

The impact of alternative education: A summative evaluation of the Achieve Alternative Education Program

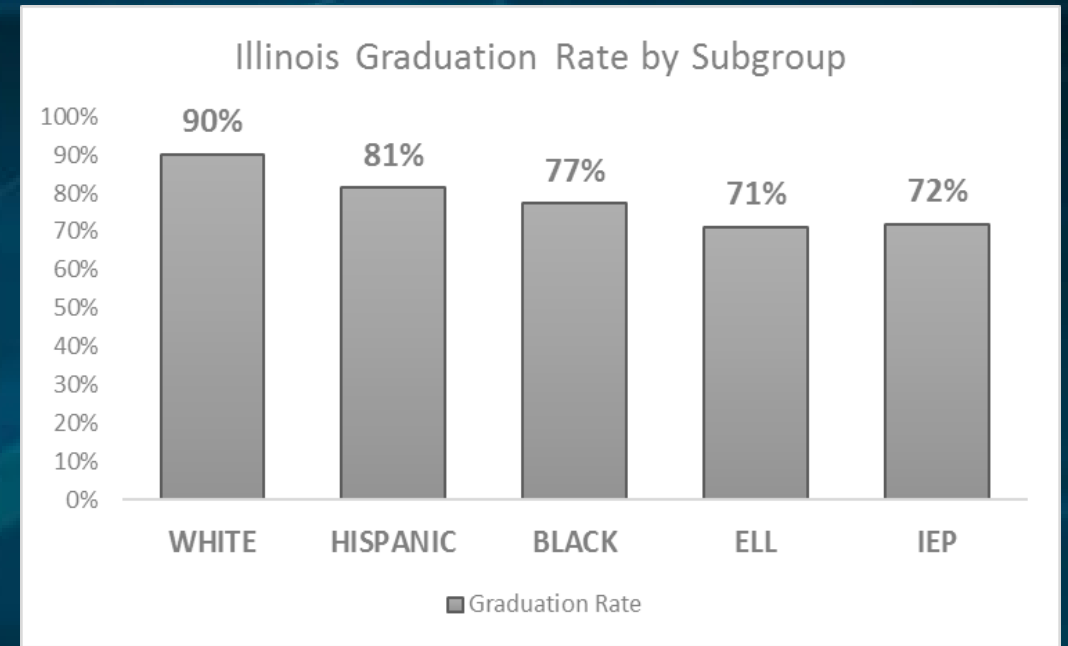
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COLLOQUIUM PRESENTATION
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Problem Statement

➤ Dropout prevention

US Dept. of Education (2014) reported:

- Nearly 745,000 students did not graduate;
21,374 from Illinois
- **86%** Graduation Rate in Illinois
 - Achievement Gap for students of color, ELL, IEP, & Low-Income



➤ Consequences of dropping out:



- less likely active in labor force
- **Earn substantially less** (≈1 million over a lifetime)



- **higher rates of crime**
- **50% of inmates** in state prisons



- More likely on **public welfare and health services**



- **Cost: over \$148 billion in lost tax revenues & public expenditures over a lifetime**

(Belfield, Levin, Muennig, & Rouse, 2006)

Problem Statement Continued

- Achieve Program implemented in 2012-13 school year
 - regular & special education students with academic, behavioral, and/or social-emotional issues
 - prevent at-risk from dropping out of high school
 - Tier 2 intervention of RTI model
 - helps students who are unsuccessful in the regular classroom setting
 - 5th year of implementation & yet to be evaluated

Purpose

The purpose of this quantitative quasi-experimental study was to evaluate and document the effectiveness of the Achieve Alternative Education Program, in order to determine the impact on at-risk students, establish accountability, and identify areas for improvement.

