



WEST DES MOINES
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Alternative Education

November 24, 2025 Board Workshop

EDUCATE. EMPOWER. INSPIRE.

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the efforts, energy, leadership, and sacrifices of the humans and communities who trust us with the academic, social, and emotional development of their children. We acknowledge, affirm, and celebrate the resilience, gifts, and capital of those entrusted to our care.

We acknowledge the students who were, are, and will be in our schools. We recognize the energy, passion, vulnerability, and sacrifices of our staff and administrators.

We acknowledge that historical and socio-political barriers combined with social toxins impact how individuals engage, experience, and show up; differently positioned people are intentionally and unintentionally invited/excluded and served/unserved. WDMCS strives to ensure ALL learn and belong.

We acknowledge that our pursuit for access, accountability, and healthy systems means commitment to continuous improvement and centering students. As a board, we acknowledge we will not be perfect AND that we are vessels that uphold humanity while doing hard well!

Learning Intentions

- 1) How can we leverage lessons gained from the National Alternative Education conference to best meet the needs of WDMCS?
- 2) What are best practices for alternative education?
- 3) How can we leverage finite resources to create greater impact for WDMCS?



Welcoming Inclusion



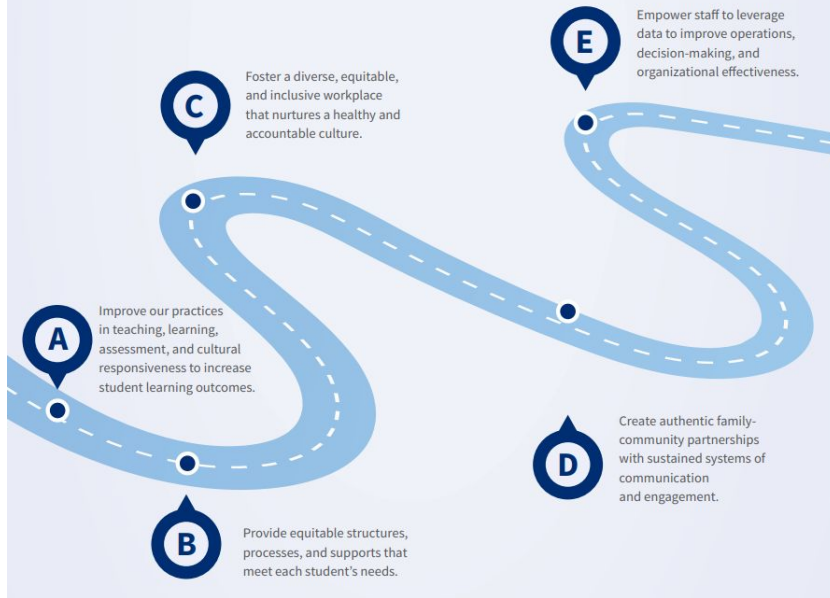
Think about your educational journey and an individual whose behaviors, practices, actions, and modeling made a profound difference in your life. How did they show up, what did they do differently than others?



Context

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Focus of Our Improvement Efforts



1. Strategic Plan
2. Mindset shift on “HS”
3. 7-12 Systems
4. Student Voice
5. Instruction & Curriculum
6. Resource Constraint

*Alternative education does not necessitate a separate school. Alternative education is about creating options that differentiate from what we traditionally offer to increase the opportunities for students to succeed...or to be **educated, empowered, and inspired.***

Supporting Educators

WHAT IS ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION?

Alternative education serves students who require or thrive in an environment other than a traditional educational setting. This population of learners may face challenges in school, home, and/or community. Their ability to receive services in a traditional academic setting may increase vulnerability to school failure. Alternative education strives to deliver equitable access to innovative approaches to teaching and learning which provide students the opportunity to meet graduation requirements, prepare for post-secondary experiences and participate as productive members of their communities.

Critical Lens

“Trauma decontextualized in a person looks like personality. Trauma decontextualized in a family looks like family traits. Trauma decontextualized in people looks like culture.” Resmaa Menakem

For alternative education, regardless of setting or format to thrive, three things stood out:

- 1) Leadership matters
- 2) Modified expectations ensure student achievement, agency, and experiences
- 3) Access is disrupting reproductive practices

*“...IT IS OUR JOB AS
EDUCATORS TO NOT JUST
TEACH SKILLS, BUT ALSO
TO TEACH STUDENTS TO
KNOW, VALIDATE, AND
CELEBRATE WHO
THEY ARE.”*

DR. GHOLDY MUHAMMAD

**NATIONAL ALTERNATIVE
NAEA
EDUCATION ASSOCIATION**

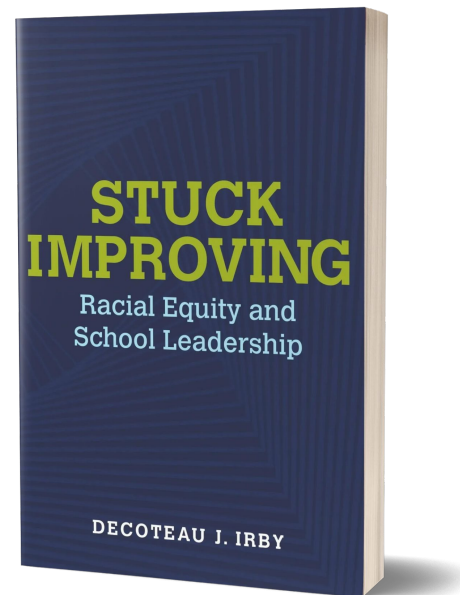
Access Context

Access

Ensuring each individual has **systematized opportunities** to **participate in and benefit** regardless of dimensions of identity.

