



**Office of the Washington State Auditor
Pat McCarthy**

April 11, 2018

Greetings,

Today we are publishing the culmination of four years of audit work on Alternative Learning Experience programs. There are more than 250 ALE programs across Washington, taking shapes as different as alternative high schools, online courses, or specific classes or programs in public schools.

We have seen significant improvement in compliance with the requirements ALE programs must meet. We have also documented the special role these programs have in our education system. Most students seek out ALE as an educational choice, but for students who find traditional school settings overwhelming, who have significant medical issues, and many others, these alternative approaches to education are invaluable.

In 2013, the Legislature asked us to review ALE programs by auditing their finances and measuring student outcomes. Since then, we've audited the compliance of every ALE program in the state with more than 10 full-time students. We've visited ALE programs in person, interviewed educators and surveyed students and parents. The reports released today meet the intent of the Legislature's request.

The financial audits show more school districts are following ALE compliance requirements, resulting in lower levels of questioned costs. The performance audit work on student outcomes used qualitative analysis of information from educators, parents and students to document the value ALE instruction has within the state's educational system. But because of ongoing data quality issues, we were not able to independently verify the effectiveness of these programs.

Improving academic data will enable Washingtonians to make better choices in our education system overall. Better data will require continued effort from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the more than 300 school districts and education programs, the Education Research and Data Center, and others. We have offered recommendations for data improvement in our report, as well as recommendations to resolve common noncompliance issues we've found in audits of individual programs.

Please visit our website for an interactive map of ALE programs statewide, our reports and other materials. We want to empower every Washingtonian with information about their public services.

Thank you,


Pat McCarthy
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