National Alternative Education Association

Developing Potential in All Students

Join Us in Tampa!

25th Annual NAEA National Conference

October 28-30, 2019

Hotel: Tampa Marriott Water Street

Reserve Your Hotel Room

School Tours are filling fast! Sign up today!

Other Pre-Conference Offerings:

- **Building Strong Brains: Trauma Sensitive Strategies for Alternative Educators**
- **Thrive More Than Survive: 8 Key Strategies to Achieve Educator Well-Being**
- **Inspire Greatness with NAEA Continuous Improvement Tools**
- **Gallery Walk of Alternative Schools**

NAEA Conference Registration

NAEA 2019
Conference KEYNOTE Speakers

Opening Keynote
Kevin Honeycutt

Closing Keynote
Dr. Adolf Brown

2019 NAEA Conference Special Luncheon Keynote Speaker

NAEA is Honored to Present Dr. Curtis Jones

2019 National Superintendent of the Year and Alternative School Advocate

Register Today

The **Bagwell College of Education** at **Kennesaw State University**
is proud to partner with **NAEA** to advocate for students in alternative/non-traditional schools. Both organizations share an important mission to provide high quality resources and support to educators in P-12 school districts for greater student success.

We invite you to leverage your education opportunities with a graduate degree from the Bagwell College of Education. We offer online, hybrid, and face-to-face programs designed for teachers and leaders. We can help you develop your potential and achieve your professional goals.

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KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY

2019 Video Contest

"***NAVIGATING THE FUTURE"*** **-** Tell the story of your alternative program in a 2-5-minute video or rap. This contest is open to middle and high school students who attend alternative education programs. Your video should communicate the message and mission of your program and relate it to the annual national NAEA conference theme ***"Navigating the Future".*** Entries may express this theme in any genre or shooting style but must be submitted by link containing a YouTube URL.

THE PRIZES:

Winners will receive the following cash awards:

First Prize—$400.00 Second Prize—$300.00 Third Prize—$200.00

ENTRIES MUST BE POSTMARKED by OCTOBER 12, 2019.
WINNERS WILL BE ANNOUNCED at the NAEA conference.

Guest Editorial

A Passion for Alternative Education

Written by Kellie Burns, District Executive Officer, Yavapai Accommodation School District, Prescott, Arizona; President-Elect, Arizona Alternative Education Consortium.

Endorsed by: Johnson Bia, President Arizona Alternative Education Consortium; Wayne Tucker, Board Member, Arizona Alternative Education Consortium; and, Cybill Jacob, Board Member, Arizona Alternative Education Consortium.

I began my teaching career in a 4th grade classroom, where the students were excited to be at school, where they were SO excited to see their teachers, and excited to learn. I loved every minute of teaching them, and they made me feel really good as a teacher – because their enthusiasm and success was a result of my passion and ability, correct? That's where I stayed for 14 years before I took a leap of faith and accepted a position as an assistant administrator of an Alternative School. Unbeknownst to me, these were two completely different worlds, and I had NO IDEA the challenges ahead.

I very quickly realized that it was going to take more than just my passion and ability to help them. It was going to take making connections that were much harder to reach than I'd ever known possible. Instead of seeing happy, shining eyes, I saw no eyes because they were always staring at the floor. The eyes that I was blessed enough to see stared back at me with anger and disgust. Instead of hearing excitement in their voices, I heard sadness and shame. Instead of seeing kids who were excited to be at school, I saw kids who had fallen through the cracks, who had all but given up on an education and a bright future, who now had little or no hope or goals.

The same kids I saw as energetic, enthusiastic 4th graders had turned into kids who no longer had trust in adults or their school. I saw and felt their deep, deep sadness. Deep, deep loss of connection. And deep, deep desperation to find a new beginning, a restart on a bright future and a high school diploma. I realized within the first day at an Alternative School that it was up to me and our staff to help "our kids" see a new light and help them believe in themselves. "Hearts first, and the heads will follow," became our motto.

"Alternative" students are AMAZING human beings. The strongest of the strong facing scrutiny and assumption that they are the weak ones. Some of them have stories that would bring you to your knees. Some of them have experiences that are unfathomable, that make you sick to your stomach, that make you question humanity. Some of their stories force you to put on a strong face in front of them and then sob uncontrollably after they leave your classroom.