Significance of the Study

- **Limited empirical studies** on the effectiveness of alternative education (Aron, 2006; Foley & Pang, 2006; Lehr, Tan, & Ysseldyke, 2009)
 - Specifically on student outcomes (Culbertson, d'Entremont, & Poulos, 2014)
- Student attending alternative education programs tend to be from **marginalized populations who already at-risk** in our society
- **Moral & legal obligation** to provide a free and appropriate education with access to the most rigorous curriculum
- **Important to all stakeholders** in the school district
 - **Costly program** with heavy resources allocated
 - full-time counselor and social worker
 - co-taught class structure
 - smaller class sizes

Literature Review

Descriptive studies on student characteristics:

- **poor grades, truancy issues, behavior issues, teen pregnancy** (Carver & Lewis, 2010)
- **Disproportionate students of color** (African-American & Hispanic), **students with IEP, male students, & low-income** (Chiag & Gill, 2010; Fairbrother, 2008; Perzigian, Afacan, Justin, & Wilkerson, 2016)

Evaluating alternative education programs:

- Studies on small, academically non-selective found **increased graduation rates, fewer failed classes, more credits earned, higher percentage of students' college ready** (Bloom, Thompson, Unterman, 2010; Bloom & Unterman, 2014)
- Study on behavior-focused alternative found **lower discipline referrals, lower suspensions but earned fewer credits** and had **lower attendance rates** compared to students in traditional schools (Wilkerson, Afacan, Perzigian, Justin, & Lequia, 2016)
- Study on academic remediation found **decrease in discipline referrals, suspensions, and increase in credit completion** (Wilkerson, Afacan, Yan, Justin, & Datar, 2016)
- Fairbrother (2008) found **students valued the small, supportive, and caring environment** but programs **lacked rigor** with low expectation and remedial course work.


Research Questions:



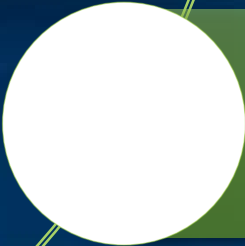
What differences exist in *academic achievement* for at-risk students who attended the Achieve Program and at-risk students who remained in the traditional setting?



What differences exist in *attendance rates* for at-risk students who attended the Achieve Program and at-risk students who remained in the traditional setting?



What differences exist in *office discipline referrals* for at-risk students who attended the Achieve Program and at-risk students who remained in the traditional setting?



What differences exist in *graduation rates* for at-risk students who attended the Achieve Program and at-risk students who remained in the traditional setting?

Research Design

- Quantitative quasi-experimental 2x2 Mixed Model Design
- Groups were already intact and lacked random assignment
- Pre & Post Archival Data
 - Attendance
 - office disciplinary referrals
 - cumulative GPA
 - graduation frequency counts for all participants
- Demographic Data
 - Ethnicity
 - SES
 - Gender
 - IEP or No IEP

Participants

112 At-risk students

Graduation cohorts 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016

- **Achieve Group: 57 students**
(Participated for at least one year)

- **Control Group: 55 students***

(Identified for Tier 2 support- Corrective Reading, Math Resource, or Academic Resource AND failed at least 2 classes during 9th grade)

**may include students referred to Achieve who chose not to participate*

	Achieve	No Achieve	All
N	57	55	112
Gender			
Male	39	39	78
Female	18	16	34
SES			
Free/Reduced Lunch	31	43	74
No Free/Reduced Lunch	26	12	38
Special Needs			
IEP	16	14	30
No IEP	41	41	82
Ethnicity			
Hispanic	15	26	41
American Indian	2	0	2
Asian	2	2	4
African American	14	12	26
White	22	15	37
Multi-Racial	2	0	2

*What differences exist in **ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT** for at-risk students who attended the Achieve Program and at-risk students who remained in the traditional setting?*

