

# **THE HISTORY OF YOUTH ACADEMY WITHIN THE CONTEXT AND HISTORY OF ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLING**

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## **Abstract**

Alternative education in America has existed for several decades. Born from egalitarian ideology and calls for social progressivity during the Civil Rights Movement, alternative education has assumed many forms including institutions specifically established to assist students with disciplinary issues, attendance troubles, substance abuse problems, and learning difficulties. Through an in-depth analysis of one such alternative education institution (Youth Academy in West Virginia), this article aims to explain what alternative education is, what it has become, and why alternative education institutions are necessary to help combat problematic social and educational issues in America. The philosophy of re-education is discussed as a theoretical teaching tool and the significance of Youth Academy as a model alternative education institution within its state and nationally is stressed. It was concluded that those entrusted with decision-making power within America's school systems would be wise to consider the potential benefits of establishing alternative education institutions by using Youth Academy as a possible blueprint.

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**Keywords:** Alternative Education; Re-Education; Student Dropouts; Residential Treatment Programs

## **INTRODUCTION**

This paper will aim to explore the history of Youth Academy (YA), an alternative residential treatment and educational institution in Fairmont West Virginia that has been serving at-risk families and children since 2002. Analysis will be constructed from primary (school internal records) and secondary sources and through in-depth interviews conducted with a YA

counselor and the director of public relations at the school. Born from local philanthropy, YA has the distinction of being the first level II residential program to house an on-ground school in the state of West Virginia. Since its founding, the school has nearly tripled its staff size and received local and national accolades for its effective family-centered, community-based approach. YA will be situated in the general and local (West Virginia) histories and contexts of alternative education and ultimately the analysis will point out how YA promotes social justice and equity and why this school should be valued as a model of quality alternative education and considered a blueprint for alternative education nationally.

During his presentation at the First International Conference on Educational Alternatives in 2005, holistic education pioneer Dr. Ron Miller asked the following two important questions: What are schools for? What can schools be? As for the former question, Dr. Miller explained that the history of schooling in the West over the past two centuries can be seen as the triumph of abstraction and bureaucratic management over local, communal, and organic ways of living and learning; the idea that public schooling was a form of social discipline that would help the industrial state harness the energies of the youth to the demands of a competitive system of production serving the interests of a national state (2005). In the name of social efficiency school leaders have often believed that “obedience to bureaucratic norms” was crucial to social progress as public schooling mechanically inducted young people into the ways of “modernity” (the ideas and technologies that emerged with the rise of corporate capitalism and nationalism in the West (Miller, 2005). Thus modernity has traditionally valued material wealth more highly than spiritual richness or communal responsibility. As a result of this trend, education has become increasingly standardized and uniform and students are not often perceived as active human

beings who seek a connection to their community, society, and the natural world (Miller, 2005; Stateuniversity.com, n.d.).

## **DEFINING ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION**

This brings us to the idea of alternative education. Philosophically, we can view alternative education as a pedagogical stance beginning with a genuine concern for the essential and diverse nature of humans rather than with an abstract program of channeling human energies in the service of a mechanistic system (Miller, 2005). Alternative education movements have been significantly influenced by humanist educators such as Pestalozzi, Froebel, Alcott, Montessori, and Rousseau. Rousseau in particular argued that education should follow the child's natural growth rather than the demands of society which tended to frustrate this growth (Miller, 2005). While inclusive definitions of alternative education are difficult to pin down, alternative schools are generally a result of the desire to provide the best education to *all* of America's students, a general current definition of alternative education is: Institutions designed to educate students who have not been successful in traditional K-12 schools and are at risk of school failure, often because of behavior, disciplinary, and safety concerns (Aron, 2006; Lange & Sletten, 2002; Logsdon, n.d.; Settles & Orwick, 2003; Stateuniversity.com, n.d.). Alternative schools generally include the following characteristics or elements: Small size; an emphasis on one-on-one interaction between teachers and students; a supportive and safe student-centered environment; opportunities for student success relevant to the students' future; creative teachers licensed in necessary subject areas; flexibility in structure and an emphasis on student decision-making; teacher and student empowerment; and instructional programs stressing a specific philosophy or school culture (D'Angelo & Zemanick, 2009; Hadderman, 2002; Lange & Sletten,

2002; Logsdon, n.d.; Settles & Orwick, 2003; Streeter, Franklin, Kim, & Tripodi, 2011).

