

*Towards a Revitalization of the
Alternative Program*

Alternative Schools Advisory Committee
February 28, 2008

Executive Summary

The Alternative Schools Advisory Committee is tasked with advising the Board about matters pertaining to the Alternative Program. Over the years the Alternative Program has introduced an educational philosophy based on multi-age classrooms, non-competition, child-centred learning, anecdotal reporting and parental involvement. While these ideas have been both successful and well-received, there has also been a feeling that changes in educational approach outside the Alternative Program, restrictions in government regulations and a certain complacency of parents and/or educators has eroded the distinctiveness of the Program in comparison to other OCDSB programs, in particular the English Program.

The Alternative Schools Advisory Committee, representing the six Alternative Schools in the Board, believes that the Program does offer a valuable and distinct learning environment. At the same time, however, there is recognition that more experimentation and revitalization is possible. As a result, starting in 2006, ASAC engaged in a Revitalization Project that has sought feedback from parents, teachers and students, formulated options and worked with the six Alternative schools to produce a solid set of recommendations to the Board.

Results of the surveys and feedback from school councils indicate that the Alternative Program is distinct and offers different options to students—so much so that nearly 40% of those responding to an ASAC poll would not have their child(ren) enrolled in a public school if the Alternative Program did not exist. At the same time, however, there is an acknowledgment that the Program is being hamstrung both externally and from within. While the Program does deserve more support from the Board in order to maintain its philosophy, distinctiveness and innovation, it is also acknowledged that the Alternative Schools must be accountable to the Board for their programs and how each school's program fits within the core philosophy.

Revitalizing and supporting a successful and innovative educational program within the Board must be undertaken in partnership; therefore ASAC recommends the following set of actions:

For Schools

In order to give the Board confidence that the program they are supporting is different and innovative, each school will provide the Board every year with:

1. An outline of concrete structures, programs and projects that provide innovation and support the Alternative Program philosophy as promised to parents and students in Board literature.
2. A plan for the upcoming year on new projects or plans to improve and strengthen their Alternative Program
3. Commitment to one joint Professional Development activity per year devoted to Alternative practices and concepts.

For the School Board

ASAC recommends that the Board consider the following actions and implement them within the suggested timeframes detailed in the report in order to support and strengthen the Alternative Program:

4. Require Alternative schools to indicate in their School Improvement Plans what steps they will take in the coming year to strengthen their Alternative Program and offer innovative programming based on the Alternative philosophy.

5. Designate a staff resource to work with the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa to promote and develop research and programming opportunities related to Alternative Education, including accreditation possibilities.
6. Develop, in consultation with ASAC and Alternative teachers and principals, guidelines for flexible curriculum delivery in order to accommodate multi-age classrooms.
7. Permit Alternative schools to provide anecdotal report cards to their parents. In addition, to work with ASAC to develop Alternative methods of reporting.
8. Consider the Alternative Program schools as preferred sites for piloting new programs and projects which are compatible with the Program philosophy.

For ASAC

ASAC will undertake the following in order to provide ongoing support to the Alternative Program and advice to the Board concerning the Program:

9. Work with Alternative schools to bring them together as a community in order to share best practices and innovative ideas.
10. Act as a resource for principals and school councils in the support and enhancement of their Alternative programs.
11. Develop a common Principal Profile that will support each school's Principal Profile and will guide the Board in the placement of new principals into Alternative Schools.
12. Evaluate possible program alignments in order to advise the Board on where new Alternative schools could be added or removed (when they are no longer sufficiently supported by their communities).
13. Review proposals for innovative pilot programs and special projects (including those referred by schools or the Board) for potential value and compatibility with the Program philosophy, advise schools and the Board on the suitability of reviewed programs, and facilitate evaluation and information sharing after piloting.

All of the above recommendations propose concrete, achievable actions that can either be implemented immediately or carried out within a relatively short timeframe. All of the recommendations build on the Alternative Program's acknowledged distinctiveness and strengths, and ultimately seek to enhance the Program's ability to provide value to the Board and our school communities through the continuous improvement and sharing of innovative learning strategies and best practices.

ASAC has made an effort to strike a fair balance of responsibility for Program revitalization among ASAC, the existing Alternative schools, and the Board. The proposed actions will require a commitment of time and energy from all three, but it must be noted that there is not a single recommendation that requires new money. *Towards a Revitalization of the Alternative Program* represents the conclusion of the first research phase of the Alternative Revitalization Project. ASAC will review this report in September 2009, to evaluate the work accomplished by that time in implementing the recommendations. Next steps for the Revitalization Project will be considered in 2009-10.

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Introduction

The Alternative Schools Advisory Committee (ASAC) is tasked with advising the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB or the Board hereafter) about matters pertaining to the Alternative Program. The Alternative Schools Advisory Committee, representing the six Alternative Schools in the Board, believes that the Program does offer a valuable and distinct learning environment. At the same time, however, there is recognition that more experimentation and revitalization is possible. As a result, starting in 2006, ASAC engaged in a Revitalization Project that has sought feedback from parents, teachers and students, formulated options and worked with the six Alternative schools to produce a solid set of recommendations to the Board.

Alternative Education in Ottawa Public Schools: A History

In 1982, local parents banded together and convinced the former Ottawa Board of Education (OBE) to turn Lady Evelyn Public School into Ottawa's first Alternative School based on the philosophy of parental involvement, non-competition, anecdotal reporting, mixed grades and an integrated curriculum. During the first three years of this primary-grade pilot, Lady Evelyn's program was evaluated by independent researchers (Watkin and Bonyun, 1983-5) and positively reviewed. With this endorsement and in response to demand, the Program was allowed to expand over time to three additional locations (Churchill in 1984, Crichton in 1987 and Riverview in 1985) and into the junior grades by 1989. In 1991 the Program expanded into grades 7 and 8 with the establishment of Summit.

In 1998 the Ottawa Board of Education and the Carleton Board of Education amalgamated, forming the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board. After amalgamation it was decided that current Alternative Program boundaries would remain, effectively limiting the Alternative Program to the old OBE area. Then came the provincial government's take-over of funding, which implemented a cap on new school construction in the suburbs if there was any space unused elsewhere in the Board. The resulting school closure process, which included the closure of Crichton Alternative School, scared many of the more downtown schools into defensive mode and convinced many in the Alternative Program that it was in the cross-hairs of the administration. This feeling of threat was not helped by the September 1998 recommendation by the Director's Council of Superintendents that the Alternative designation be removed. This did not lead to a supportive environment for expanding or experimenting with the Program.

At the same time, many of the successes of the Alternative Program, such as parental involvement and integrated curriculum, were being picked up by non-Alternative schools and even pushed by both the Ministry of Education and the Board. At the other end of the spectrum, tighter provincial curriculum requirements and standardized report cards made it harder for the Alternative Program to deliver on mixed-grade classrooms and anecdotal reporting. Labour contracts also lead to difficult staffing models at two of the co-located schools. The Alternative Program has survived, and thrived in some schools, but there are stakeholders who feel that some of the innovation and experimentation has been lost.

Philosophy of the Alternative Program

These core elements have long been the pillars of the Program and are laid out both in the Alternative Program brochure as well as the Alternative Program Letter of Understanding.

? Cooperation and Teamwork

Cooperation and teamwork are emphasized instead of competition in all aspects of the school. The core belief is that children who are motivated from within, instead of by rewards, will become lifelong learners, eager to take on challenges.

? Innovative Approaches to Teaching and Learning

A commitment to innovative approaches to teaching and learning through a shared responsibility among staff, students, and parents.

? Child-centred Learning

A balance between student-directed and teacher-directed learning: the teacher acts as a facilitator/mentor/guide of the child's learning; enhances self-concept, enthusiasm for learning, and personal responsibility.

? Multi-aged Groupings (as distinct from multi-grade classrooms)

Multi-aged groupings: interaction among children of different ages and at different stages of development provides an environment wherein students learn from each other as well as from the teacher.

? Integrated Curriculum

Integrated curriculum: this provides a natural progression from whole to parts and stresses the interrelation of all learning and subjects.

? Parental Involvement

A family-centered school environment wherein parental involvement is a partnership between the home and school fostering self-respect, respect for the ideas and the opinions of others, and an appreciation for people's differences.

? Anecdotal Reporting and Self-Assessment

Assessment and evaluation is ongoing using multiple strategies which include student self-evaluations. The primary focus of this process is personal growth, as well as being used as a tool for program planning and assessment.

The commitment to "Innovative Approaches to Teaching and Learning" requires that the Program evaluate itself and seek out new ideas and new approaches.

The Alternative Revitalization Project

Starting in 2006, ASAC engaged in a Revitalization Project that has sought feedback from parents, teachers and students, formulated options and worked with the six Alternative schools to produce a solid set of recommendations to the Board. At the outset it was decided that the Revitalization Project would focus on developing achievable recommendations for strengthening the Program as defined by the Alternative philosophy. Revisiting the Program philosophy may be one of the outcomes of the Alternative Revitalization Project, however, altering or redefining the seven pillars has not been considered during the initial phases.

Goals

The initial goals of the Alternative Program Revitalization Project are to:

1. Work with parents, teachers and students at the Alternative schools to gain an understanding of the uniqueness, problems, goals and possible changes to the Program.
2. Work with school councils and school staff to evaluate the responses and create recommendations, based on the core philosophy of the Program.
3. Develop a set of recommendations for presentation to the OCDSB.
4. Provide a set of expectations and reporting structures for schools so that the Board can have confidence that the Program remains innovative, distinct and valuable.

