

# Alternative Education in Arizona

## MISSION OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

Arizona statute and the State Board of Education have recognized that alternative education **serves a unique student population**. Alternative schools must have a **mission/charter that clearly identifies its purpose is to serve a specific student population** who will benefit from a nontraditional school environment. Nationally recognized characteristics of alternative education students include homelessness, students with disabilities, over-aged students, and/or students who have experienced traumatic life events. Even though alternative education serves youth who may share some similar characteristics, diversity exists among alternative schools, programs, and other non-traditional educational opportunities: 'one size doesn't fit all'. Most alternative high schools offer credit recovery. Some alternative schools recruit and successfully retain younger high school students by working with families to offer culturally appropriate support for first time high school graduation. Other alternative high schools serve over-aged students and/or re-engage former dropouts.

An alternative school in Arizona must annually certify with the Arizona Department of Education that 70% or more of its students are eligible. The categories for eligibility are students with/who are:

- Adjudicated.
- Documented history of disruptive behavior issues.
- Dropout status.
- Poor academic standing as demonstrated by being at least one year behind on grade level performance or academic credits.
- Primary caregivers or are financially responsible for dependents and, therefore, may require a flexible school schedule.
- Wards of the state and are in need of an alternative school setting.

## IMPACT TO ARIZONA SOCIETY

Alternative education in Arizona provides a **significant contribution to society** by providing educational opportunities. We have calculated a Return on Investment (ROI) for educating these high-risk Arizona citizens<sup>1</sup>.

Arizona's ROI for alternative education is **20 to 1**.

Every dollar invested in Arizona alternative education returns twenty dollars!

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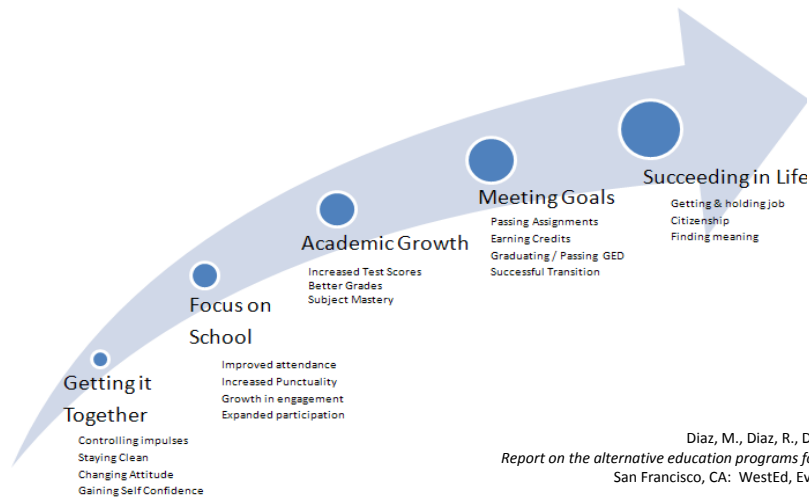
<sup>1</sup> Return on investment is calculated using numbers reported in WestEd. (2014.) *How Arizona's dropout crisis affects communities, Creates economic losses for the State of Arizona*, retrieved from : [https://www.wested.org/wp-content/files\\_mf/1403888261AZMRT\\_FullReport.pdf](https://www.wested.org/wp-content/files_mf/1403888261AZMRT_FullReport.pdf)



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## A CONTINUUM OF DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH SERVED BY ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

This well researched developmental model shows a continuum of student learning readiness as well as academic growth and success for alternative education youth.



## A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR LEARNING

Alternative Education offers hope to students at risk of not completing school by continuing to engage students at-risk of dropping out of school or re-engaging disenfranchised youth through nontraditional educational environments including some or all of the following:

- access to wrap-around services,
- flexible scheduling including make-up times/days and tutoring,
- modification of delivery of instruction, often through blended-learning,
- credit-recovery programs,
- student-engagement activities,
- realistic career and post-secondary planning including dual enrollment with community colleges, work study programs, and/or career education programs.

At-risk students benefit from Alternative Education because each school or program provides a unique approach to providing interventions through learning expectations and experiences that maximize student potential for success.

## **ARIZONA ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION CONSORTIUM**

The Arizona Alternative Education Consortium is a grass-roots member association of personnel and leaders from alternative schools and alternative education programs at accommodation schools, districts, charters, county education service agencies, non-profits, community organizations, dropout recovery programs, and other dedicated stakeholders who support alternative education in Arizona. Our membership represents 100 schools and other organizations. The Arizona Alternative Education Consortium is the Arizona affiliate of the National Alternative Education Association.