Alternative schools can appear in many forms and configurations ranging from short to long-term programs and encompassing institutions such as charter schools, magnet schools, contract schools, residential alternatives, home schools, internet programs, and blended high school/college institutions (Stateuniversity.com, n.d.). A three-type typology of alternative schools developed by Mary Anne Raywid based on a school's goals can be described as follows:

**Type I** schools are schools of choice that utilize themes and innovative, challenging programs to attract students. A full instructional program at these institutions places students on track to graduate. Institutional examples include: magnet schools, charter schools, and job-based schools.

**Type II** schools are “last chance” schools where students are sentenced as a last-resort before expulsion. These are typically not schools of choice and their focus is on behavior modification or remediation; discipline is the distinguishing characteristics here. Placement is usually short-term.

**Type III** schools are schools of choice designed with a remedial focus on academic and/or socio-emotional issues. These programs typically offer counseling, access to social services, and academic remediation (Aron, 2006; Lange & Sletten, 2002).

It has been suggested that a fourth type of alternative program is emerging, one that may blur or combine the types (Aron, 2006). This emerging type will be evidenced in the analysis of YA.

## The History of Youth Academy within the Context and History of Alternative Schooling

As the number of youth who are not in school, not working, and do not have a diploma have not significantly decreased in America (over 3.5 million youth from age 16 to 24), the growth and interest in alternative schools as a means to serve these youth is on the rise (Aron, 2006). 39% of public school districts have at least one alternative school or program for students in grades 1-12 representing nearly 11,000 such programs in America (Aron, 2006).

Alternative schools are positively developing youth by providing them with educational and cognitive outcomes including: educational attainment; achievement motivation; study skills; oral and interpersonal communication skills; computer technology skills; and higher order thinking skills (Aron, 2006). Alternative school students also are shown to adjust better to higher education, report less anxiety and depression symptoms, and show greater life satisfaction and academic achievement when compared to their traditional school peers (Shankland, Genolini, Franca, Guelfi, & Ionescu, 2009). Recent in-depth research surrounding students' perceptions of traditional and alternative schools showed that compared to their previous traditional schools at-risk students highly preferred their experiences at their alternative schools claiming their traditional schools lacked: personal relationships with teachers, a focus on responsibility; opportunities to understand social issues, and positive peer relationships (Lagana-Riordan, Aguilar, Franklin, Streeter, Kim, Tripodi, & Hopson, 2011). Even students in mandatory alternative school assignments report being more engaged, more encouraged about graduating, and generally more satisfied with their alternative schools environments in relation to traditional environments (Carpenter-Aeby & Aeby, 2012). Many studies have shown that high-quality, well-staffed alternative education programs decrease truancy, act as deterrents to poor behavior in traditional schools, minimize expulsions, and enhance academic achievement (D'Angelo & Zemanick, 2009). These are important results given that today's learners are more diverse than

ever in terms of their backgrounds, interests, learning styles, and motivations. Split families, two-parent wage earners, longer commuting times, technology, and the prevalence of sex, drugs, and violence have contributed to the changing face of today's student (D'Angelo & Zemanick, 2009). In order to educate an increasingly diverse learner population with differing needs, America will benefit from transcending a "one size fits all" model of education in favor of establishing a wider variety of institutions, some of which will address the needs of students that cannot be met in traditional classrooms.

## **HISTORY OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION**

The history of alternative schools can be traced back to the birth of American education where educational opportunities differed based on race, gender, and social class. In the modern sense, however, the roots of alternative education lie in the civil rights movement as mainstream public education in the 1950s and early 60s was highly criticized for being racist and designed for the success of the elite few (Lange & Sletten, 2002; Settles & Orwick, 2003). By the end of the 1960's public education began to incorporate new models that offered educational alternatives either outside of public education or within the public school system (Lange & Sletten, 2002). Freedom schools (outside of public higher education) and free schools were developed at this time. The former focused on educating minority students according to a community-school model where the latter emphasized individual achievement in response to traditional schools which were thought to inhibit the exploration of natural intellect and curiosity (Lange & Sletten, 2002). The 1960s marked a period of educational innovation and change as public school educators were forced to consider the benefits of implementing alternative education programs.