Partners

The partners in this consultation process are the three cornerstones of the Program:

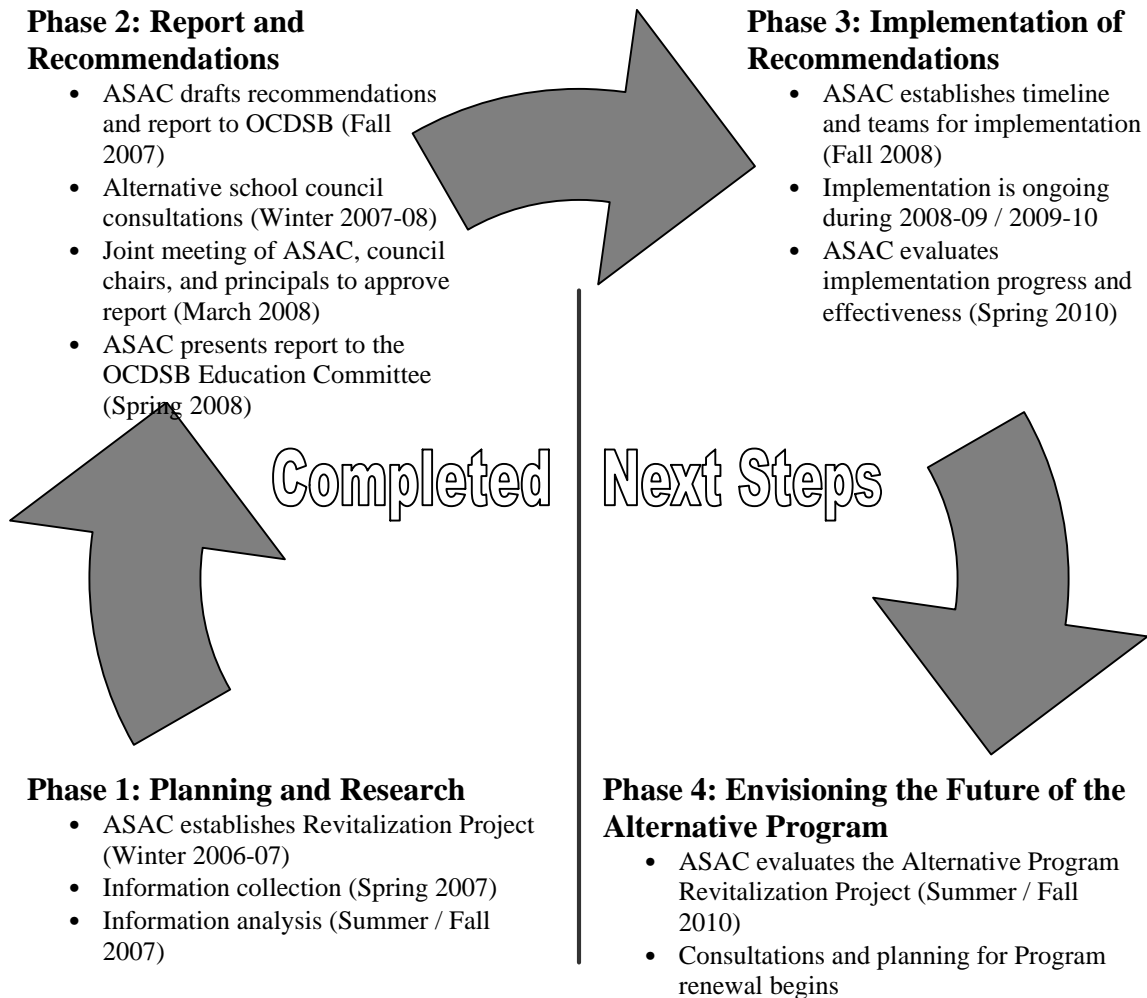
- ? Families. The Alternative Program has always emphasized parental involvement and leadership.
- ? Educators. The knowledge, ideas and experience of educators is vital to understanding what is possible.
- ? Students. The Alternative Program has always emphasized engaging children in their own learning process.

Process

1. ASAC consulted with school councils on the project goals, stakeholders and timelines. (Fall 2006)
2. Creation of survey for staff, parents and students. (Winter 2007)
3. Administration and collection of surveys. (Spring 2007)
4. Analysis of survey results and development of draft recommendations. (Fall 2007)
5. Alternative school councils were asked to provide feedback, proposals and ideas; some delegated this responsibility to their education committee. Principals and staff were invited to participate. Where appropriate, school councils engaged student councils for ideas and comments. (Fall 2007 – Winter 2008)
6. Refinement of revitalization recommendations and report based on feedback and meetings.

7. Special Meeting of Principals, School Council Co-chairs and ASAC to approve recommendations and final report to the Board. (Winter 2008)
8. The recommendations will be presented to the OCDSB's Education Committee. (Target: Spring 2008)

Process Diagram – Phases of the Alternative Revitalization Project



Stakeholder Survey

During the winter of 2007, ASAC, in consultation with the six school councils, developed a survey for parents, students and teachers (see references). The survey asked a series of anecdotal and option-based questions in four broad categories:

1. Current Situation
2. Challenges
3. The Future
4. Supports and Resources

The surveys were made available in paper format to all teachers, parents of guardians and junior students (primary level students were allowed to also take it, but it was not automatically provided to every student. As well, an on-line survey with the same questions was made available on the ASAC web site.

Although the anecdotal questions resulted in interesting and informative responses, and fits within the anecdotal assessment model favoured by the Alternative Program, it does not lend itself to statistical analysis as well as option-based questions did. This is not surprising when the goal of the analysis is data collection and not individual assessment.

Survey Analysis

Highlights of the survey findings are presented here. An expanded version of the analysis is presented in an appendix to this Report, complete with results tables and charts illustrating the responses to each question.

Current Situation

The first section of the survey asked parents, teachers and students for their perception of how different the Alternative Program was from other non-Alternative schools, in each of the following areas:

- Non-competitive, emphasizing cooperation and teamwork
- Innovative approaches to teaching and learning
- Child-directed learning
- Multi-grade classrooms and other multi-age groupings and activities
- Integrated curriculum
- Family-centred school environment with an emphasis on parental involvement
- Emphasis on self-assessment and anecdotal reporting
- Experiential learning with hands-on activities and curriculum-linked field trips

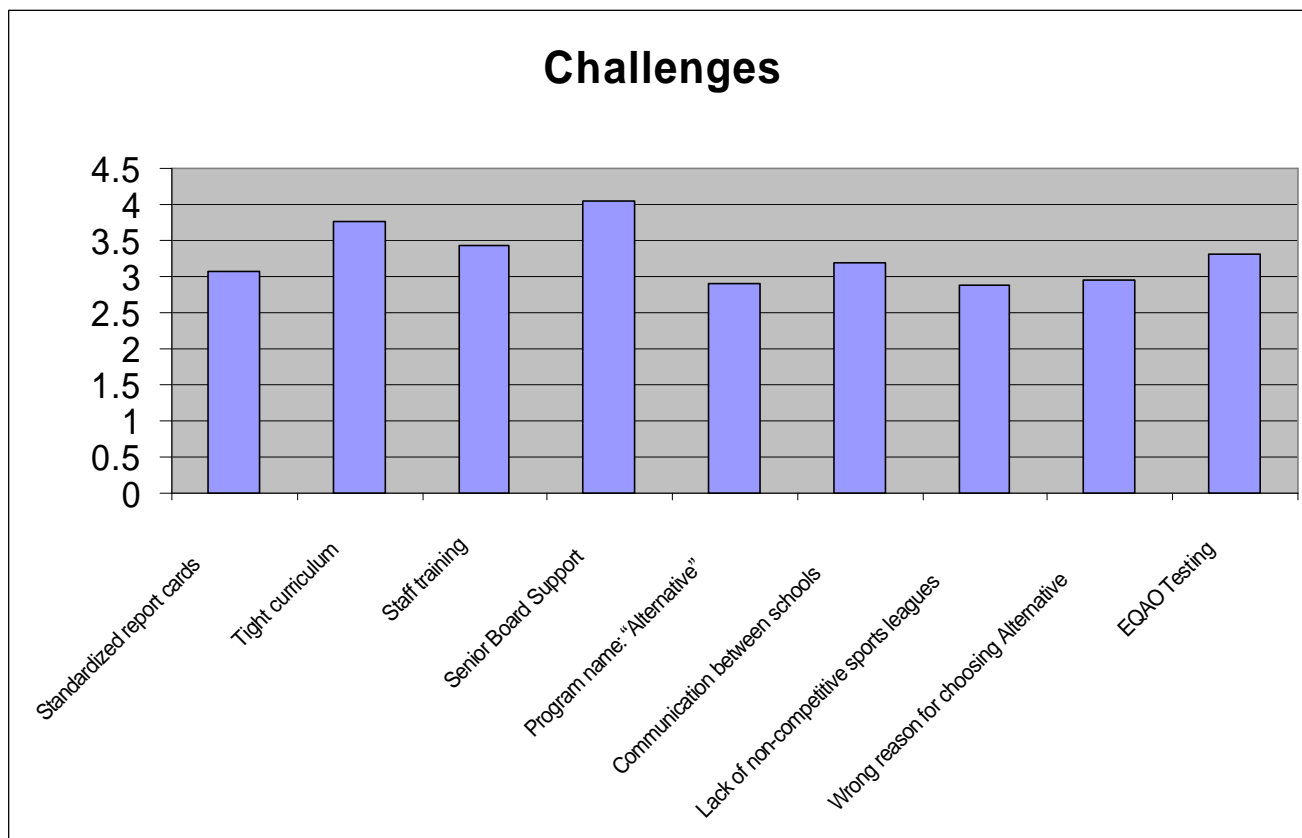
Highlights of the results include:

- The primary cited differences of the Alternative Program among adults are parental involvement and non-competition.
- Across all questions, 81% of adults viewed the Alternative Program as “somewhat different” or “very different”.
- Students had slightly different opinions, viewing self-assessment and innovative approaches above parental involvement and non-competition. These two areas also had the lowest variance for students.

- Students felt strongly that the Alternative Program was different, with significant weakness in their assessment of child-directed learning.

Challenges

The second section of the survey looked at the current challenges the Alternative Program faces and how much parents and teachers feel certain issues detract from the Program. (These questions were not asked to the students.)



