests were administered to all students in the school district on an annual basis. These tests were scored on the basis of standardized national percentile scores for all students in the same grades. The possible range of the test scores was 400 to 800.

School absences. Attendance records were collected consisting of actual days absent from school. These were totaled for each data collection period.

RESULTS

Differences between participation and control groups were tested using repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). Repeated measures was preferable over other types of statistical analyses because it enables one to study the effects of variables across time, often produces more power than other designs with the same sample size, and allows for more precise identification of the variance due to individual differences by separating them from the error term (Pedhazur 1982). The analyses consisted of conducting six repeated measures MANOVAs. Each procedure tested for statistically significant differences between participation and control groups on the interview scales (attitudes toward school, self-esteem, and self-reported
delinquency) and the official school records (grade point average, standardized achievement tests, and school absences) across the three data collection periods.

The repeated measures MANOVA tested for three types of effects: mean differences for the study group (participation versus control group), time differences (sample mean differences at the three separate times of the data collection), and the interaction of study group by time (differences between the participation and control groups at the three time points).

Of particular interest is the interaction of Program Group × Time. The interaction term tests for differences between the two study groups occurring at program completion and one year following program completion. That is, statistically significant interaction terms would suggest that there were differences between the participation and control group that could be attributable to the alternative school program. The $F$ values presented in the tables are for the interaction of Study Group × Time.

**Interview Scales**

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, 95 percent confidence intervals of the mean, $F$ values, and effect sizes for the interview measures. For these scales, only self-esteem produced statistically significant effects across time. The differences in self-esteem between the participation and control groups were present following program completion (at the postprogram assessment). At this time, self-esteem increased for the participation group and remained the same for the control group. These differences were not present at the one-year follow-up interview. In the MANOVA analysis, the Program Group × Time interaction was the only significant finding, $F(2, 162) = 4.26, p < .05$.

**Official School Records**

Analysis of official school records produced two statistically significant findings. First, grade point averages of the participation group increased at the postprogram assessment and decreased at the one-year follow-up assessment, whereas the grade point averages of the control group decreased at the postprogram assessment and increased at the one-year follow-up. The MANOVA analysis found that these differences were statistically significant for the Program Group × Time interaction, $F(2, 162) = 16.67, p < .05$. 
TABLE 1: Means, Standard Deviations, 95 Percent Confidence Intervals of the Mean, F values, and Effect Sizes for the Interview Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Preprogram</th>
<th>Postprogram</th>
<th>One-Year Follow-up</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>School attitude</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation (n = 41)</td>
<td>.02 (.42)</td>
<td>.12 (.47)</td>
<td>.01 (.45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control (n = 42)</td>
<td>-.03 (.47)</td>
<td>-.13 (.47)</td>
<td>-.01 (.48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-.11 to .16)</td>
<td>(-.03 to .27)</td>
<td>(-.13 to .15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-.18 to .12)</td>
<td>(-.27 to .02)</td>
<td>(-.17 to .13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F = 2.76 (ns), effect size (Program Group × Time)(^a) = .030</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-esteem</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation (n = 41)</td>
<td>3.77 (.65)</td>
<td>4.08 (.60)</td>
<td>3.91 (.76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control (n = 42)</td>
<td>3.68 (.58)</td>
<td>3.64 (.69)</td>
<td>3.85 (.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.56 to 3.97)</td>
<td>(3.89 to 4.27)</td>
<td>(3.67 to 4.15)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.50 to 3.86)</td>
<td>(3.43 to 3.86)</td>
<td>(3.67 to 4.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F = 4.15 (p &lt; .05), effect size (Program Group × Time)(^a) = .049</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Self-reported delinquency</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation (n = 41)</td>
<td>2.90 (1.71)</td>
<td>3.07 (1.57)</td>
<td>3.20 (1.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control (n = 42)</td>
<td>2.83 (1.51)</td>
<td>2.71 (1.58)</td>
<td>2.83 (1.46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.36 to 3.44)</td>
<td>(2.58 to 3.57)</td>
<td>(2.70 to 3.69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.36 to 3.30)</td>
<td>(2.21 to 3.17)</td>
<td>(2.38 to 3.29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F = 0.70 (ns), effect size (Program Group × Time)(^a) = .008</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** ns = nonsignificant.

a. Effect sizes were estimated using eta-squared, the percentage of variance accounted for by that effect (Hunter and Schmidt 1990).