## The History of Youth Academy within the Context and History of Alternative Schooling

Alternative education within the public school system increasingly took the form of “open schools” or schools marked by parent, student, and teacher choice, learning autonomy, non-competitive evaluation; and a student-centered approach (Lange & Sletten, 2002). Open schools included alternatives in the form of schools without walls, multi-cultural schools, and magnet schools. In the 1980s the definition of alternative schools narrowed to more conservative and remedial forms. At this time, alternative schools were geared toward students who were disruptive or failing in their home schools; collective decision-making was de-emphasized in favor of teaching basics (Lange & Sletten, 2002).

Today, alternative schools have grown to include a varied lot of institutions that can be aptly categorized under Raywid’s three-type typology as previously explained. It is estimated that over 20,000 alternative schools and programs currently operate within the U.S. public education system including public, private, home-school, and correctional institutions (Lange & Sletten, 2002). These institutions serve the important public purpose of giving diverse learners who may be alienated by the impersonal routines of conventional schooling opportunities to attain education and change their lives for the better (Miller, 2005). The cost benefits associated with these programs are potentially great as they could save taxpayer dollars by helping students avoid the criminal justice system even though costs associated with alternative education vary from program to program (Settles & Orwick, 2003). As we push forward in the era of accountability in schools it will be important for educators and students alike to: consider the specific benefits of alternative education for various student populations; understand the differences between various alternative programs and which types of students are likely to succeed in various respective programs; more clearly define metrics of success; and keep track of the proportion of students of color and low-income students who attend these schools (Lange &

Sletten, 2002). These last two points are crucial as demands for institutional efficiency increase and as society considers the potential drawbacks or stigmas associated with removing students from traditional classrooms later in students' lives (Hadderman, 2002; McGregor & Mills, 2011).

## **HISTORY OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION IN WEST VIRGINIA**

The history of alternative education in West Virginia can be aptly understood as a social response to the alarming number of student dropouts in the state. West Virginia defines a “dropout” as an individual who was enrolled in school at some time during the previous school year and was not enrolled on October 1 of the current school year or has not graduated from high school or completed a state approved educational program (Brock-Fowler, 2001, pp. 16-17). In a study of teens from 16 to 19 who are neither attending school nor working West Virginia ranked 50<sup>th</sup> or last in this area (Brock-Fowler, 2001, p. 2). In a study of West Virginia dropouts, the primary reasons students dropped out of school related to school belongingness issues, particularly, attendance violations, lack of participation in school activities, academic performance, student behavior, amount of received counseling services, and overall dislike of school (Brock-Fowler, 2001, p. 2). The creation of alternative schools in West Virginia was a direct response to these student dropout issues as these at-risk students were not being successfully served in traditional classrooms. Alternative schools would serve students whose disruptive behavior placed them at risk not to succeed in the traditional classroom and in adult life without positive intervention (Brock-Fowler, 2001, p. 4).

West Virginia's alternative education policy was adopted in 1996 and was directed at implementing the requirements of state legislation enacted by the legislature as part of the Safe Schools Bill (Brock-Fowler, 2001, p. 39). West Virginia's Board of Education policy holds the

The History of Youth Academy within the Context and History of Alternative Schooling

superintendent and the local board of education responsible for the district's alternative education policy and evaluating its effectiveness. In December of 1999, the West Virginia State Board of Education formed a committee to review the alternative education policy and articulated a flexible range of programs that could be considered viable "alternative" options to traditional programs; these alternative programs included: in-school suspension; a school within a school; a school at an alternative site; and after school programs (Brock-Fowler, 2001, p. 40). Programs would be deemed "effective" if they resulted in: academic gains; a reduction in dropout rates; reduction in incidents requiring disciplinary action; improved attendance and return to the regular program; and rates of completion of high school and successful job placement and retention (Brock-Fowler, 2001, p. 6).

## **YOUTH ACADEMY**

Within the context of this high West Virginia dropout culture, Youth Academy (YA) was privately founded in Fairmont, West Virginia in October of 2002. The founders of YA (Dr. David Bonasso and Dr. Ronald Pierce) are respectively a dentist and licensed psychologist who subscribed to the importance of helping troubled children in their home state of West Virginia and home county of Marion. After interviewing two important figures at YA, the school counselor and the director of public relations (whom I will refer to by title only to respect their privacy) it was clear that this institution was born from a lack of agreement as to how a successful alternative residential program should educate students (personal communication, February 25, 2013).