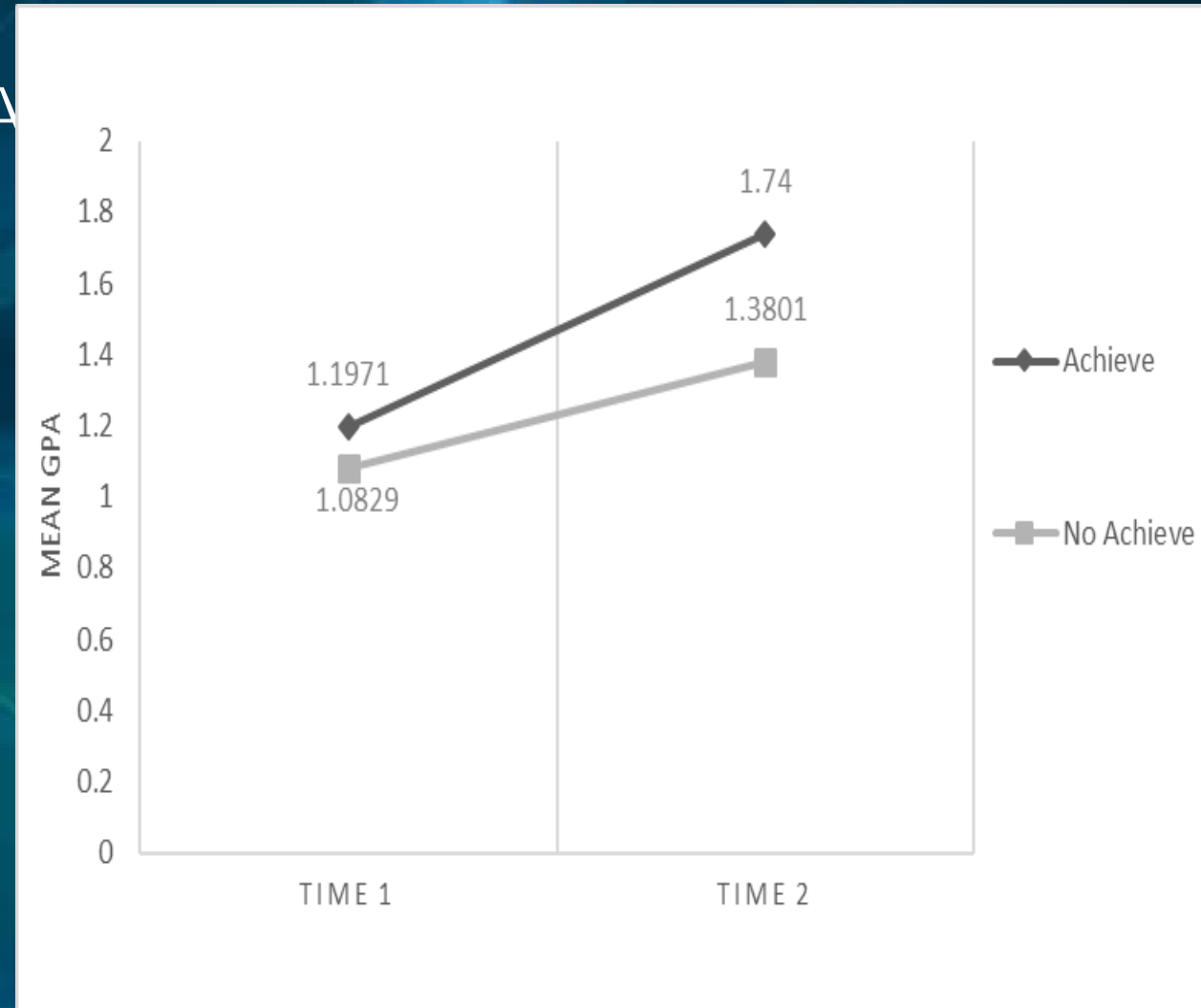
Data: Cumulative GPA

Analysis: Mixed Factorial ANOVA

Results:

Statistically significant interaction between school setting & time on GPAs ($F(1,110)=9.663, p = .002, h^2_p = .081$)

Statistically significant main effect of time on GPA
($F(1,110)=9.878, p < .001, h^2_p = .057$)