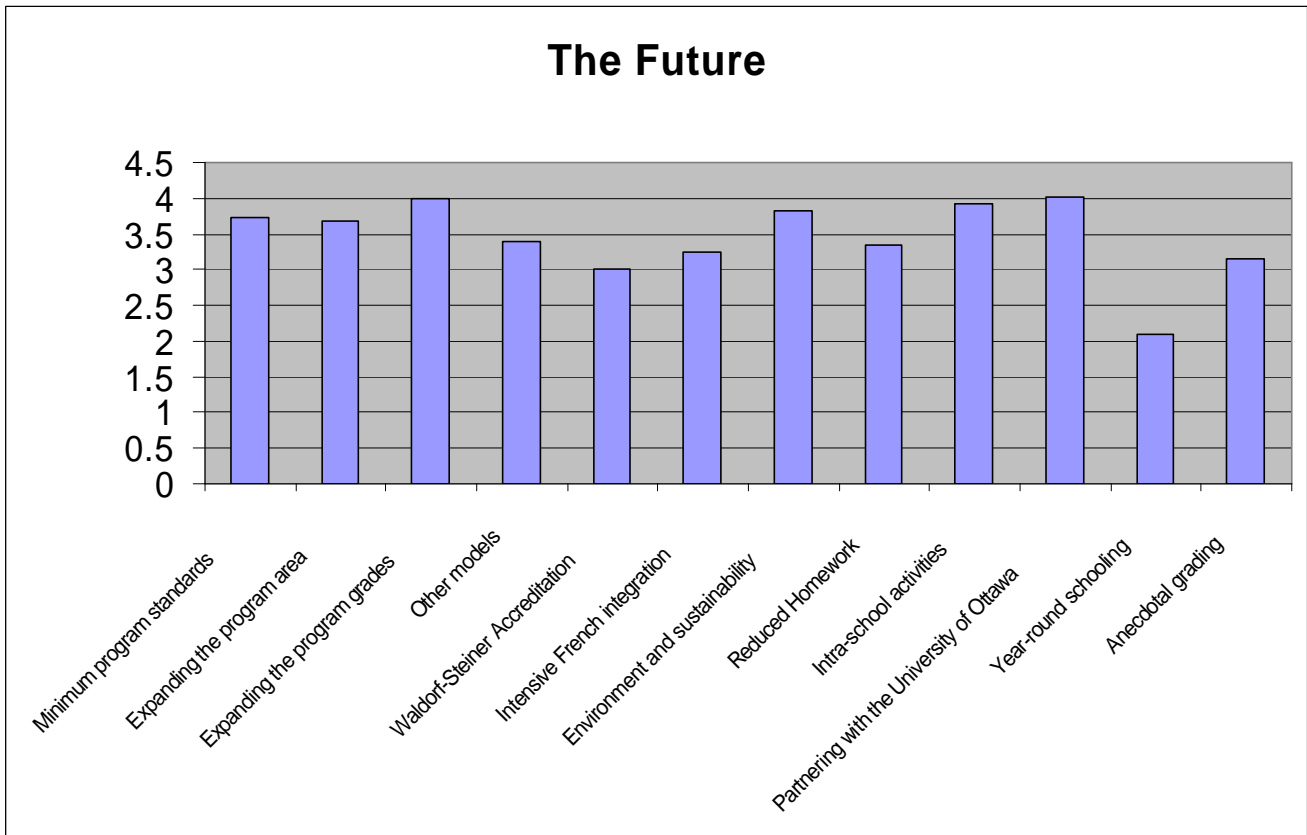
The survey results shown in the figure above demonstrate that the most significant impediments to the current Program were perceived to be a lack of senior Board support and the tight provincial curriculum.

The Future

The third section of the survey looked at where parents, teachers and students would like the Program to go. (The student version of the survey presented a simplified list with fewer options.) Respondents were asked to rank the extent to which they agree that these are good ideas. The figure below illustrates the results for the adult respondents.

Highlights of the results include:

- The strongest support among adults is for a partnership with the University of Ottawa to support innovative approaches, expanding into high school, doing more activities between the schools, and getting involved in environmental teaching.
- Students had similar interests (they were not asked about University partnership).
- The greatest variance in opinion was in anecdotal reporting and Intensive French integration.
- Year-Round schooling was of limited interest to both adults and students.



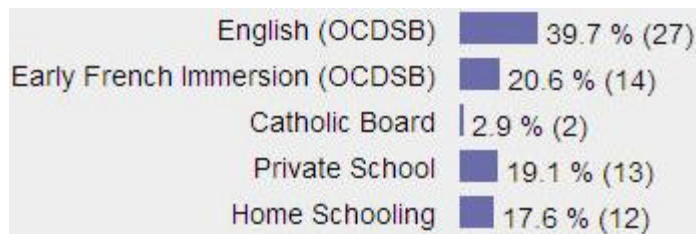
Supports and Resources

The final section of the survey asked parents, guardians and teachers what specific actions should be taken to strengthen the Program. (Students were not asked these questions.) Results from this section of the survey indicate that:

- Parents, guardians and teachers feel that we need more Alternative Professional Development support. This has broad support, with the highest average, lowest variance and 87% of respondents thinking it is a very good idea.
- Similarly there is broad support for seeking out some sort of accreditation system for Alternative teachers in the future.
- 89% of respondents support asking for a more flexible curriculum. 72% would like exemptions from the Provincial Report Card requirements.
- There is broad support for either a second Alternative middle school and/or an Alternative High School.
- High levels of support for many of the suggested actions indicate parental support for innovation and experimentation within the Program.

Additional Research

At one of the school council meetings discussing a draft version of this report, it was suggested that there was a need to ask an additional question that had not been part of the survey conducted in 2007. A short electronic survey was developed and posted on the ASAC Web site. Alternative school councils were asked to notify their communities through existing distribution lists and newsletters. A total of 68 individuals responded to the question: **If the Alternative Program did not exist, where would you have enrolled your child(ren)?** The poll results are as follows:



These findings back up the survey results indicating that parents do find the Alternative Program to be distinct. So much so that **nearly 40% of those responding to the poll would not have their child(ren) enrolled in a public school if the Alternative Program did not exist.**

General Conclusions

Survey respondents believe that the Alternative Program does offer an educational option that is distinct from the other programs offered by the Board. However, they also recognize that the Program is facing challenges and desire that the Program improve its ability to provide an educational experience based on the Alternative philosophy, with innovation and child-directed learning identified as particular areas of interest. The survey results directly support the set of recommendations presented in the following section of the report.

Recommendations

Members of ASAC reviewed the results of the survey and engaged in discussions about both the survey results and the possible recommendations that should be developed at this phase of the Alternative Revitalization Project. A set of recommendations and draft report was distributed to all Alternative school councils in November 2007 for review and discussion. Many useful suggestions and additions were integrated into the final report which was presented and approved at a joint meeting of the ASAC executive, Alternative school principals and school council chairs held in February 2008.

For Schools

In order to give the Board confidence that the program they are supporting is different and innovative, each school will provide the Board every year with:

1. An outline of concrete structures, programs and projects that provide innovation and support the Alternative Program philosophy as promised to parents and students in Board literature.
2. A plan for the upcoming year on new projects or plans to improve and strengthen their Alternative Program
3. Commitment to one joint Professional Development activity per year devoted to Alternative practices and concepts.

For the School Board

ASAC recommends that the Board consider the following actions and implement them within the suggested timeframes detailed below in order to support and strengthen the Alternative Program:

4. Require Alternative schools to indicate in their School Improvement Plans what steps they will take in the coming year to strengthen their Alternative Program and offer innovative programming based on the Alternative philosophy.
5. Designate a staff resource to work with the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa to promote and develop research and programming opportunities related to Alternative Education, including accreditation possibilities.
6. Develop, in consultation with ASAC and Alternative teachers and principals, guidelines for flexible curriculum delivery in order to accommodate multi-age classrooms.
7. Permit Alternative schools to provide anecdotal report cards to their parents. In addition, to work with ASAC to develop Alternative methods of reporting.
8. Consider the Alternative Program schools as preferred sites for piloting new programs and projects which are compatible with the Program philosophy.

For ASAC

ASAC will undertake the following in order to provide ongoing support to the Alternative Program and advice to the Board concerning the Program:

9. Work with Alternative schools to bring them together as a community in order to share best practices and innovative ideas.
10. Act as a resource for principals and school councils in the support and enhancement of their Alternative programs.

11. Develop a common Principal Profile that will support each school's Principal Profile and will guide the Board in the placement of new principals into Alternative Schools.
12. Evaluate possible program alignments in order to advise the Board on where new Alternative schools could be added or removed (when they are no longer sufficiently supported by their communities).
13. Review proposals for innovative pilot programs and special projects (including those referred by schools or the Board) for potential value and compatibility with the Program philosophy, advise schools and the Board on the suitability of reviewed programs, and facilitate evaluation and information sharing after piloting.

Rationale

As stated earlier in this report, the Alternative Revitalization Project is not intended to alter or redefine the core philosophical pillars of the Alternative Program: cooperation and teamwork (non-competition), innovative approaches to teaching and learning, child-centred learning, multi-age classrooms, integrated learning, parental involvement, and self-assessment and anecdotal reporting. The recommendations seek to strengthen the Program by establishing supports and mechanisms which will help insure that these goals are pursued to their full potential.

The survey results provide clear indications as to which program areas respondents feel are most in need of improvement. There is also strong support for a number of possible program directions and supports that were listed. The results of the survey directly contributed to the formulation of this set of recommendations (these links are indicated in the brief explanations of each recommendation below).

ASAC discussions related to the Revitalization Project, the survey and its results, and possible directions for the report recommendations led to the emergence of a consensus among participating members that the recommendations should:

- build on the Alternative Program's acknowledged distinctiveness and strengths
- enhance the Program's ability to provide value through the sharing of innovative learning strategies and best practices
- seek to balance responsibility for Program revitalization among ASAC, the existing Alternative schools, and the Board
- strengthen commitment and accountability at all levels
- be concrete and achievable within a short timeframe

Recommendation Details and Targets

The recommendations are discussed in turn in this final section of the report, showing how each one relates to the objectives described above, is supported by the survey results, and complements the other recommendations.

?? All Alternative schools will provide an outline of concrete structures, programs and projects that provide innovation and support the Alternative Program philosophy as promised to parents and students in Board literature.

This recommendation builds on and strengthens practices already in place (often in the form of school brochures, primers, and handbooks) by requiring all Alternative schools to provide a specific document on the Alternative Program as it is realized in their school. The availability of this document will:

- demonstrate the school's commitment to the Alternative Program goals
- contribute to the sharing of information and best practices among the Alternative schools
- improve the level of understanding about the Program among the school's parents
- enhance accountability to parents and the Board
- serve as an outreach and recruiting tool

This is a soft approach to addressing the high approval among adult survey respondents for minimum standards for the Program locations. **Schools are asked to prepare a document that will be ready for the 2008-09 school year, and to review it annually.**

?? A plan for the upcoming year on new projects or plans to improve and strengthen their Alternative Program.