Some of these students have seen the worst of the worst in the very people who were supposed to love and support them - and failed them in the most miserable ways. Yet somehow, they continue to persevere. They continue to dream and strive for goodness and a bright future. They have the desire to get an education and to hold that high school diploma in their hands, and they need us to help them get there.

The path of an alternative student typically has more bumps, turns, and obstacles than the average student. Most come to us from other district or charter schools with little or no credit. Almost every kid we see has been thrown away by their former schools. Some "seniors" have earned a mere 4 credits or less before they even get to the Alternative School, yet the Alternative Schools, whose mission is to help these at-risk kids, are the ones who are placed in the spotlight, shamed and scrutinized for not "succeeding." We are fighting for and providing an education to students whom other schools may have failed. We are providing an education for the kids who would likely otherwise have become dropouts.

I cherish even the small graduation rates that we do have (typically half of local school district rates). Without the work of the Alternative Schools, the students who represent that small bar graph would have otherwise been dropouts! We may not have the highest graduation rates but those who do graduate are able to move on and become contributing citizens and tax payers.

We are put in tough positions to get kids through school who likely have no other options or motivation. It's very similar to the starfish story: "You can't possibly save them all, but it matters to this one."

Some of our students have tackled mountains that an "average" person wouldn't attempt to climb. Naturally, it is going to take them longer to get to their destinations, but with love, support and encouragement from their teachers – adults in their lives who believe in them – they can reach that! Will all of them get there? Nope. But does that mean that we stop trying for those who do? No way!

Alternative Schools are faced with the challenge of taking students of all kinds and rebuilding them, restoring their faith in themselves and others, and helping them discover their potential and ability. It takes hours and hours of convincing abused kids that they have a purpose, and convincing kids who have made poor choices that they have the ability to choose a better path and find their second chance.

This has to be done before they can learn. We have to focus on their hearts before we can even begin to get into their heads. It takes a really long time to do this.

Alternative Schools have to be very strategic in hiring the right people for "our kids," and "It takes a special kind of person to work with the kids you do," is a phrase I hear from educators from all types of schools from all over the state all of the time! One wrong personality could jeopardize the success of all of our students, and many times we would rather go without a staff member than with the wrong person.

Our staff is the foundation of our students' success and we recognize that we must have a cohesive staff with like minds and like hearts. Our version of success has to be different. We all have to buy into that and believe it before our students ever will. Our staff is vested in the student as a human being, instead of just having the ability to pass a test. WE DO NOT GIVE UP ON ANY KID! EVER!

Are all Alternative Schools good schools? Heck no. There are some bad eggs that need to go. But the same holds true for other traditional schools, district schools, charter schools, private schools, and any other school you can name. There are always going to be rogues, and it is unfair to judge all Alternative Schools on the few who damage the integrity of alternative education.

We are not all the same! We do not all run the same! Most of us have high standards for our students. Most of us follow ethics and the moral responsibilities to ensure that our students have the foundation of knowledge that any other schools have. We must get rid of the bad eggs and support the ones who are moving mountains for students who would never have found the will to walk again.

The work of Alternative Schools should not be minimized. Alternative Schools are changing lives and we are proud of the work we do despite the criticism and blame. If not us, then who?

Yavapai Accommodation School District schools are AdvancedED™ accredited.

Board Member Spotlight

Dr. Michael Hylen

Region 3 Director

Dr. Hylen currently serves as the Dean of the School of Education at Asbury University. Prior to coming to Asbury, he enjoyed a career as a public and private school educator that spanned over 25 years. During that time he served as a high school math teacher and principal. His most extensive work was as an alternative high school principal for students with emotional disorders and behavior problems. Under his leadership, one of his schools became the first alternative school to be recognized by the National Association for At-Risk Education Network at the silver level.

He worked in both the inner city of St. Louis and in the surrounding counties. He has an earned Ph.D. from the University of Missouri – St. Louis with a specific emphasis on At-Risk Students and Character Education. He has co-authored articles and books that emphasize understanding at-risk students and include strategies for helping problem behavior students understand emotions and their relationship to behaviors.