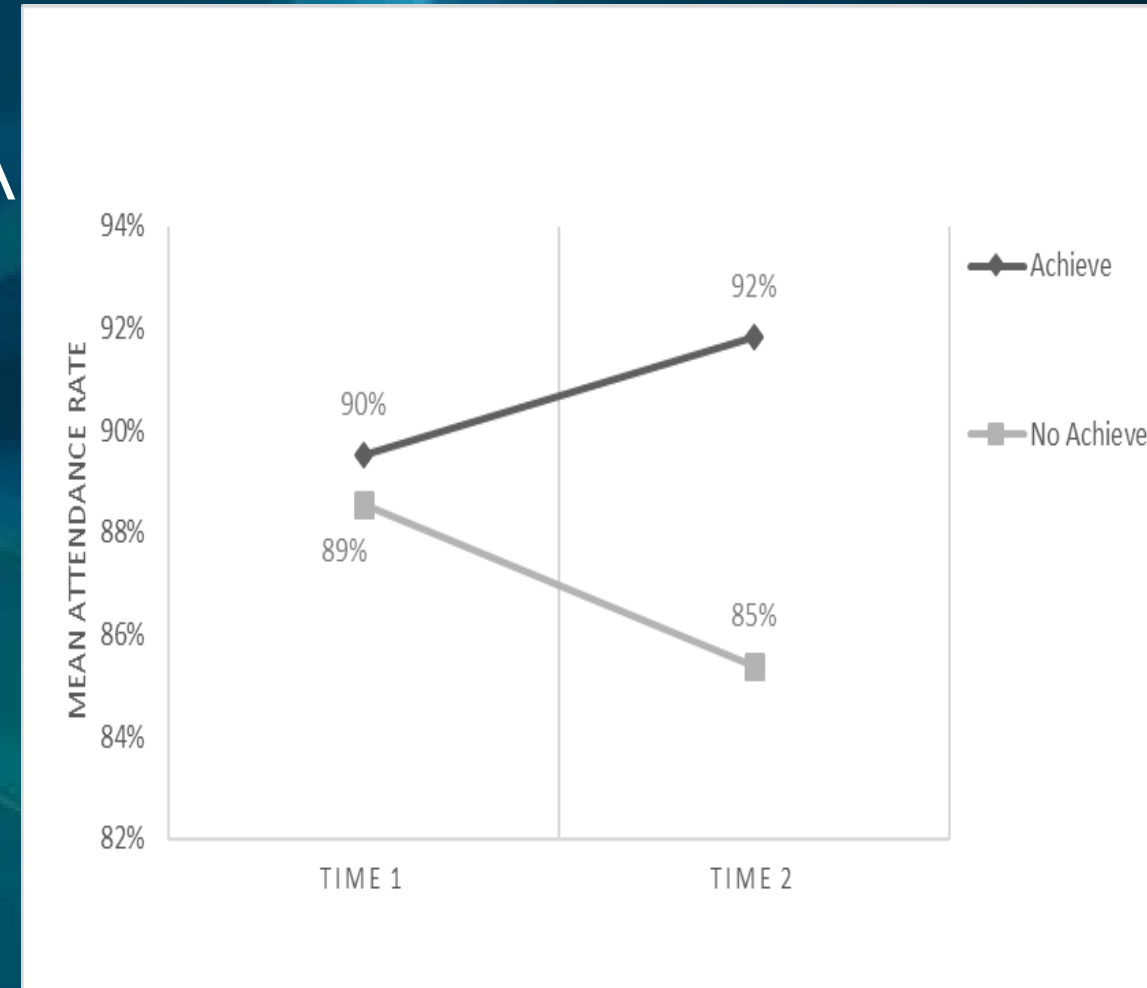
*What differences exist with **ATTENDANCE RATES** for at-risk students who attended the Achieve Program and at-risk students who remained in the traditional setting?*

Data: Attendance Rates
Analysis: Mixed Factorial ANOVA

Results:

Statistically significant interaction between school setting & time on attendance rates

$(F(1, 104)=10.576, p = .002, h^2_p = .092)$



*What differences exist in **DISCIPLINE OFFICE REFERRALS** for at-risk students who attended the Achieve Program and at-risk students who remained in the traditional setting?*