Several years ago ASAC introduced the Alternative School Improvement Plan as a tool to assist schools and school councils in enhancing their Alternative Program. Designed to dovetail with the Board's mandatory School Improvement Plan, it was intended to insure that there was also a focus on the Alternative Program elements in this process, as well as to foster dialogue within the school community on Alternative Program directions. Use of this tool is uneven across the six Alternative schools. Having each school produce an annual plan, and submit it to the Board and ASAC, will:

- ? demonstrate the school's commitment to fostering innovation and continuous improvement in the Alternative Program
- ? provide ASAC with information for tracking program innovation, reporting to the Alternative schools, and reporting to the Board
- ? foster dialogue within the school community (staff, students and parents) on program directions
- ? enhance accountability to parents and the Board

This recommendation is directly linked to recommendation number 4, which requests that the Board formalize this process. Like number 1 above, it addresses some concerns raised in the survey about the degree to which all of the Program goals are being met in all schools (innovative approaches and integrated curriculum ranked low among perceived differences),

without setting minimum standards. **Schools are asked to produce an Alternative School Improvement Plan as part of the School Improvement Plan due to the Board in 2008.**

?? *Commitment to one joint Professional Development activity per year devoted to Alternative practices and concepts.*

With the restoration of some professional activity days in 2006-07 it is now possible for the Alternative schools to dedicate some of this time to specifically program-related PD. ASAC envisions the Alternative principals taking on the lead responsibility for planning the PD, in consultation with their staff and schools councils as they find appropriate. The guideline of one activity per year may be applied flexibly and the PD need not necessarily involve all staff on one day. Ideally, all teaching and support staff should have one program-related PD opportunity each year. Alternative PD will:

- ? demonstrate the school's commitment to fostering innovation and continuous improvement in the Alternative Program
- ? provide teaching staff with the opportunity to learn new skills and strategies appropriate for Alternative classrooms
- ? give staff time to share Alternative approaches, benefit from the experience of other Alternative teachers, and strengthen relationships with their peers
- ? foster team teaching at the school level and inter-school dialogue at the program level
- ? encourage the development and application of innovative learning strategies and best practices which can be shared with other schools in the Board

The survey results for parents, guardians and teachers showed very strong support for Alternative PD. It received the highest average, lowest variance, and 87% of respondents thought it is a very good idea, making it the highest ranked of the possible program resources/supports listed. **Schools are asked to begin planning Alternative PD opportunities as soon as possible, and to share information about their plans with ASAC.**

?? *Require Alternative schools to indicate in their School Improvement Plans what steps they will take in the coming year to strengthen their Alternative program and offer innovative programming based on the Alternative philosophy.*

This recommendation for the Board is directly linked to recommendation number 2 above. The benefits are essentially the same. This step will formalize and strengthen the process of school improvement planning for the Alternative schools. Although schools have been asked to produce an Alternative School Improvement Plan as part of the School Improvement Plan due to the Board in 2008, **ASAC requests that the Board work towards make this is a formal requirement for the School Improvement Plan due in 2009.**

?? *Designate a staff resource to work with the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa to promote and develop research and programming opportunities related to Alternative Education, including accreditation possibilities.*

Informal relationships currently exist between the University of Ottawa's Faculty of Education and the staff of the Board's Alternative schools. Several school staff members have been asked to speak on matters related to alternative education (at least one teacher has been seconded to the Faculty to teach a course) and there is a high interest among Faculty students in securing a placement at an Alternative school or visiting the schools to learn more about the Program.

Having the Board designate a staff resource to assist with liaison between the Faculty and the Alternative Program will:

- ? demonstrate the Board's commitment to the Alternative Program and its support for strengthening ties with the Faculty
- ? add a significant degree of continuity to the relationship between the Faculty and the Program/Board
- ? increase partnership opportunities for educational research
- ? encourage work towards improving post-secondary curriculum components on alternative education, and potentially accreditation
- ? position the Alternative Program as a potential venue for innovative pilot programs and/or graduate research

In the survey results, support for alternative accreditation was second only to the desire for alternative PD among adult respondents. ASAC believes that a designated Board staff resource will improve the likelihood of this becoming a reality as well as providing the other benefits described above. ASAC is also interested in developing a relationship with the Faculty and would like to engage in discussions with the Board on this subject. **The Board is asked to designate the staff resource person by September 2009.**

?? Develop, in consultation with ASAC and Alternative teachers and principals, guidelines for flexible curriculum delivery in order to accommodate multi-age classrooms.

Split-grade classrooms have been in the news recently, in part due to the need for school boards to meet the class size caps established by the Ministry of Education. The multi-aged groupings favoured within the Alternative Program are distinct from split-grades, and therefore the Board's fact sheet on split grades does not adequately address the situation of Alternative schools which choose to create multi-age classrooms as their preferred option. Currently, administrators and teaching staff do not have guidelines for delivering the provincial curriculum in a flexible manner appropriate for the Alternative Program. Developing guidelines will:

- ? provide a general interpretation of appropriate curriculum delivery within Alternative schools/multi-age classrooms and examples of successful strategies
- ? reduce uneasiness and uncertainty among administrators and teaching staff, and give them the confidence to pursue innovative approaches to curriculum delivery
- ? enhance the exploration of options for integrated curriculum
- ? allow the Program to transparently investigate new methods for tracking and assessing curriculum delivery in a multi-age environment
- ? provide a resource for parents who have questions regarding curriculum delivery within Alternative multi-age classrooms
- ? encourage the sharing of best practices developed through years of teaching in multi-age classrooms (potential to benefit the teachers of split grades throughout the Board)

The survey results indicate that the tight provincial curriculum is a very significant challenge for the Alternative Program (ranked second only to a perceived lack of support from the Board and senior staff). More flexibility in delivering the curriculum was the third-ranked desirable program support (following alternative PD and accreditation) among adult respondents. It is also worth noting that 'integrated curriculum' (a Program core pillar) was the lowest-ranked

perceived difference between the Alternative schools and other schools; a more flexible approach to curriculum delivery will provide more opportunities for improving this aspect of the Program. **The target date for developing the guidelines is June 2009.**

?? Permit Alternative schools to provide anecdotal report cards to their parents. In addition, to work with ASAC to develop Alternative methods of reporting.

Student self-assessment and anecdotal reporting are central to the Alternative Program, but in recent years this goal has been eroded by the regimented demands of the provincial reporting requirements. At a minimum, **ASAC recommends that the Board immediately and explicitly authorize the practice (currently in place at some Alternative K-6 locations) of sending home provincial report cards which do not include letter/number grades.** (The report on file would include grades, and parents may request to have access to their child's grades.) Secondly, ASAC requests that the Board agree to consider future proposals for improving student assessment in the Alternative Program. This recommendation will:

- ? decrease comparing of grades among students, supporting a non-competitive learning environment
- ? support child-directed learning and improved dialogue between parents and teachers
- ? encourage innovative approaches to assessment and evaluation, which may include new methods for tracking curriculum delivery (link to recommendation number 6)

Anecdotal reporting is a somewhat controversial issue within the Alternative schools, and this is reflected in the high standard deviation on survey questions related to reporting, both for the adult and student surveys. ASAC acknowledges that future changes to reporting must be explored carefully, with an appreciation for differing views. Permitting grade-free report cards is a first step that can be taken immediately and will be acceptable to almost everyone in the community.

?? Consider the Alternative Program schools as preferred sites for piloting new programs and projects which are compatible with the Program philosophy.

'Innovation' has been clearly identified as an area where the Alternative Program has lost ground over the years, for many reasons discussed earlier. 'Innovative approaches to teaching and learning' was ranked second lowest (above only 'Integrated curriculum' which it is closely related to) by adult survey respondents asked to assess the Program's distinctiveness. There is a growing appetite within the Program to embrace innovation and experimentation. Piloting new programs and projects is one of the ways in which this can occur. This recommendation will:

- ? support improvements in delivering a more flexible and integrated curriculum
- ? increase interest in innovative programming within the Alternative schools, and develop staff expertise in testing, assessing and reporting on pilot projects
- ? provide the Board with a resource for testing the potential effectiveness of new educational methods

This recommendation is linked to number 13 below, which asks ASAC to take an active role in reviewing potential pilot projects and facilitating information sharing. **ASAC requests that the Board take this recommendation under advisement immediately.**

?? Work with Alternative schools to bring them together as a community in order to share best practices and innovative ideas.

It has been observed that Ottawa's Alternative schools became 'islands' after the amalgamation and subsequent school closures process. ASAC existed as a high-level forum for information sharing, but there was little feeling among staff, students or parents of belonging to a broader 'Alternative community' outside of their school. In recent years, there has been increased communication among the Alternative principals and there is an interest in bringing the different schools together for events. Two years ago, ASAC organized an all-Alternative schools 'Global Village'—an evening event for families and staff. Attendance exceeded the organizers' expectations and feedback from the participants was extremely positive. (Plans for an event last year were put off track by funding issues.) **ASAC commits to examining options for fostering greater inter-school communication and event/activity planning.**

Inter-school activities for students:

- ? contribute to the sharing of information and best practices among Alternative staff
- ? provide opportunities to observe and explore other Alternative schools' interpretations of the Program philosophy (for example, through non-competitive sporting events)

All-Alternative school community events:

- ? improve the level of understanding about the Program among parents
- ? encourage parents to volunteer and taking a more active role in their school
- ? serve as an outreach and recruiting tool for school councils
- ? provide an opportunity for school council members from different schools to share information and best practices

Alternative schools are perceived to be very family centred. The adult survey results ranked this as the most distinctive feature of the Alternative Program. Student respondents placed 'family centred' in a virtual tie with 'non-competitive' as the feature that most makes the Alternative Program different from other schools. All-Alternative community events build on this sense of community, extending it to the broader group and strengthening the Program as a whole. 'More activities for all the Alternative schools to come together' was the highest-ranked response among students asked about future program directions. Adult respondents were also very favourable on this point, which had the highest percentage of moderate support or higher.

???Act as a resource for principals and school councils in the support and enhancement of their Alternative programs.

The heart of the Board's Alternative Program does not exist in a book or in one of its leading proponents. It is dispersed among those teachers, principals, students, council members, families and volunteers who understand and embody the Program's philosophy and goals. This is why Alternative schools can be vulnerable during transitions, such as when a principal or key staff member retires, or a leading group of families move on when their children graduate. ASAC members tend to be drawn from a pool of individuals who are knowledgeable about and committed to the Program philosophy. ASAC proposes to make its members available as a resource for principals and school councils in the support and enhancement of their Alternative programs. This may include, for example, meeting with incoming school council members, being present at school events related to the Program, or providing advice and assistance with preparing Alternative Program Improvement Plans. This will:

- ? contribute to the sharing of information and best practices among the Alternative schools
- ? help to build community between schools as well as within them
- ? improve the level of understanding about the Program philosophy and goals among the schools' parent communities
- ? strengthen the role and presence of ASAC within each Alternative school community
- ? provide support to schools during transitions, helping to strengthen the school's commitment to the Program philosophy

This recommendation is also broadly supportive of the Alternative Program philosophy and the goals of the Revitalization Project. **ASAC is prepared to take on this role immediately.**

???Develop a common Principal Profile that will support each school's Principal Profile and guide the Board in the placement of new principals into Alternative Schools.