Phoenix Rising (PR) is an alternative school, grades 9-12th, in Tulsa, OK that impacts and engages youth through a unique partnership between the Tulsa County Family Center for Juvenile Justice and Tulsa Public Schools. Phoenix served over 100 youth last year educating the most at-risk students in the District. Some of the major challenges of the youth were those involved (or at-risk of being involved) with the juvenile justice system, wards of the State, homeless, pregnant/parenting teens, substance abuse issues, and many other appalling challenges that may block a successful pathway to education.

Youth at PR have generationally strained interactions and relationships with police officers, as the statistics of our population with parental incarceration, both at the school and within the state of Oklahoma, are astounding. Currently, near 50% of the students have one or parent incarcerated, while almost 90% of them have had one or more parent previously incarcerated. In addition, over 45% of the youth at PR are currently on probation and have been adjudicated of a crime. So imagine when the Deputy Chief of Tulsa Police Department (TPD) presented the program called “Project Trust” to innovatively pilot at our school.

Project Trust is a 6- 8 week course, once per week, in which a curriculum discusses things such as citizens’ rights, basic laws, civil rights, and various police/citizen interactions. The discussion before the course even began was among the administration of PR and TPD regarding ensuring they would adhere to a trauma informed model and practices. PR administration and TPD agreed that the officers would not wear their uniforms initially. They would not bring 10-12 police cars, as first stated, and that honest and open discussion would be had even if it were questions TPD was not necessarily used to being asked.

We knew that the students would initially be cautious or that even some would worry that the police were there for them (which was actually asked by two students the first day.) However, with the small group discussions, open and honest dialogue on both sides, and figuring out that everyone was just a human being, the program was more successful expected. By the third and fourth weeks, various youth had chosen the police they felt closest to and it additionally became somewhat of a mentorship program.

Qualitative data showed that students learned many things from the program including:
• “trust more policemen and women” gaining “friends and confidence” for police
• “they are human beings” and “normal people” having “worries too”
• “overlooked uniforms” and they “aren’t all bad or mean”
• “their job is very hard” and learning the “other side of the story”
• “our civil rights” and “their rights” and what a “proper pullover looks like”
• “how to live with confidence driven by a world of fear and racism”

Many of the graduates from the program, and the school, have begun college in criminal law and continue to have communication with both Deputy Chief Brooks and many of the other Tulsa Police officers. This program created long-lasting relationships, taught students how to legally protect themselves in situations, given them hope for positive community policing, and a new outlook

For more information please click here: More on Phoenix Rising

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New alternative middle school to open this fall at Sylvester Broome

By: Ashley Schafer

FLINT, Michigan—A new alternative middle school is being offered to local students through a unique partnership between GearUp Academy and the Sylvester Broome Empowerment Village. It is designed specifically to help students develop the skills they need to go on to graduate high school.

Called the GearUp2Lead Invictus Academy, the program will serve Flint and Genesee County youths in sixth, seventh and eighth grades. It is a new program by GearUp Academy, an alternative high school launched in 2016 and located on Ballenger Highway in Flint.

Each student will have an individualized Learning Plan and diagnostic tests to assist them in putting their best foot forward. Students will have the opportunity to participate in art, drama, gym, leadership training, character building, fitness and nutrition education.

Breakfast and lunch will be offered to students daily. The curriculum is a combination of the Fenton Area Public Schools Middle School Core Curriculum, GEAR Up 2 Lead Curriculum, and Why Try - Social & Emotional Curriculum.

Students will attend four “blocks” of classes during the school day from 9:30 a.m. to 3:45p.m., with an opportunity to attend in the evening from 4-7 p.m. The goal of the program is to prepare students to return to their home districts after completion of the eighth grade. GearUp Academy and Job Corps are other options offered students.

Richard Kerry Thompson, dean of GearUp2Lead Academy, said if more resources were offered at the middle school level could help drastically reduce the dropout rate among high school students.

“I believe 100 percent that these students have a high chance of surviving in the high school setting, armed with the skills, both educationally and emotionally, to be successful in high school and in life,” Thompson said.

The GearUp2Lead Invictus Academy expects to open this fall at Sylvester Broome Empowerment Village.