Data Set	Walnut Creek	Valley
Chronic Absenteeism	84.53%	27.94%
Special Education Enrollment	25%	8.26%
ESOL Enrollment	16.22%	11.99%
Black Student Enrollment	20.27%	11.65%
Hispanic Student Enrollment	24.32%	18.97%

As of 11/14 the total enrollment at Walnut Creek is 148 students. In the last four years the average number of students served at any point in the year was 180.25.



AEA Audit Summary

Attendance

Chronic absenteeism gets worst as students transition from the comprehensive school setting to Walnut Creek.

Academics

Student academic performance stays at a similar level. Early results were students were more successful with core diploma at VHS than WCC.

Proposal

We are recommending that we shift from an alternative high school model as a our main driver of our at-risk funding to a program of alternative education.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Focus of Our Improvement Efforts

C Foster a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace that nurtures a healthy and accountable culture.

E Empower staff to leverage data to improve operations, decision-making, and organizational effectiveness.

A Improve our practices in teaching, learning, assessment, and cultural responsiveness to increase student learning outcomes.

D Create authentic family-community partnerships with sustained systems of communication and engagement.

B Provide equitable structures, processes, and supports that meet each student's needs.

A - Flexible pacing, project-based, blended instruction, etc.

B - Students will have more meaningful access to tier 1

C-Steve, Dau, and others will support Dr. Christensen & VSW principal in building & sustaining accountability to support alternative programming

D-Decrease transitions and maintain systems of engagement/communication

E-Data informed reallocation of resources to support more students, less remediation & more prevention

Best Practices

Vision and Mission	Leadership	Climate and Culture
Staffing and Professional Development	Curriculum and Instruction	Student Assessment
Transition Planning and Support	Family Engagement	Collaboration
Program Evaluation	School Counseling	School Social Work
Digital and Virtual Learning	Policies and Procedures	Personalized Education Plan

At your table's, review the best practices handout with how we can capture this in a model of alternative education programming. What details can we provide to alleviate any concerns?

High Level Overview of Services

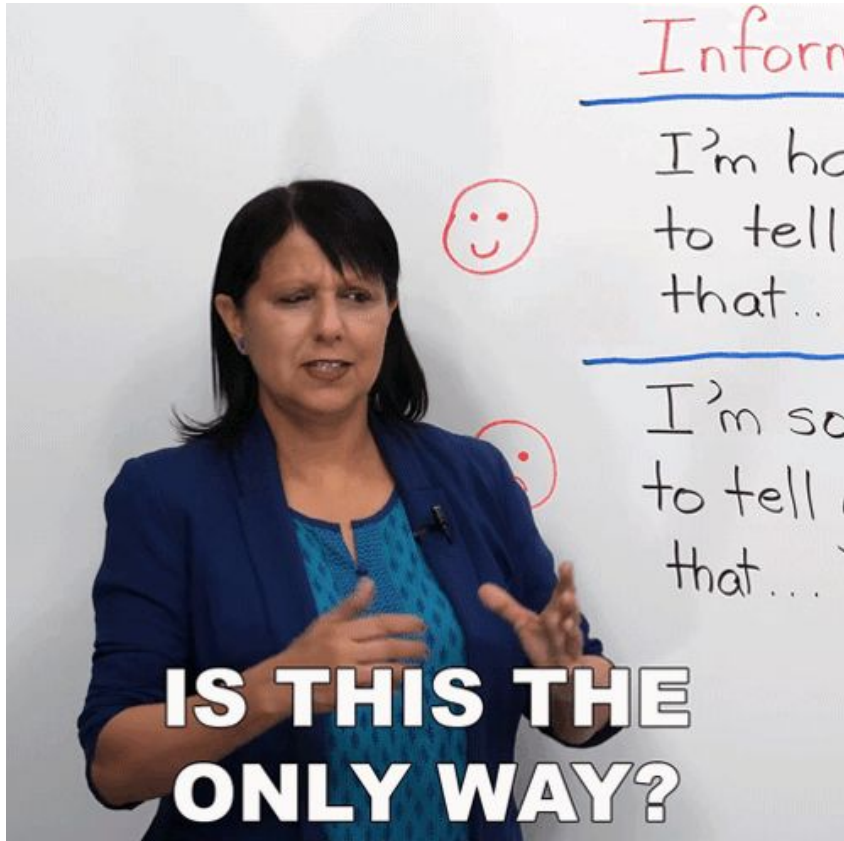
Continued	Revamped	New
Counseling cost sharing	Success Center	Night School with ESOL supports
Behavior Interventionists cost sharing	Expanded Elementary Summer School (2027)	Family Engagement Teachers to support schools without
Youth Justice Initiative	Jr High AP roles & responsibilities to improve student outcomes	Campus Monitors at Valley HS
Employee Family Services	Oversight of homeless/foster services	Student Services Coord.
Jr & HS Summer School	Oversight of homeschool services	Virtual Learning Opportunities
Math & Reading Resource		(8-9 Activities Mgr.)

Reductions

As a result of this proposal, we'd have the following reductions:

- WCC Principal
- Secretary
- Pace Contract (outside services)
- Reduction in teachers (4.5 FTE)
- Counselor
- .5 Instructional Coach
- .2 GT Support

Reflection



At your tables share an example of when a disruption to current practice, policies, and behaviors led to a positive outcomes and experiences for students?

How might this proposal better support historically resilient students?

Board Only Conversation

What's sitting top of mind for our board?



Matt's Closing Message