This recommendation builds on the Board practice of requiring a principal profile for each of its schools, recognizing that Alternative schools are distinct learning environments. Transition to a new principal, especially one without direct experience of the Alternative Program, can be a difficult period for school communities. It can also be a challenge for a new principal to understand the different philosophical aspects, working relationships, and practices of their new school, relative to his or her previous experience. ASAC proposes to review the existing principal profiles for each of the Alternative schools and draft a new common Principal Profile for the Alternative Program aligned with the Program philosophy. Current principals will be invited to participate in this process and all school councils will have the opportunity to review and comment on the profile. This document is intended as a resource and would not replace the existing profiles developed for the individual schools. This exercise would:

- ? demonstrate commitment to the Alternative Program philosophy
- ? foster dialogue among schools (through ASAC) on the essential qualities of Alternative school principals
- ? provide a resource for the Board to use in the recruitment of new principals for the Alternative Program
- ? provide a resource for schools and councils for reviewing and revising their principal profile
- ? improve understanding of the Program's philosophy and practices among principals, particularly those new to the program
- ? facilitate smooth transitions when a new principal is assigned to an Alternative school

This recommendation is broadly supportive of the Alternative Program philosophy and the goals of the Revitalization Project. **ASAC is prepared to take in this project in 2008-09, with a target date for completion in June 2009.**

???Evaluate possible program alignments in order to advise the Board on where new Alternative schools could be added or removed (when they are no longer supported by their communities).

There have not been any new Alternative Program locations established since the creation of the Summit Intermediate Alternative Program in 1991 (re-locations not included), despite the fact that the population distribution within Ottawa, and within the Alternative school 'catchment' boundaries, has changed significantly. Some Alternative locations are attracting families to

their neighbourhoods and drawing students from the outlying suburbs where no Alternative school exists, while other locations are struggling to sustain the Program's philosophy. ASAC believes that a strengthened and renewed Alternative Program has the potential to attract students to the Board, including those from families considering private-school options or home schooling. As part of its advisory role, ASAC proposes to work with Board staff to examine program alignment options. This will:

- ? demonstrate the commitment of ASAC and the Board to a vibrant Alternative option that complements the Board's other program offerings
- ? provide an opportunity to examine the factors that promote the success of an Alternative school and use this knowledge to inform the selection of potential new Program locations
- ? enhance Board and school accountability to parents

The survey results showed strong support among parents for investigating new program locations or expanding into the secondary grades, despite the fact that new locations would not be in the personal interest of many adult respondents. Interestingly, students were also highly supportive of expanding the program area ('make another grade 7-8 school so it will be easier for more students to go to an Alternative school' was second only to students' wish for more inter-school activities)—even more so than expanding the program grades. It may be speculated that this is seen as a matter of fairness, and students would like to see the Program they enjoy available to all students in Ottawa. **ASAC is prepared to take on this role beginning in September 2008.**

Review proposals for innovative pilot programs and special projects (including those referred by schools or the Board) for potential value and compatibility with the Program philosophy, advise schools and the Board on the suitability of reviewed programs, and facilitate evaluation and information sharing after piloting.

This recommendation is linked to number 8 above, which requests that the Board consider Alternative schools as preferred sites for pilot projects. In addition to the benefits cited in the details for recommendation number 8, ASAC's role will:

- ? ensure discussion of the fit between the Program philosophy and proposed projects
- ? enhance information sharing about potential and ongoing innovative pilot projects among the Alternative schools staffs and school councils
- ? promote innovation within the Alternative Program

ASAC is prepared to take on this role immediately.

Anticipated Outcomes

The table below provides a summary of the anticipated outcomes and benefits of implementing the report recommendations.

Direct Outcomes	Summary of Anticipated Benefits
All Alternative schools provide an outline of their concrete structures, programs and projects that demonstrate the Alternative Program philosophy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents have a better understanding about the Alternative Program, how it is delivered at their child's school, and their role in their child's education • Improved school accountability to parents and the Board • School communications materials are regularly reviewed and up-to-date
All Alternative schools include, as part of their School Improvement Plan, a plan outlining strategies and projects to improve and strengthen their delivery of the Alternative Program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration of continuous improvement of the Alternative Program into existing planning processes • Improved engagement of Alternative school councils and parents in the school improvement process • Better delivery of the Alternative Program to benefit students
Each school year, all Alternative Program staff members have the opportunity to participate in at least one Professional Development activity devoted to Alternative practices and concepts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased opportunities for inter-school staff development and sharing of best practices • Development of innovative curriculum delivery strategies • Advancement of alternative methods of assessment and evaluation
An OCDSB staff resource works with the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa to develop opportunities for working together on research and development related to Alternative Education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for new research projects related to Alternative Education • Encouragement of graduate research topics involving the Alternative Program • Possible engagement of the OCDSB in developing accreditation for alternative education
The OCDSB has guidelines for curriculum delivery in Alternative multi-age classrooms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased confidence among teaching staff in delivering the provincial curriculum in Alternative multi-age classes • Increased confidence among parents that the Alternative Program both adheres to its philosophy and ensures exposure to all of the provincial curriculum strands • A new "best practice" model for all schools regularly facing multi-grade challenges
Alternative schools are permitted to send home provincial report cards that do not display grades. Schools explore options and develop innovative assessment and evaluation practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New opportunities for education about and reinforcement of Alternative principles • Reduced competition among students • Improved tools and practices for monitoring effective curriculum delivery in Alternative multi-age classes • Increased sharing of best practices for student self-assessment

Direct Outcomes	Summary of Anticipated Benefits
Alternative schools are the preferred sites for piloting new programs and projects that are compatible with the Program philosophy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renewed spirit of innovation within the Alternative Program • Alternative schools develop expertise in pilot program testing and evaluation, providing a resource for the Board
Alternative school staff members, school councils, students and families come together to celebrate successes, share information, and exchange ideas on best practices and innovation in Alternative Education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased sense of community within the Alternative Program as a whole • More opportunities for sharing experiences and best practices among school councils and parent volunteers • New opportunities to showcase Alternative Program highlights and student achievements
ASAC's mandate includes evaluation of possible program alignments in order to advise the board on where Alternative Program sites may be added or removed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved awareness of and commitment to Program philosophy to retain designation • Potential to improve equity of access to the Alternative Program
A common Principal Profile for Alternative Schools reflects the common elements of each school's Principal Profile, serving as a resource guiding the OCDSB in the placement of new principals into Alternative Schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased understanding of the Alternative Program milieu among candidates for principal positions • A new resource for school councils reviewing their school's principal profile • The OCDSB has a new resource to guide the selection of appropriate candidates for principal at Alternative Program sites
ASAC is active and present in the individual school communities, serving as a resource for principals and school councils in the support and enhancement of Alternative Program delivery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased opportunities for education about and reinforcement of Alternative philosophy • Increased opportunities for sharing of best practices among school councils • Strengthened understanding of the role of ASAC in the Alternative community • Improved understanding of the Alternative Program philosophy among parents

Conclusion

All of the above recommendations propose concrete, achievable actions that can either be implemented immediately or carried out within a relatively short timeframe. All of the recommendations build on the Alternative Program's acknowledged distinctiveness and strengths, and ultimately seek to enhance the Program's ability to provide value to the Board and our school communities through the continuous improvement and sharing of innovative learning strategies and best practices.

ASAC has made an effort to strike a fair balance of responsibility for Program revitalization among ASAC, the existing Alternative schools, and the Board. The proposed actions will require a commitment of time and energy from all three, but it must be noted that there is not a single recommendation that requires new money. ASAC acknowledges and understands the Board's difficult financial circumstances and does not believe that requests for new funding would be appropriate or effective; neither is it the kind of support that the Program is most in need of. There is a general requirement, however, to strengthen commitment and accountability at all levels—the proposed set of recommendations tackles this issue in a very straightforward manner.

Towards a Revitalization of the Alternative Program represents the conclusion of the first research phase of the Alternative Revitalization Project, but the project itself is only just beginning. The current recommendations represent only the first tangible steps. ASAC will review this report in September 2009, to evaluate the work accomplished by that time in implementing the recommendations. Next steps for the Revitalization Project will be considered in 2009-10.

References

OCDSB Alternative Program Brochure:

http://www.ocdsb.ca/general_info/Fact_Sheets/Alternative%20Elementary%20Programs.pdf

Alternative Program Letter of Understanding

A New Vision: 1998: [http://www.asac-](http://www.asac-ottawa.org/index.php?module=pagemaster&PAGE_user_op=view_page&PAGE_id=3)

[ottawa.org/index.php?module=pagemaster&PAGE_user_op=view_page&PAGE_id=3](http://www.asac-ottawa.org/index.php?module=pagemaster&PAGE_user_op=view_page&PAGE_id=3)

Revitalization Survey: [http://www.asac-](http://www.asac-ottawa.org/index.php?module=documents&JAS_DocumentManager_op=viewDocument&JAS_Document_id=7)

[ottawa.org/index.php?module=documents&JAS_DocumentManager_op=viewDocument&JAS_Document_id=7](http://www.asac-ottawa.org/index.php?module=documents&JAS_DocumentManager_op=viewDocument&JAS_Document_id=7)

Appendix: Expanded Survey Analysis

Current Situation

The first section of the survey asked parents, teachers and students for their perception of how different the Alternative program was from other non-Alternative Schools.