Drs. Pierce and Bonasso were alarmed by the high percentage of student dropouts in their state and did not think a certain segment of the alternative student population (students

experiencing socio-emotional, addiction, and disruptive behavior disorders) were being well served under the social, political, and economic conditions in West Virginia at the time (personal communication, February 25, 2013). Some educational administrators in West Virginia felt that alternative education in the state was successful because it allowed disruptive students to be removed from the classroom, sent to a separate site for alternative programming, and allowed to return to their homes in the same day (Brock-Fowler, 2001). Drs. Pierce and Bonasso felt that students would be more optimally served by living at the site of their alternative programming which would allow for more comprehensive and integrated delivery of alternative services to students. In addition, the doctors were tired of seeing students have to leave their counties to attend alternative programs; they felt this was logistically unnecessary (personal communication, February 25, 2013). They knew there was a lack of alternative educational facilities for students with addiction, truancy, and behavior problems in West Virginia and thus wanted to create a facility that would house these students around the clock and save them from having to leave their counties and state for alternative programming. YA is one of only two facilities in West Virginia that treat substance abuse and is the only level II residential institution in the state that has a school on site operating under the West Virginia state Board of Education.

Although the doctors clearly wanted a school at their institution from day one, YA started off as a level II residential treatment center only in 2002. The political and economic climate at the time made it difficult to receive state backing to start an on-grounds school. The doctors along with the YA Board of Directors had a certificate of need from the state yet still needed to lobby the state legislature for several years to get the approval for the on-grounds school which was established in 2008. The legislature was eventually sold on the idea that an on-grounds school would be more conducive to the effective all-day treatment of students and the fact that it

## The History of Youth Academy within the Context and History of Alternative Schooling

would be cheaper to keep students in the state for their treatment and schooling needs (personal communication, February 25, 2013).

The mission of YA is to provide accountable, effective, family-centered, community-based treatment services which are delivered in the least restrictive and most efficient manner (academyprograms.org). Some of the values that embody the institution include: commitment to service; respect; communication; family; safety; trust; and innovation (academyprograms.org). Some of the goals of YA include: to seize every opportunity as a learning moment; to provide an environment where feelings are respected; to maintain programming based on evolving family, student, and community needs; and to ensure that all programming is individualized to address each child's specific needs (academyprograms.org). These goals are consistent with the goals of many effective alternative education programs and have remained constant throughout the history of the institution (Aron, 2006; Brock-Fowler, 2001; Lange & Sletten, 2002). YA set its enrollment capacity at 22 children. The increasing demand for YA services induced the YA administration to create another institution on premises in 2009, the YORE academy. YORE was created to provide more opportunities for alternative education on premises. YA had achieved incredible popularity for its services and West Virginians were coming from all corners of the state to attend. Many parents were encouraging YA to increase its enrollment capacity and the diversity of the issues addressed on site (personal communication, February 25, 2013). This community demand and feedback in addition to the fact that youth substance abuse was reaching epidemic proportions in the state prompted the YA administration to designate YA as the institution to treat students exhibiting behavioral and/or emotional issues that prevent children from being maintained in the regular classroom; YA would extend services to students with ADHD, depression, conduct disorder, disruptive behavior disorder, and substance abuse (academy

programs.org). YORE Academy with a capacity of 24 students was designated to treat students with co-occurring issues namely substance abuse and mental health disorders. Thus, by 2009, the Youth Academy and YORE Academies existed under the umbrella of Academy Programs and students at both these academies were educated at the on-grounds school which operated under the West Virginia Department of Education's Office of Institutional Education Programs (OIEP). West Virginia students had the unique benefit of a variety of treatment services and a full curriculum that could lead to the attainment of a GED or high school diploma. While the YORE Academy is an important addition to YA, historical analysis from this point on will strictly focus on the Youth Academy (YA).

The uniqueness of the Academy Programs as an academic learning and behavioral learning site is increased by the uniqueness of its privately and publicly funded status. Private funds started the school and private donations continue to fund the school including generous donations from the founding doctors. However, the evolution into a state body has allowed a majority of the funding to come from state sources. In 2011, 54% of revenues to YA came from the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources and 36% came from West Virginia Medicaid (2011 YA Report). Medicaid pays for the treatment of students where the DHHR pays for the room and board (personal communication, February 25, 2013). The Academy Programs are actually registered with the West Virginia Department of Commerce as a private company even though it has a contract with DHHR.