Data: Office Discipline Referrals

Analysis: Mixed factorial ANOVA

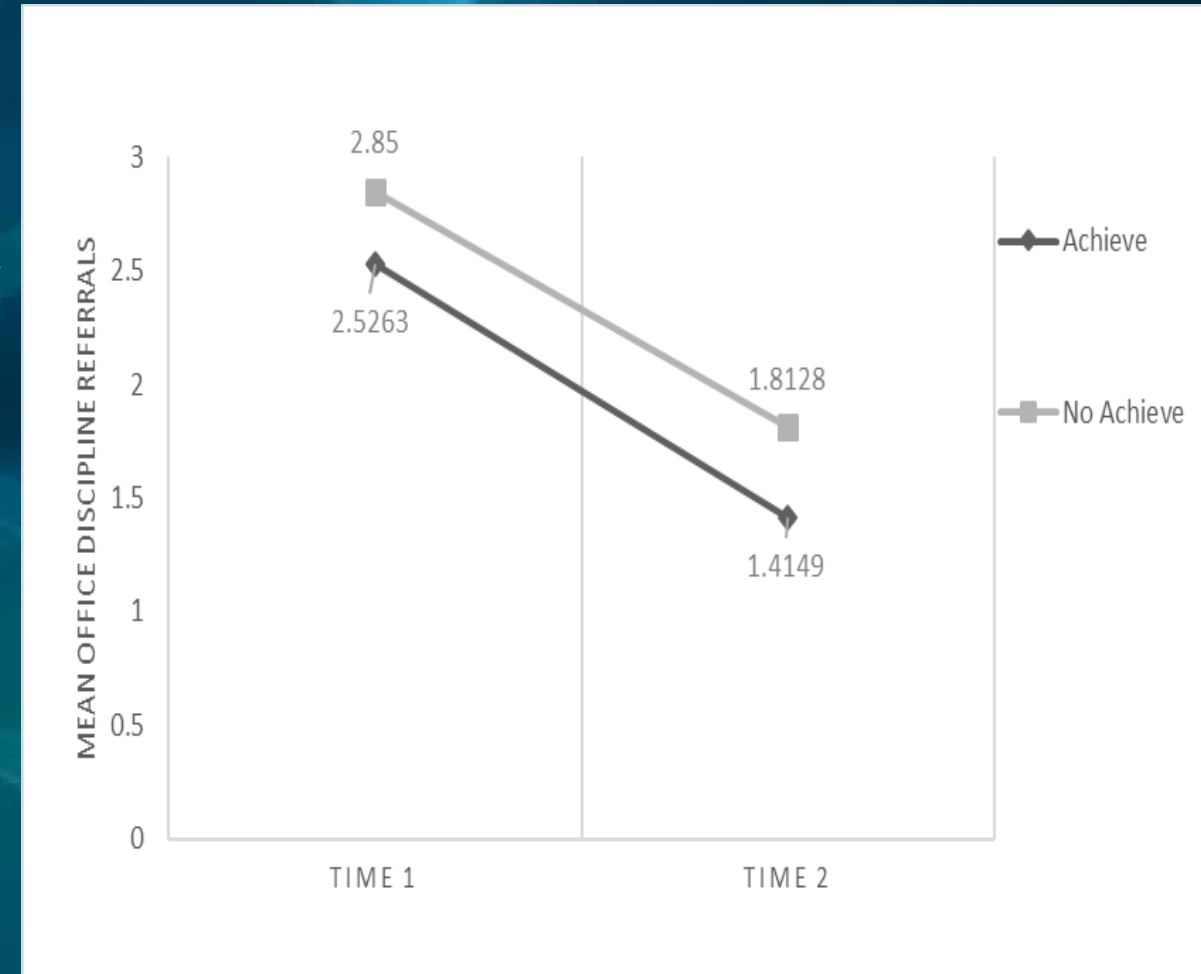
Results:

No statistically significant interaction between school setting and time on discipline office referrals

$(F(1,105)=.021, p = .885, \eta^2_p < .001)$

Statistically significant main effect of time on discipline referrals

$(F(1,105)= 21.464, p < .005, \eta^2_p = .170)$



*What difference exist in **GRADUATION RATES** for at-risk students who attended the Achieve Program and at-risk students who remained in the traditional setting?*