Adult Results:

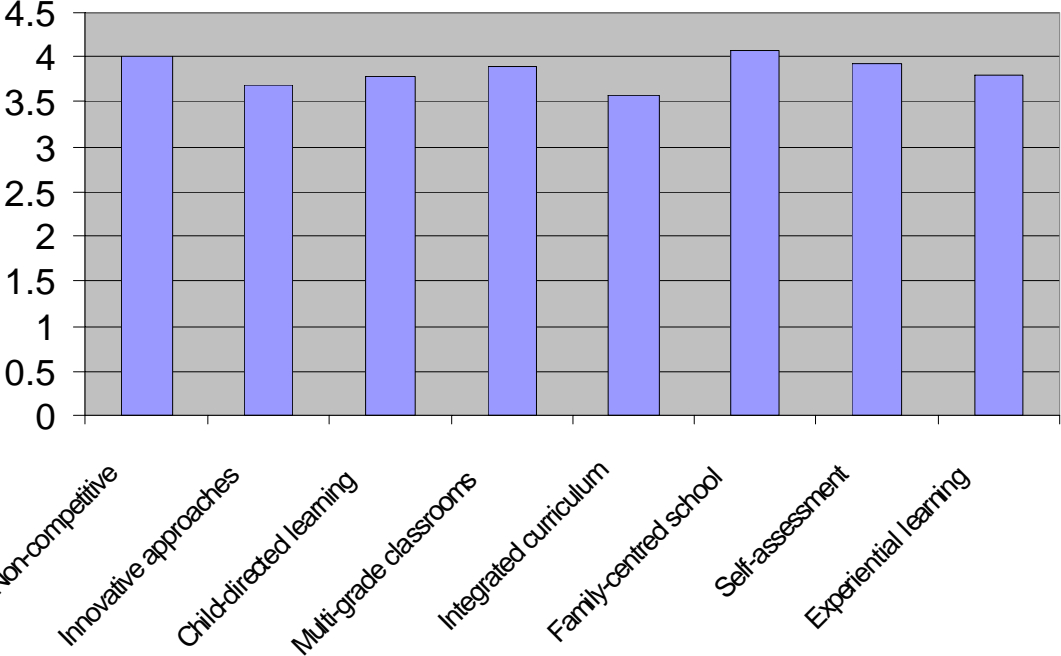
	Non-competitive	Innovative approaches	Child-directed learning	Multi-grade classrooms	Integrated curriculum	Family-centred school	Self-assessment	Experiential learning
Average	4	3.681416	3.767857	3.893805	3.571429	4.087719	3.929204	3.787611
Count	114	113	112	113	112	114	113	113
Median	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Mode	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	4
STDEV	0.959351	1.095979	1.106754	1.227387	1.054499	1.186662	1.066677	1.137442
Variance	0.920354	1.201169	1.224903	1.506479	1.111969	1.408166	1.1378	1.293774
Somewhat different or higher	93.00%	81.30%	85.60%	87.50%	85.60%	86.80%	90.20%	85.80%
Quite or Very Different	76.20%	67.00%	66.70%	75.90%	58.60%	78.80%	69.70%	67.00%

Full Questions:

Rank how different the Alternative Program at your school is from other OCDSB programs and non-Alternative schools in each of the following areas. (1=no difference, 2=a little different, 3=somewhat different, 4=quite different, and 5=very different)

1. Non-competitive, emphasizing cooperation and teamwork
2. Innovative approaches to teaching and learning
3. Child-directed learning
4. Multi-grade classrooms and other multi-age groupings and activities
5. Integrated curriculum
6. Family-centred school environment with an emphasis on parental involvement
7. Emphasis on self-assessment and anecdotal reporting
8. Experiential learning with hands-on activities and curriculum-linked field trips

Perceived Differences



Student Results:

(Note: to simplify the questions, the student survey offered three options for every question and not five.)

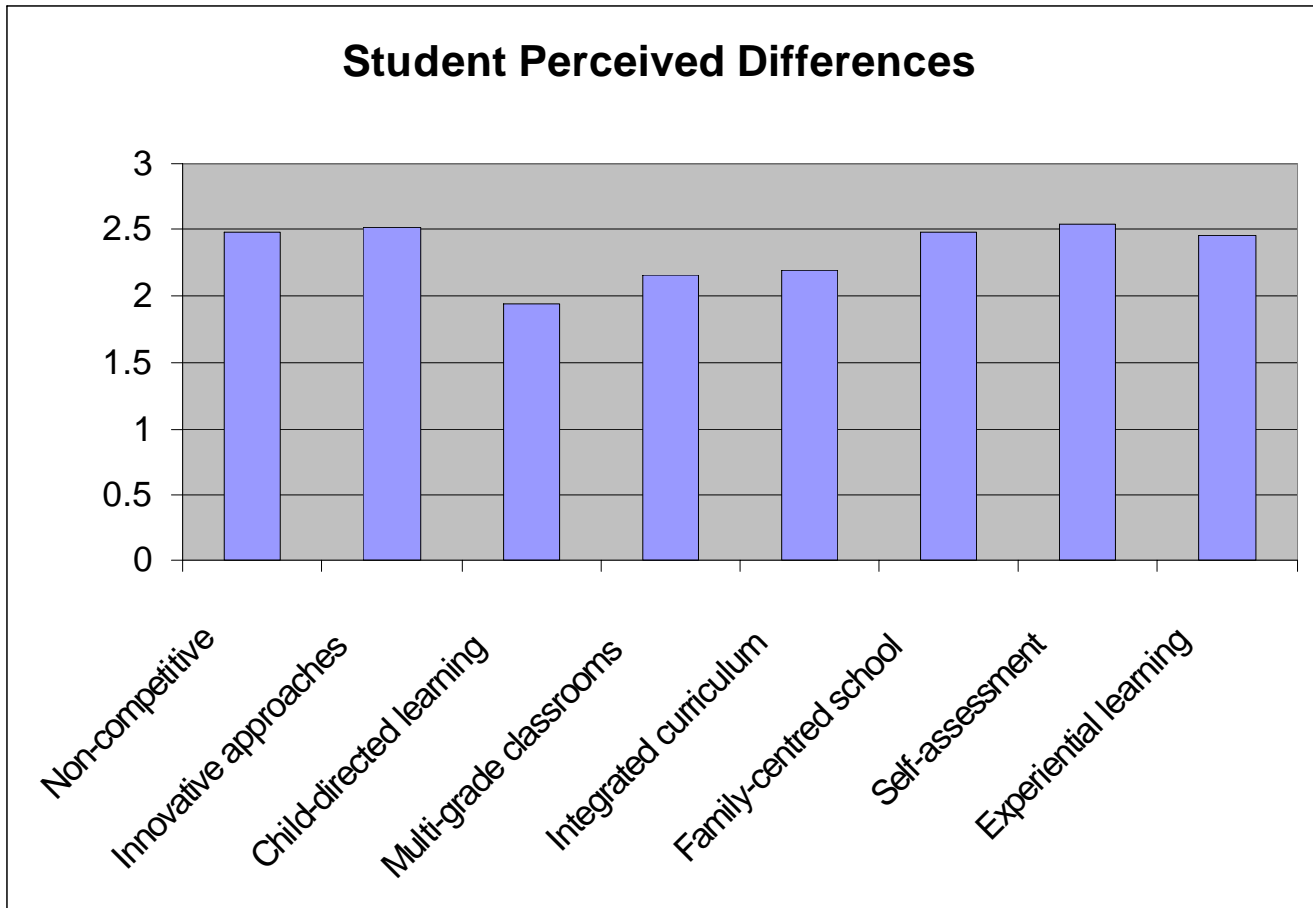
	Non-competitive	Innovative approaches	Child-directed learning	Multi-grade classrooms	Integrated curriculum	Family-centred school	Self-assessment	Experiential learning
Average	2.492063	2.519841	1.951807	2.154762	2.191837	2.492	2.548	2.464286
Count	252	252	249	252	245	250	250	252
Median	3	3	2	2	2	3	3	3
Mode	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	3
STDEV	0.615161	0.595136	0.699717	0.78574	0.69537	0.647777	0.580555	0.633332
Variance	0.378423	0.354186	0.489604	0.617388	0.48354	0.419614	0.337044	0.40111
Somewhat or a lot	93.70%	94.90%	73.00%	75.70%	83.70%	91.60%	95.60%	92.50%

Full Questions:

Tell us how ‘alternative’ your school is compared to other schools that you know about. The statements below describe the goals of the Alternative Program. Do these things happen in your school?

1=not really, 2=sometimes, 3=a lot/all the time

1. We cooperate and work in teams, don’t have contests where only some people win, and everyone can participate in sports
2. We get to try out cool and different ways to learn about things
3. We get to make some choices about what we learn about and how we learn
4. Kids help each other learn in multi-grade classrooms and other multi-age groups
5. We can learn about the one theme in different classes, like history, language, and art
6. We have lots of family events and some parents spend a lot of time helping out at the school
7. It’s important for us to think about how we’re doing and set goals, the teachers tell our parents how we’re doing, and we get chances to show our work
8. We get to do hands-on activities to ‘learn by doing’ and go on field trips related to our schoolwork



These results show that:

1. The primary cited differences of the Alternative Program among adults are parental involvement and non-competition.
2. The lowest variance is in non-competition, integrated curriculum and self-assessment.
3. Across all questions, 81% of adults viewed the Alternative program as “somewhat different” or “very different”.
4. Students had slightly different opinions, viewing self-assessment and innovative approaches above parental involvement and non-competition. These two areas also had the lowest variance for students.
5. Students felt strongly that the Alternative Program was different, with significant weakness in their assessment of child-directed learning and multi-grade classrooms.