The YA houses 22 total students including 10 females. Students must be referred to a particular academy which involves approval by the DHHR and a judge. The Academies pride themselves on meeting the needs of at-risk children and families in West Virginia. The average of male students in 2011 at YA was 15.86 and 15.62 for females; the average length of stay is

## The History of Youth Academy within the Context and History of Alternative Schooling

9.24 months for males and 10.09 months for females (2011 YA Report). 79% of males served in 2011 were on probation and 52% females were on probation. Where the female probation percentage has remained fairly consistent over the years, the male probation percentage has jumped by 34% over the last two years (2011 YA Report). A vast majority of students at YA have ADD and disruptive behavior disorders (78%) where the remaining 22% have depressive, anxiety, adjustment, impulse control, and cannabis use disorders. Of the 235 referrals received in 2011, 188 were not served in favor placing those students in higher and lower levels of care, sending them home, placing them closer to home (2011 YA Report). YA has always received many more referrals than it has the capacity to serve. The faculty and staff regret they do not have more beds to serve all students who might benefit from their residential services but current enrollment capacities (students with the most urgent need to enroll are given priority) ensure the highest quality treatment of students (personal communication, February 25, 2013).

It is important to understand that a majority of the youth that enroll at YA come from home and family lives that are deeply fractured and unhealthy. This fact has contributed to students being behind with regard to grade equivalency at school (personal communication, February 25, 2013). Despite this home-life disadvantage, students do remarkably well academically while enrolled at YA. For example, the average current student comes into YA with a 1.5 GPA and increases that average to 2.85 while enrolled. Throughout the history of YA, students' GPAs have always significantly increased after enrollment. Further, students earn a much larger percentage of the possible course credits they pursued at YA (96%) than they did at their previous traditional institution (56%) (2011 YA Report). It is important to note that most YA students go back to their original traditional schools after they have completed their treatment process and for the most part these re-enrollments are successful over the long term in

terms of academic success and personal readjustment (personal communication, February 25, 2013).

Academic successes such as these can be attributed to the YA's philosophy and approach to treatment and learning, namely, Re-Education or (Re-ED). Re-ED is a philosophical basis posited by Nicholas Hobbs for working with children and youth who have emotional and-/or behavioral disorders. At YA, Re-ED is based on 2 basic principles: one that humans derive the most benefit out of life as it is lived, not as it is talked about and two, the child is not blamed for his or her maladaptive behavior or framed as having an underlying illness or pathology but rather his or her behavior is a symptom of a malfunction in the child's family, school, community, or relationships with other people (2011 YA Report). Thus the child is encouraged to live life now as opposed to dwelling on the past and to trust a caring adult on-site who will help the child understand his or her personal strengths and build upon them. Implicit within a Re-ED approach is the idea that intelligence can be taught, it is not fixed and time is an ally in the improvement of one's life. Instead of sending children to 12 step programs, Re-ED helps the increasing number of students with substance abuse problems in West Virginia nurture their natural feelings in a supportive and structured community atmosphere (personal communication, February 25, 2013).

Re-ED has been a founding philosophy of YA and has remained an important part of the overall YA experience since day one. This philosophy was chosen because the founders wanted students to believe that their feelings were important and that they had control over creating more positive outcomes for themselves (personal communication, February 25, 2013). The Re-Ed philosophy provided the basis for the treatment and academic curriculum. As for the treatment side of the program, students must complete six levels of goal-oriented work to complete the treatment process. Throughout this process an emphasis is placed on community

## The History of Youth Academy within the Context and History of Alternative Schooling

projects. Students are placed into one of two groups (Cherokees and Spartans) and encouraged to complete important community projects within their respective groups. For example, recent community projects have included litter control projects, a talent show, and various work projects (personal communication, February 25, 2013). These projects can be considered part of the extra-curriculum although they are still governed by the Re-ED philosophy and part of the overall holistic approach to treating and educating YA students (personal communication, February 25, 2013).

Although one may expect students with behavioral and substance abuse issues to be difficult to teach or manage, by many accounts, there have been very few disciplinary issues at YA (no fights have yet to be reported) throughout its existence and students who have been on campus longer often take younger students under their protection and keep them “in-line” if they appear to be attempting to act out. The school counselor attributes student order to the fact that student feelings are always nurtured and positively re-directed and to the fact that students under probation fear the consequences of facing legal consequences for poor behavior (personal communication, February 25, 2013).