CONNECT with others in your region at the 2019 NAEA Conference! Regional meetings enable you to meet your Regional Directors & connect with others in your state and geographical region. Learn how you can work together to provide each other with ongoing support throughout the year.

Best Practices of instruction- Peer Questions

By: Caroline Whitt

I had both my ELA and Math instructor, implement the peer question activity in their respective classes. Each class had to write areas of concern down on an index card and then transferred them to a large "post it" note on the wall. We had the next class to come in and give suggestions/solutions for problems they could solve.

The teachers didn't limit the area of difficulty to just our subject areas, we opened it up to anything that could be of concern to them. Of course many of them stated the obvious - Math! or certain math concepts....motivation and anxiety came up as well!

The teachers will use these problems and suggestions to create formative assessments and also help us in grouping our students. We can have stronger students help weaker students. We love the peer tutoring concept, so we would love to see more of that amongst our students. This may also help them in the areas of motivation and anxiety. Both of which can be caused from not understanding concepts in math or other areas.

Teaching moment- Douglas County School System
Success Center

News Items Needed!

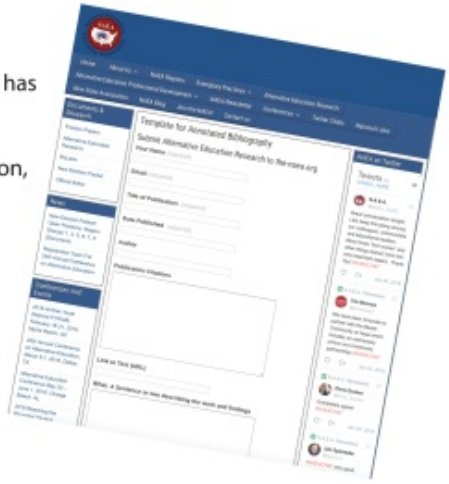
We want to feature your school next month!!!

Tell us about some of the great things your school is doing or a specific best practice that works very well. Send pictures or video links.
Please email your district/school news to: justin_demartin@yahoo.com

Get Involved with NAEA—

Submit Your Research

Your National Alternative Education Association has instituted an Annotated Bibliography of Alternative Education Research. I've submitted a few examples including Raywid's seminal work on alternative education, Job for the Future's piece on "Reinventing Alternative Education", and National Dropout Prevention's meta-analysis, to get us started. http://the-naea.org/alternative-education-research/



Your colleagues want your contributions! Submit works that you have found particularly useful using the simple template provided. NAEA members tend to most interested in the title and the What, How, Why of the work:

- What A description of the work and its findings
- How The methodology or some key terms like quantitative, qualitative, policy research
- Why The big picture – a rationale about why the work is important-valuable

NAEA looks forward to your submissions, so that alternative education research is accessible to NAEA members and all Alt Ed advocates. As you see, you will be recognized on a nationally available website for your contribution.

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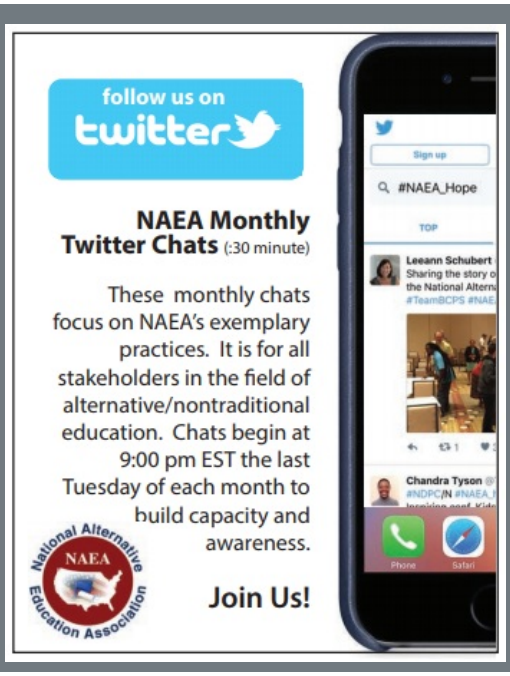

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Submitting Articles

If you are interested in submitting an article for the NAEA newsletter please reach out to Dr. Justin DeMartin, Region 1 Director for more information. justin_demartin@yahoo.com