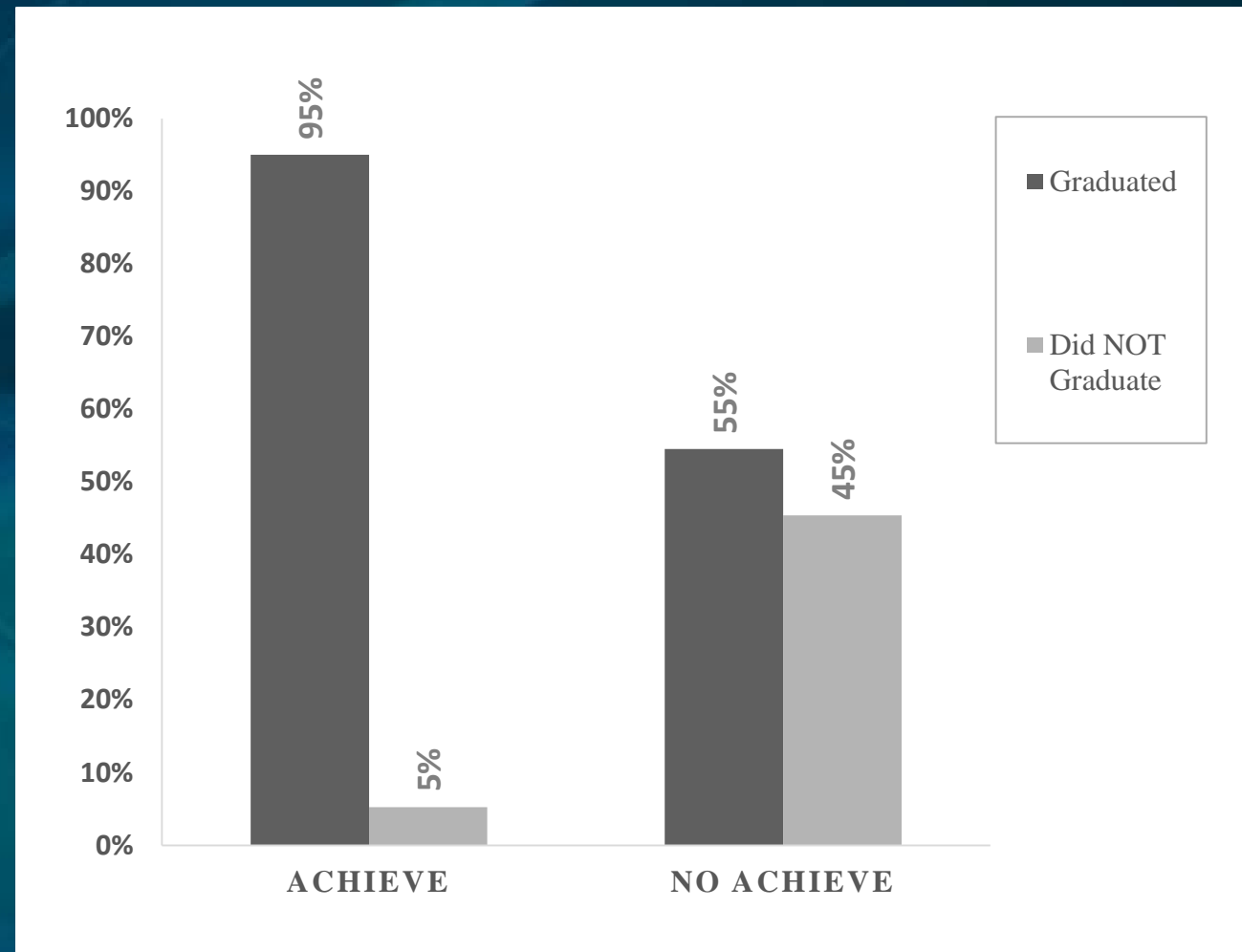
Data: Graduation Rates
Analysis: Pearson Chi Square Test

Results:
Statistically significant relationship between school setting and graduation from high school

$$\chi^2 (1, N = 112) = 24.115, p = < .001$$

Cramer's V= .464

- **Very strong relationship between graduation and attending the Achieve Alternative Education Program**



Conclusions & Implications

- Based on the findings of this study, participation in the Achieve Program had positive effects on student outcomes:
 - Improved academic achievement as measured by GPAs
 - Improved attendance rates
 - Increased graduation rates
 - 95% of Achieve graduated compared to only 55% of non-Achieve
- Support should continue for the Achieve Alternative Education Program and other similar alternative programs

Limitations

➤ Generalizability

- Findings are specific to the investigated school program

➤ Quasi-experimental design & inherent limitations due to not having a random sample

- Not able to control for other variables
- Students who chose to participate in Achieve may have been more motivated academically

➤ Only examined quantitative student outcome data

Recommendations

More research needed to examine the effectiveness of alternative education programs

- Explore **additional ways to measure** student outcomes
 - Academics: **credit completion, standardized test scores, commons assessments**
 - Discipline:
 - **distinguish between specific nature of discipline referral**
 - help to identify patterns and changes in behavior
 - **Pre-Post Behavior rating scales which may help measure changes/improvements**
- Expand to include **other types of data** *(student outcome data only tells part of story)*
 - Incorporate **quantitative data** including student voice
- **Longitudinal data** to examine long term outcomes to determine if prepared for post secondary options & success contributors to society

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