Teachers at YA’s on grounds school are dedicated to working with students with special needs. There are (and have always been) five full-time teachers at YA’s on grounds school who teach one of five core courses and three electives and there is always a teacher-counselor in the room during each class to provide assistance to students who may be experiencing physical or emotional difficulties while learning; in instances where a student is experiencing personal issues in class a teacher-counselor “huddles” with that student and devises an impromptu plan to solve the issue (personal communication, February 25, 2013). Teachers at the on grounds school are eager to work with student population yet there have been instances where certain teachers have

been “scared away” or changed their mind after interviewing which probably can be attributed to their new found hesitance and fear of working with an alternative student population (personal communication, February 25, 2013). This same fear or hesitance was demonstrated by some of the residents of Fairmont, West Virginia as opposition to an alternative school may irk individuals who tend to compare alternative schools to juvenile detention centers or prisons (personal communication, February 25, 2013).

There is currently a relatively low staff turnover rate at YA. All staff members and faculty members are required to complete an initial probationary 90 day period of employment where new faculty and staff shadow a senior staff or faculty member (2011 YA Report). YA started with 30 total staff members in 2002 and now has over 80 employees. All faculty members are certified in the area they teach in. The staff turnover rate (which includes faculty members) has decreased from 38% in 2009 to 24% in 2011 (2011 YA Report). This decrease can be attributed to an increased internal focus on developing and meeting the needs of staff members (personal communication, February 25, 2013).

In terms of satisfaction and effectiveness, YA families and students are very satisfied with their experiences on campus. Recent returned surveys from families of students at YA illustrate that there was high satisfaction in reference to being informed about intake at the program, overall communication, child progress, and child safety (2011 YA Report). Families are always encouraged to get involved in every aspect of their child’s life at YA and meetings are held between administrators, teachers, counselors, and families at least once per month; this arrangement is especially appreciated by family members. Families are also highly satisfied with the addition of a new gymnasium and dining hall facility on campus a couple years back that has

## The History of Youth Academy within the Context and History of Alternative Schooling

apparently increased opportunities for student activity and increased the quality of food on campus (personal communication, February 25, 2013).

YA effectiveness measures are always predicated on successful student outcomes. While metrics of effectiveness are also connected to variables such as average length of stay, number of residents served, satisfaction surveys, and occupancy rate, student outcomes in terms of increased signs of student behavioral adjustment and increased academic performance during and after enrollment are the most important measures of institutional effectiveness (personal communication, February 25, 2013; 2011 YA Report).

## **CONCLUSION**

Despite a common everyday view of history as a collection of facts or observations associated with a particular time period it is perhaps more important or apt to understand history as a process where something is constructed through personal memories that rely on interpretation (Butchart, 1986, p. 3). In addition, studying history is a logical way to understand the broader historical currents of our society and of our world (Butchart, 1986, p. 5). This historical investigation of the Youth Academy in Fairmont, West Virginia can be seen not only as an institutional analysis but also a study of the overall history of alternative education nationally and within West Virginia. All institutions are embedded within social, political, cultural, and economic realities that provide the context for that institution. The investigation of YA can more broadly be situated in questions of what schools are and what schools might be. The idea that schooling in America has traditionally valued social efficiency and material wealth more highly than spiritual richness or communal responsibility bears repeating and provides the philosophical backdrop to the need for and creation of alternative educational programs.

Alternative schools promote social justice and equity by providing opportunities for learners who are not well served by traditional schools to grow personally and academically in nurturing and appropriate environments.

The Youth Academy (and its interrelated YORE Academy and on grounds school) is truly a unique and important institution in the state of West Virginia. It was born out of philanthropical urges that responded to context of schooling at the time in West Virginia, a context that included high student dropout and idleness rates and a lack of resources and opportunities to address these problems. The founders of YA used their own funds to create an institution that would address diverse learner needs both behaviorally and academically by combining a mixture of alternative program typologies to provide behavior modification and academic remediation. The combination of an on-grounds school and a residential treatment center at YA has provided opportunities for at-risk learners to prosper that were not available prior to its founding. From the founding of YA to the creation of the on grounds school to the founding of the YORE academy, the history of the Youth Academy is one that is situated in the social and educational needs of the state it is located in. As a sense of urgency to appropriately educate as many children as possible grows, one can only hope that institutions such as the Youth Academy will continue to be established in the name of meeting needs of local populations and showing us what schools might be.

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