The MANOVA analysis found that there were statistically significant differences for the Program Group × Time interaction for school absences, $F(2, 162) = 4.27$, $p < .05$. For the participation group, the number of school absences decreased while the students were in the alternative education program and increased when they returned to their traditional school. The control group mean school absences remained relatively the same at each of the data collection points.

**Summary**

The repeated measures MANOVA produced two distinct findings. First, there were no differences between the program participation group and the control group for self-reported delinquency, attitudes toward school, or standardized achievement test scores. Second, there were statistical differences across time between the two groups for self-esteem, grade point averages, and school attendance. The patterns were similar for these three constructs. The alternative school students had higher self-esteem, better grade point averages, and improved attendance while they were at the alternative school.
### TABLE 2: Means, Standard Deviations, 95 Percent Confidence Intervals of the Mean, F values, and Effect Sizes for Official School Records

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Preprogram</th>
<th>Postprogram</th>
<th>One-Year Follow-up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade point average</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation (n = 41)</td>
<td>1.38 (.75)</td>
<td>1.87 (.80)</td>
<td>1.29 (.83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control (n = 42)</td>
<td>1.46 (.75)</td>
<td>1.02 (.62)</td>
<td>1.34 (.68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.15 to 1.62)</td>
<td>(1.62 to 2.13)</td>
<td>(1.03 to 1.55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.23 to 1.70)</td>
<td>(0.82 to 1.21)</td>
<td>(1.12 to 1.55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>F</em> = 16.67 (p &lt; .05), effect size (Program Group × Time)*a = .171</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standardized test scores</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation (n = 41)</td>
<td>704 (49)</td>
<td>721 (24)</td>
<td>742 (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control (n = 42)</td>
<td>714 (23)</td>
<td>727 (25)</td>
<td>741 (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(689 to 719)</td>
<td>(713 to 729)</td>
<td>(735 to 748)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(707 to 722)</td>
<td>(719 to 735)</td>
<td>(735 to 748)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>F</em> = 1.37 (ns), effect size (Program Group × Time)*a = .017</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School absences</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation (n = 41)</td>
<td>31 (25)</td>
<td>20 (26)</td>
<td>34 (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control (n = 42)</td>
<td>31 (24)</td>
<td>29 (19)</td>
<td>29 (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(24 to 39)</td>
<td>(14 to 26)</td>
<td>(26 to 43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(24 to 38)</td>
<td>(21 to 37)</td>
<td>(21 to 37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>F</em> = 4.27 (p &lt; .05), effect size (Program Group × Time)*a = .050</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** ns = nonsignificant.

a. Effect sizes were estimated using eta-squared, the percentage of variance accounted for by that effect (Hunter and Schmidt 1990).

However, these effects dissipated when the students returned to the traditional school.

**DISCUSSION**

The findings obtained in the present study were similar to other studies of alternative education programs (Driscoll, Mandell, and Schneider 1985; Frazier and Baenen 1988; Reilly, Reilly, and West 1982; Reisler and Friedman 1978). Each of these studies found that changes occurring at the alternative school disappeared when the students returned to the traditional school. Two common explanations have been offered for these findings. First, Reisler and Friedman (1978) speculated that while at the alternative school, students were able to effectively change their environment to their liking, which improved their school performance. However, due to the large size and rigid structure of the traditional school, the former alternative school students were frustrated and unable to cope without the flexibility they experienced at the alternative school.
Second, Reilly, Reilly, and West (1982) believed that the problem may lie with the traditional school. Students who are sent to alternative schools are those who have problems that are serious enough to warrant placement outside of the traditional school. The students experience success in the more individualized and supportive environment of the alternative school but then are sent back to the traditional school. The traditional school fails to help the alternative school students adjust to their return to the traditional school.

