



PRESS RELEASE

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ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION EXPANDS, OPENS DOORS TO MIDDLE SCHOOL

High-Schoolers Have More Room to Learn, Green Valley Middle Opens

Today, students received more room to learn at the Alternative High School in Bladensburg, while a new alternative middle school opened in Temple Hills to help younger "at-risk" children stay on course to an education.

"This is a very exciting day for our school system as we are able to help more children, who often face serious challenges, turn their lives around and return to their friends at their home schools," said Dr. André J. Hornsby, Chief Executive Officer for Prince George's County Public Schools. "Under the mandates of No Child Left Behind, as a society, we must do a better job of helping at-risk children succeed in achieving an education. In Prince George's County Public Schools, we are committed to accomplishing that goal."

The Alternative High School – Bladensburg Instructional Services Center – opened in February 2003 on the top floor of the former Annapolis Road Middle School. Today, students attend classes on two floors, have better science laboratory facilities and additional room to grow. The Alternative Middle School – Green Valley Instructional Services Center -- opened this morning in Temple Hills. Both schools' primary objective is to prepare children to return to their home schools.

Students must apply for admission to these schools. These children are often repeating grades, expelled, or have multiple suspensions. They may have poor attendance, low grades, and court involvement. But a major determining factor in their acceptance and success in the alternative schools program is parental commitment.

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A panel of educators from the school administration's central offices, regional offices, alternative schools, and boundary schools review student applications and recommend placement for an appropriate alternative school and/or program. Students and parents attend a mandatory orientation meeting at the selected school site and participate in a required interview to determine final admission into the appropriate program. If accepted, the student's records are sent to the appropriate school program for temporary student placement.

The Department of Alternative Educational Options includes the alternative high school and middle school, plus the Crossland Evening/Saturday High School, Crossland Saturday Middle School, Northwestern Evening/Saturday High School, Northwestern Saturday Middle School, and an alternative summer school program.

Students are placed in a highly structured educational environment with small class sizes that include a 15:1 student-teacher ratio for the high school and middle school program. Highly trained staff interact with "at-risk" students. Positive behavioral intervention and support programs are in place, and there is support for these students as they transition back to their home school. For some students, getting a GED and moving on to work or career training may be appropriate, and there is an accelerated GED program for those students.

The behavioral focus follows a Maryland State Department of Education-sponsored Positive Behavioral Intervention and Student Support Program. There is an incentive-based point system to reward appropriate behavior. Mandatory strategies-for-success and study skills courses are designed to develop positive behavior modification and goal development.

Student uniforms are mandatory, as are monthly parent workshops. The workshops support the home-school partnership that is so critical to each student's success.

"If we are to be successful as a school system and have an overall positive impact on the community, we must continue to meet the needs of at-risk students by providing short-term alternative education settings to modify student behavior," Hornsby said. "Our alternative schools provide students with the opportunity to improve interpersonal skills and experience academic success. These improvements allow them to successfully integrate back into their home school and complete their education, which benefits everyone."

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