Challenges

The second section of the survey looked at the current challenges the Alternative Program faces and how much parents and teachers feel certain issues detract from the program

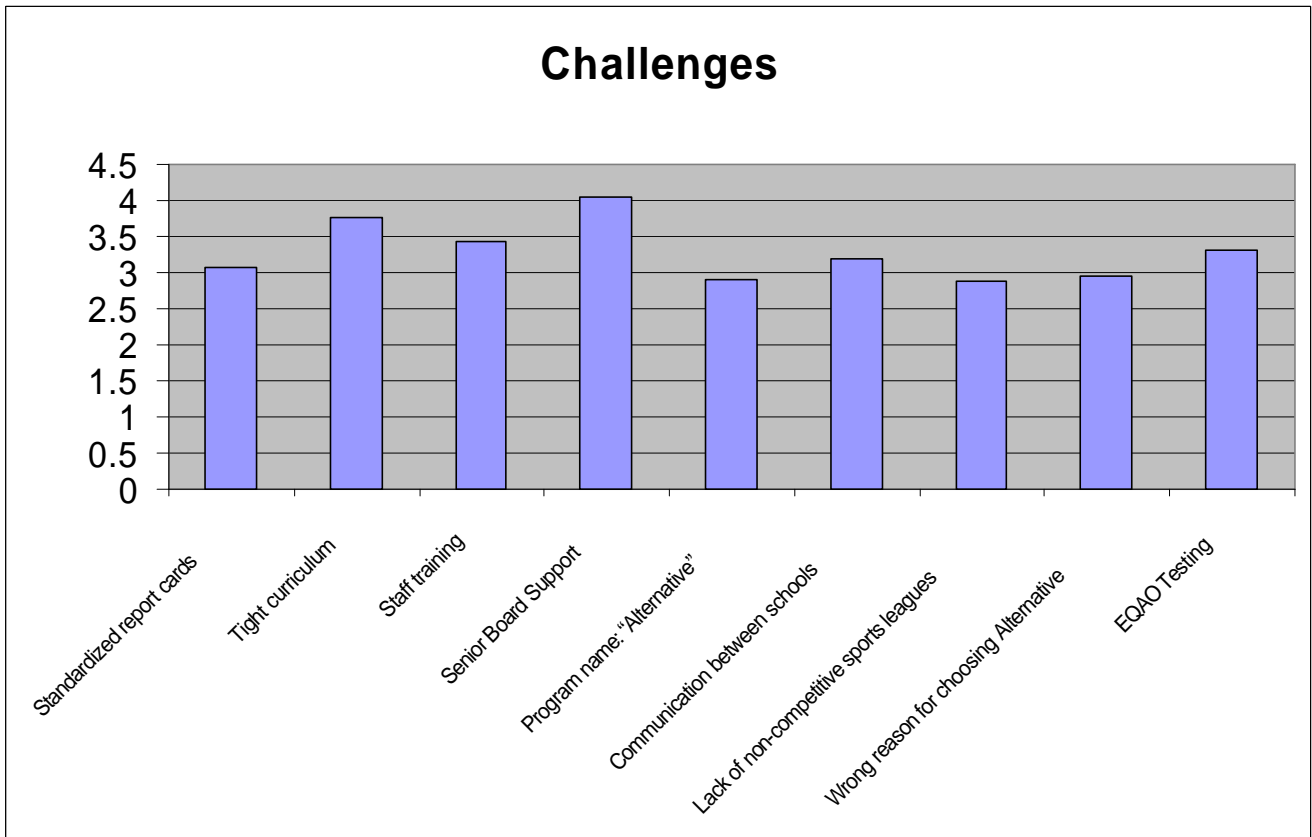
Adult Results:

	Standardized report cards	Tight curriculum	Staff training	Senior Board Support	Program name: "Alternative"	Communication between schools	Lack of non-competitive sports leagues	Wrong reason for choosing Alternative	EQAO Testing
Average	3.078261	3.754545	3.420561	4.054348	2.908257	3.202128	2.888889	2.944954	3.307692
Count	115	110	107	92	109	94	108	109	104
Median	3	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3
Mode	3	5	4	5	2	3	3	2	5
STDEV	1.325511	1.190069	1.281489	0.998506	1.384713	1.093281	1.170776	1.352877	1.38702
Variance	1.756979	1.416264	1.642215	0.997014	1.917431	1.195264	1.370717	1.830275	1.923824
Moderate challenge or higher	68.50%	85.40%	75.50%	91.30%	56.50%	77.50%	67.30%	56.50%	71.90%
Significant or critical challenge	36.00%	62.40%	54.80%	73.70%	34.30%	38.80%	29.00%	33.40%	47.60%

Full Questions:

The following points have been identified as challenges currently faced by the Alternative Program. To what extent do you agree that these are significant challenges? (1=not a challenge, 2=a minor challenge, 3=a moderate challenge, 4=a significant challenge, and 5=a critical challenge)

1. Provincially mandated graded report cards
2. Tight curriculum with no flexibility for multi-age classes
3. Lack of proper staff training / accreditation
4. Lack of support from senior Board staff
5. Meaningless/poor program name: "Alternative"
6. Insufficient communication between schools
7. Lack of non-competitive sports leagues
8. Parents choosing the program for non-program reasons (bussing, avoiding another school, etc.)
9. EQAO Testing



These questions were not asked to the students

These results show that:

1. The most significant impediments to the current program were perceived to be Board support and the provincial curriculum.
2. The lowest variance in responses concerned the Board support and concerns about communications between schools.

The Future

The third section of the survey looked at where parents, teachers and students would like the program to go.

Adult Results:

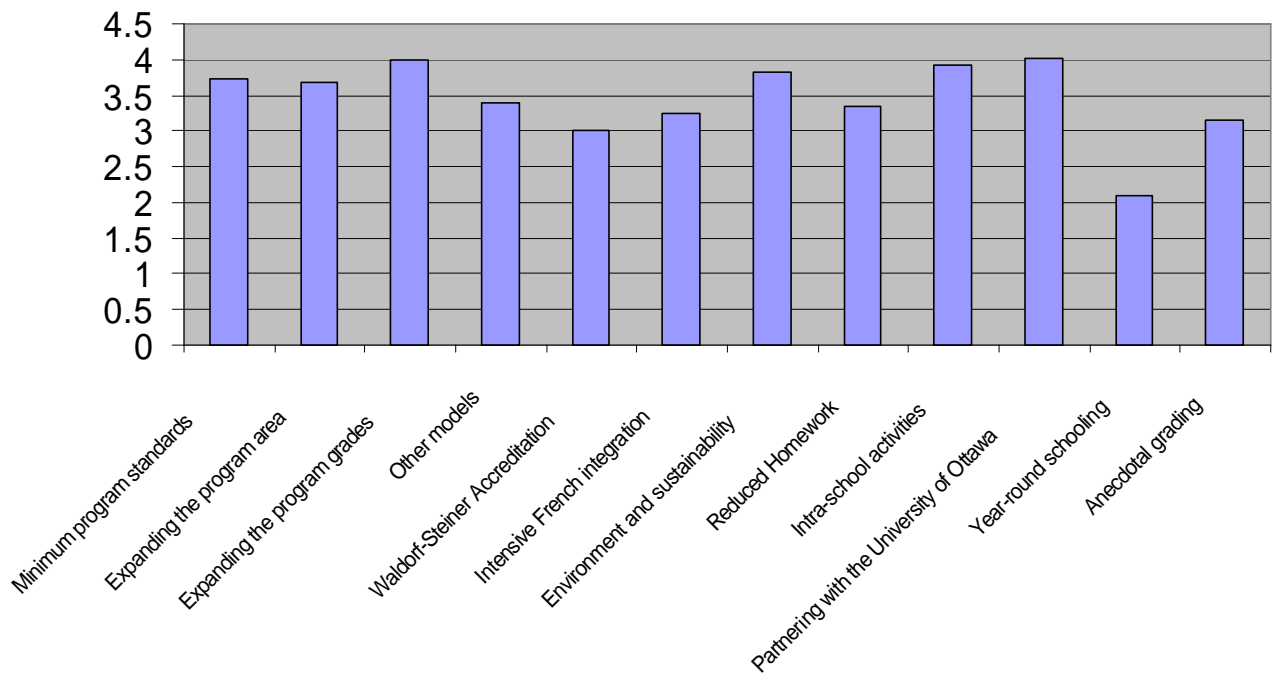
	Minimum program standards	Expanding the program area	Expanding the program grades	Other models	Waldorf-Steiner Accreditation	Intensive French integration	Environment and sustainability	Reduced Homework	Intra-school activities	Partnering with the University of Ottawa	Year-round schooling	Anecdotal grading
Average	3.732	3.684	3.991	3.394	3.02	3.245	3.824	3.347	3.930	4.026	2.104	3.160
Count	112	111	113	109	100	114	114	115	115	114	115	112
Median	4	4	4	4	3	3.5	4	4	4	4	1	3
Mode	4	5	5	4	2	5	4	5	5	5	1	5
STDEV	1.251	1.205	1.264	1.254	1.263	1.430	1.107	1.389	1.048	1.084	1.372	1.510
Variance	1.567	1.454	1.598	1.574	1.595	2.045	1.225	1.930	1.100	1.176	1.883	2.280
Moderate support or higher	81.10%	77.30%	84.90%	73.20%	57.60%	62.00%	85.00%	70.20%	91.30%	89.40%	31.60%	61.30%
Good or Excellent idea	66.70%	60.00%	71.50%	51.00%	37.40%	49.60%	69.10%	50.90%	66.70%	71.70%	18.50%	42.40%

Full Questions:

The following points have been identified as ideas that could strengthen or renew the Alternative Program. To what extent do you agree that these are good ideas? (1=a bad idea / do not support, 2=uncertain, 3=moderately supportive, 4=a good idea, and 5=an excellent idea)

1. Set minimum standards to ensure program philosophy is upheld (e.g. all JK-6 classes are multi-age)
2. Expanding the program to suburban areas; a second intermediate program in the east end
3. Expanding the program to new grade levels (secondary program)
4. Look to other models (smaller JK-12 schools)
5. Investigate Waldorf-Steiner Accreditation of schools.
6. Intensive French integrated with other subjects
7. Develop a program-wide focus on the environment and sustainability
8. Program-wide homework guidelines (reduced homework)
9. Support more intra-school activities (sports, ecology, field trips, socials, PD days)
10. Partnering with / involving the University of Ottawa in suggesting new learning strategies and programs
11. Year-round schooling
12. Remove non-anecdotal grading from JK-6

The Future



Student Results:

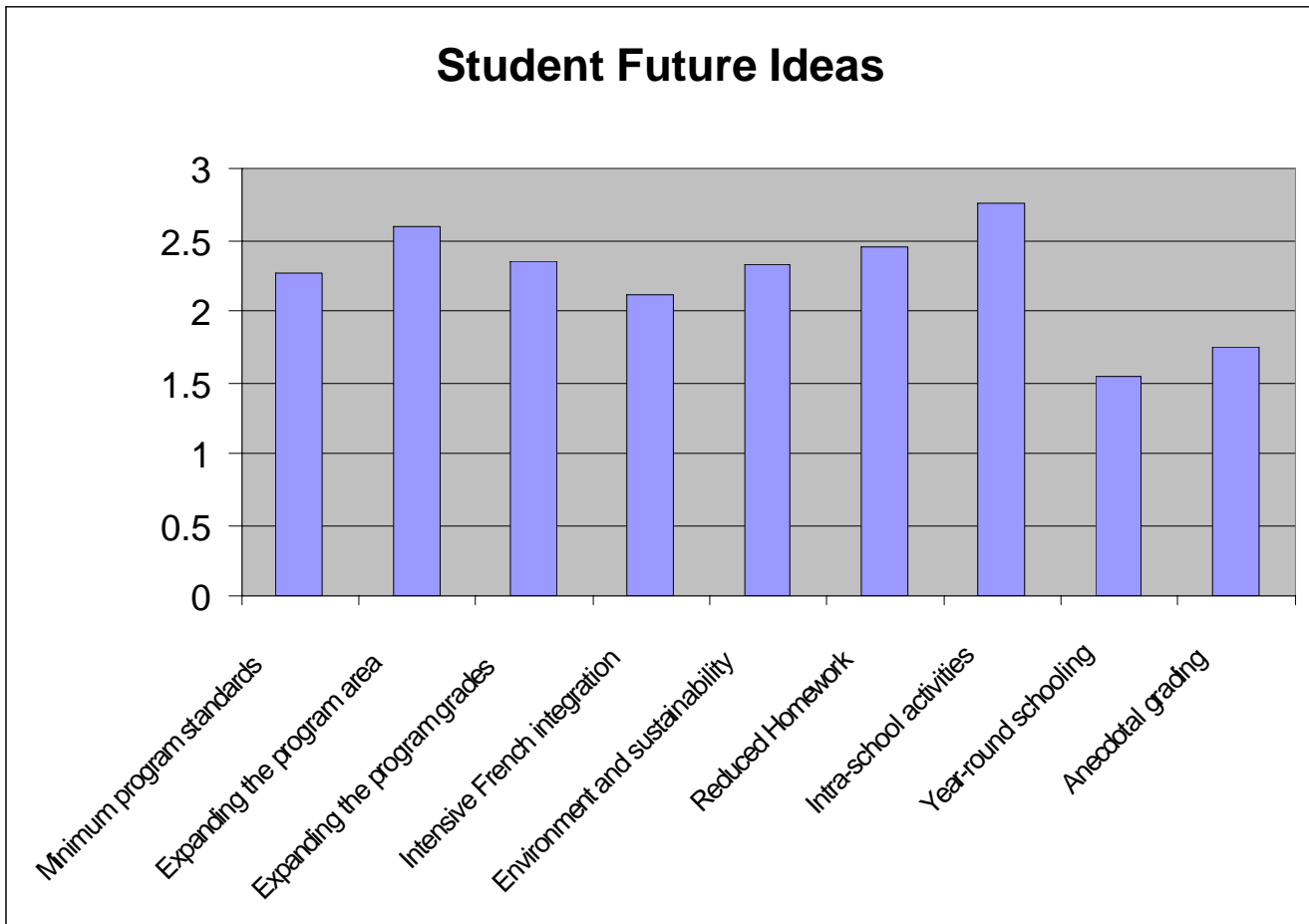
(Note that, to simplify the questions, the student survey offered three options for every question and not five.)

	Minimum program standards	Expanding the program area	Expanding the program grades	Intensive French Integration	Environment and sustainability	Reduced Homework	Intra-school activities	Year-round schooling	Anecdotal grading
Average	2.260504	2.5875	2.34728	2.108787	2.326271	2.441176	2.757447	1.544304	1.746835
Count	238	240	239	239	236	238	235	237	237
Median	2	3	3	2	2	3	3	1	2
Mode	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	1
STDEV	0.608827	0.647372	0.83055	0.791689	0.720157	0.807863	0.543707	0.809857	0.82032
Variance	0.37067	0.41909	0.689814	0.626771	0.518626	0.652643	0.295617	0.655868	0.672924
Moderate support or higher	91.20%	91.30%	76.90%	73.60%	85.20%	79.80%	94.50%	33.90%	50.50%

Full Questions:

Here are some ideas for ways that the Alternative Program could change. How much do you agree that these are good ideas? (1=a bad idea, 2=not sure, 3=a good idea)

1. Make rules so that all the Alternative schools will try to reach all the Program goals (in Question 1)
2. Make another Grade 7-8 school so it will be easier for more students to go to an Alternative school after Grade 6
3. Look into making Kindergarten to Grade 12 Alternative schools, or an Alternative high school
4. Make French more related to the other things we are learning in other classes
5. Spend more time learning about the environment
6. Less homework
7. Support more activities for all the Alternative schools to come together (sports, ecology, field trips, socials, PD days)
8. Go to school all year long, with more 1 or 2-week breaks
9. No grades, just comments



These results show that:

1. The strongest support among adults is for a partnership with the University of Ottawa to support innovative approaches, expanding into high school, doing more activities between the schools, and getting involved in environmental teaching.
2. Students had similar interests (they were not asked about University partnership).
3. The greatest variance in opinion was in anecdotal reporting and Intensive French integration.
4. Year-round schooling was of limited interest to both adults and students.

Supports and Resources

The final section asked parents, guardians and teachers what specific actions should be taken to strengthen the program and help achieve some of the targeted goals.

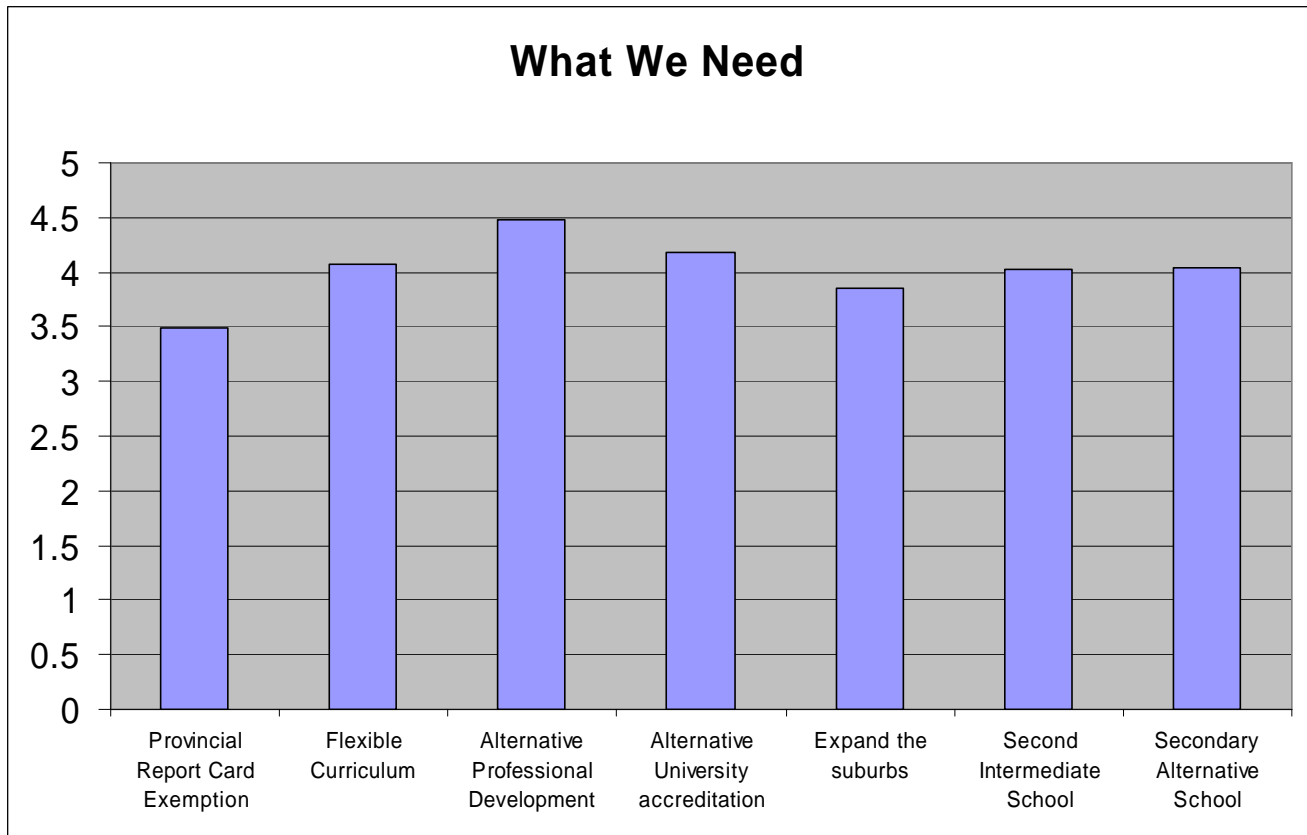
Adult Results:

	Provincial Report Card Exemption	Flexible Curriculum	Alternative Professional Development	Alternative University accreditation	Expand the suburbs	Second Intermediate School	Secondary Alternative School
Average	3.486726	4.078947	4.482456	4.184211	3.849558	4.017857	4.035088
Count	113	114	114	114	113	112	114
Median	4	4	5	5	4	4	5
Mode	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
STDEV	1.476694	1.057169	0.800801	1.093551	1.151251	1.004334	1.254583
Variance	2.180626	1.117606	0.641282	1.195855	1.325379	1.008687	1.573979
Moderate support or higher	71.50%	89.40%	96.50%	89.40%	83.10%	90.10%	85.00%
Very supportive	59.90%	77.00%	87.70%	82.40%	67.00%	73.00%	71.70%

Full Questions:

The following ideas have been proposed as possible resources / supports that the Alternative Program should be seeking. To what extent do you agree that these should be actively sought? (1=not supportive, 2=uncertain, 3=somewhat supportive, 4=supportive, and 5=very supportive)

1. Negotiate exemptions and/or flexibility in provincial report card requirements (e.g. non-graded reports for primary division, enhanced anecdotal reporting)
2. Develop guidelines to allow more flexible curriculum delivery in multi-age / multi-grade classes
3. Support professional development opportunities specifically aimed at enhancing delivery of the Alternative Program
4. Support the development of university accreditation for alternative program teachers
5. Expand the JK-6 program to make it more accessible to all residents (e.g. Orleans and Kanata)
6. Expand the intermediate program to a second location
7. Expand the Alternative Program into the secondary level



These questions were not asked to the students.

These results show:

1. Parents, guardians and teachers feel that we need more Alternative Professional Development support. This has broad support, with the highest average, lowest variance and 87% of respondents thinking it is a very good idea.
2. Similarly there is broad support for seeking out some sort of accreditation system for Alternative teachers in the future.
3. 89% of respondents support asking for a more flexible curriculum. 72% would like exemptions from the Provincial Report Card requirements.
4. There is broad support for either a second Alternative middle school and/or an Alternative High School.