



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RE: Champaign Co. Alternative School

**Photo I.D.: Teacher Keith Hyslop assisting students.**

While most students glide through school, some can just as easily fall through the cracks. They may not be qualified for in-school services such as special education or tutoring, but they need a structured environment, according to Ron Schlater, alternative education supervisor for the Champaign County Alternative School.

All five Champaign County schools have the opportunity to choose an alternative solution for students who have made bad choices in their lives or those who are short on credit hours to graduate. Some may be involved in the court system or; subject to suspension or expulsion due to behavioral problems or lack of attendance.

“It’s a chance for these kids to feel good about themselves and work back into their home schools and be able to say, ‘I can get good grades’. It also gives those with disciplinary issues a place to be during the day, as opposed to home alone or on the streets”, says Schlater. “They get a lot more individualized attention and can work at their own pace better than in their home schools where they tend to get frustrated. We are an extension of school and they all remain students of their own schools”, he points out.

The alternative school is administered by the Madison/Champaign Educational Service Center (ESC) and is located in the Champaign Residential Services, Inc. (CRSI) new facility at 1150 Scioto Street. Attendance can be as few as 10 or 13 and, later in the school year, as high as 20 or more. Jr. High and Sr. High students attend. They are bussed from their home schools (Urbana, Graham, Triad, West Liberty-Salem or Mechanicsburg) and spend their school day on an individualized curriculum that meets each student’s needs. The classroom is conducted by one teacher, Keith Hyslop and two assistants, Dawn Ward and John Apple.

ESC Superintendent July Saylor says, “This program is invaluable. It serves to help many students earn credits towards their diplomas or helps them work towards a GED. It offers them a chance to start over in a different environment. Students are referred by the schools with parental permission, but the alternative might be suspension, expulsion or the inability to graduate due to lack of credits,” she explains.

The school was started in 2000 under the leadership of then Superintendent Hal Barker but exploration of the program began in 1996 with then Superintendent Carroll Meadows. It was originally located at Graham’s Board of Education office and later moved to Urbana to include participation from all county schools. Champaign

County Juvenile Court Judge John Newlin was involved in the early support of the program. Newlin provided funds for a study and implemented the use of on-site probation officers to assist with everyday school issues.

The program is funded by a grant from the Ohio Department of Education. In addition, there is a cost to each school district per student.

According to both Saylor and Schlater, an important part of the program is working with local community partners. CRSI and the Juvenile Employment Training Services (JETS) program shares people and resources. Byron Benning (program coordinator for the JETS program) meets with older students periodically to work on employability and work skills and he gets the kids involved in community projects such as the Champaign Co. Shrine Club aluminum can collection. The Champaign County Juvenile Court system provides on-site probation officers for in-school interaction. The Ben El Child and Family Center and Consolidated Services, Inc., both provide mental health and counseling services. Additionally students attend various YMCA activities on Friday afternoons as part of their physical education requirements.

“This is a community working together”, says Saylor of the program that has involved over 300 kids in the past four years. For more information about the program contact your local school principal or superintendent or the ESC office at 937-484-1557.