These two studies promoted alternative education programs. Their speculations regarding the failure of alternative schools to produce lasting effects may have been slightly biased. Rather than asking why the students were unsuccessful when they returned to the traditional school, it may be more beneficial to investigate why students were successful at the alternative school. In other words, why were improvements observed during the post-program period?

The changes produced by the alternative school in this study were directly controlled by program staff. For example, alternative school staff provided transportation for the students. These students were picked up in front of their homes every school morning. In some cases, staff would knock on the front door if the student was not waiting for the transportation. Therefore, it should not be surprising that alternative school students attended school more often than did control group students. This service was discontinued when the students returned to the traditional school, which likely accounted for students' decreased attendance.

In addition, the students' grades at the alternative school were assigned by program staff who may have used different grading scales than traditional school teachers. At the alternative school, students were primarily graded on individual progress rather than on how well they performed compared to other students in the class (progress-based grades). A student could receive a good grade for completing an assignment, even if it was completed a week later than other students' assignments. On occasion, when students were assigned performance-based grades, they were compared to other alternative school students. Therefore, students who received high grades when compared to alternative school students might have received much lower grades when compared to traditional school students.

The enhanced self-esteem students exhibited while attending the alternative school may have been due to the flexible school environment and the perceived increase in grade point averages. The environment of the typical alternative school is more relaxed, caring, supportive, and friendly than the traditional school. The lower student:teacher ratio allows the teachers to spend more time with the students on a one-on-one basis. The supportive and flexible environment combined with improvements in academic
performance probably raised self-esteem for program participants. However, when students returned to the traditional school, they did not receive the individual and supportive attention and their academic performance was not rated as highly. This likely caused self-esteem scores to decrease at the one-year follow-up.

The alternative school did not produce positive effects on attitudes toward school, standardized academic achievement tests, or self-reported delinquency. Even though the alternative school was able to increase attendance, classroom grades, and self-esteem, these effects did not appear to influence students’ attitudes toward school, standardized academic achievement test scores, or decrease delinquent behaviors. Improvements in attendance, grades, and self-esteem appear to be artificial because the alternative school could directly control two of the three variables that changed (attendance and classroom grades).

Two views are offered that explain why the alternative school failed to improve attitudes, standardized tests, or delinquency. First, education programs of short duration have limited positive effects (Lipsey 1992). One school semester (four months) may not be long enough to expect widespread changes in poor school attitudes and high amounts of delinquent behaviors. Reisler and Friedman (1978) discussed the idea of alternative school students suffering from “culture shock” when going from the alternative school back to the traditional school. It is also possible that these students suffered culture shock upon entering the program. When students finally understood the different expectations of the alternative school, there was not adequate time for the program to significantly affect attitudes and behaviors.

Second, the program lacked support from the traditional school. Hawkins and Wall (1980) argued that the success of alternative schools is dependent on committed school districts. Without school district support, alternative schools become “dumping grounds” for disruptive students. Students who were referred often stated that they were going to the “stupid kids school” and that they were not smart enough to be at the traditional school. It is possible that this negative label affected the students’ ability to perform well at the alternative school.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study closely resembled other alternative education studies that employed a rigorous methodological design. The alternative school produced small short-term effects that disappeared by the long-term follow-up. This program did not have positive effects on school-related
attitudes or self-reported delinquent behaviors. A school-related program may simply not be the answer for youth with other types of problems that may contribute to their delinquent behavior (e.g., family, peers, etc.). Indeed, these types of findings are not unusual for evaluations of delinquency-based treatments (Wolf et al. 1995).

There is a need for more rigorous evaluation of these programs. Although studies employing an experimental design have failed to produce positive evidence of effectiveness, these studies are few and/or outdated. Future studies should focus on both methodological and implementation issues of these programs. The methodological issues consist of randomly assigning students to participation and control groups, use of official school records and self-report measures, and a long-term follow-up period. The program implementation issues that should be considered are the appropriate target populations for these programs, duration of the program, and the type of long-term support given to alternative education students once they return to traditional schools.

REFERENCES


