

Juvenile Justice Educational Enhancement Program

2006 Annual Report to the Florida Department of Education

I. Introduction

With the publication of this Executive Summary and the 2006 Annual Report to the Florida Department of Education (DOE), the Juvenile Justice Educational Enhancement Program (JJEEP) completes nine years of operations. During this period, JJEEP has focused on the review, development, and collection of data to inform its priorities and shape its practices. JJEEP has continually strived to incorporate new research evidence into its quality assurance (QA) and technical assistance (TA) processes, as well as use the results of research to formulate larger policy recommendations.

JJEEP will continue to implement its mission to positively influence the lives of Florida's delinquents through the continuous improvement of educational services while youth are incarcerated, and by conducting research that examines the factors that impact youth as they return to their communities and attempt to continue their schooling and/or gain meaningful employment. During the past nine years, countless numbers of Florida's delinquent youth have benefited from the receipt of quality educational services while incarcerated, and these benefits are now becoming even more focused upon the specific educational needs of different groups of incarcerated youth thereby facilitating their successful community reintegration.



## II. 2006 Results

- JJEEP completed 163\* QA reviews of programs that provided educational services to approximately 10,000 youths on any given day. Overall, 53 programs (33%) scored in the high satisfactory or superior range, and 23 programs (14%) scored in the below satisfactory range.
- Twenty-three programs received overall failing scores and 11 programs failed the same standard for the second consecutive year. Forty-seven programs received corrective action plans (CAPs). As in previous years, transition was the standard for which the most programs (29) received below satisfactory scores.
- JJEEP's technical assistance efforts included on-site visits to 21 low QA performing educational programs. Although more programs had below satisfactory QA scores and corrective actions compared with 2005, the majority of programs that received on-site TA visits demonstrated improvement in their 2006 QA scores.
- The trend analysis of Florida juvenile justice teachers demonstrated that the percentage of teachers with professional certification has increased from 55% in 2001 to 60% in 2006. The percentage of in-field teachers has increased from 11% to 29% in math, 14% to 31% in science, 19% to 35% in English, and 28% to 46% in social studies. Despite the progress, out-of-field teaching remains a large concern, especially in math and science. In addition, 41% of teachers in juvenile justice schools have fewer than five years of teaching experience, and 36% have taught in their current juvenile justice school for less than one year.
- Research findings from a longitudinal analysis of youth that were released from residential programs in FY 2000-2001 indicate that youths benefit from educational gains while committed. They are more likely to attend school upon release, earn a high school diploma or its equivalent, and maintain employment. Although older youth are less likely to return to school after release, they are more likely to be employed.
- Research findings considering male and female youth who were committed to residential programs in 2002-2003 suggest differences in the education characteristics of male and female delinquents. Prior to their commitment, females had higher incoming grade point averages and were significantly more likely to be on or above their age-appropriate grade levels. In addition, 51% of the male sample was found to have a disability compared to only 35% of the female sample.
- During commitment, females earned slightly more credits per student than did males. Males and females earned the same proportion of core academic credits, but females earned significantly more elective credits than career/technical credits. The opposite was true for males.
- Prior research findings have demonstrated that higher levels of education attainment reduce the likelihood of recidivism for both adults and juveniles. In addition, education attainment affects future employment opportunities, resulting in a possible indirect effect on recidivism for older youth and young adults. Findings on employment for younger adolescents are mixed, possibly indicating that employment is not as effective as education for younger youth who have not completed high school.

\*Two QA reviews were conducted late in the year and are not included in the final results.

- Studies focusing on adolescent delinquents have reported that most do not graduate from high school or earn a GED diploma while committed, nor do many of these youth return to school upon release. Many of the prior studies report individual and community level factors that impact both education achievement and employment, including minority status, socioeconomic status, and community disorganization.

### III. Recommendations

#### Transition Services

- Ensure that age-appropriate and differentiated educational services are provided to youth while they are committed. Younger youth should receive strong academic instruction and transition support services that provide assistance in returning to school upon release. Older youth, for whom it is determined are unlikely to return to school upon release, should focus upon the attainment of a GED and career education.
- Post-release support services should focus on the provision of transition services identified in students' individual educational plans (IEPs) for youth with disabilities and the provision of in-school support services for all youth. In addition, community support services are needed to assist youth with obtaining and maintaining meaningful employment.
- As part of their cooperative agreements with DJJ, school districts should develop local transition protocols for youth who are returning to their districts from juvenile justice facilities throughout the state.

#### Highly Qualified Teachers

- Collaborate with state colleges and universities to prepare future teachers for working with at-risk and delinquent youth, to place college students in juvenile facilities for their teaching practicum, and focus on early recruitment.
- Create incentives for teaching in juvenile justice education programs such as designating it as a critical teacher shortage area.
- Expand the use of the middle grades integrated curriculum certification to grades 10–12 for appropriate courses.

#### Monitoring and Accountability

- Align the current QA process with the traditional school year and report student performance data as part of each program's annual QA report.
- Conduct student performance and academic gains research using the state's new uniform entry and exit assessment, and annually report academic student performance data for juvenile justice education programs.

#### Career and Technical Education

- Sequentially report to the legislature longitudinal findings on the relationship between career and technical training for older committed youth and employment and recidivism following release.
- Expand opportunities and funding for committed youth who have received a high school diploma or its equivalent to participate in career/technical and/or post-secondary education.
- Continue implementation of the multiagency plan for career education that includes curriculum, goals, funding, transfer of credits, and outcome measures for career programming in juvenile commitment facilities.

## IV. Conclusions

JJEEP's QA and research efforts are enabling Florida to continuously improve the quality of juvenile justice educational services across the state and increase the academic achievement of thousands of the state's detained and com-

mitted delinquent youths. Moreover, 2007 legislative efforts have resulted in an approximate \$12.5 million educational funding increase for juvenile justice educational programs, incentive funding for teachers, and a ten-school-day window for entry testing of youth, which allows for more accurate testing information upon entry.

These programs. Specifically, JJEEP and DOE initiated extensive technical assistance efforts in Spring 2007. These efforts emphasize on-site visits that include meetings with school district officials and school superintendents when possible. On-site technical assistance visits are intended to identify systemic issues that have contributed to each program's low performance. The visits are also intended to establish consensus among JJEEP, DOE, school districts, and educational program providers in an effort to correct the systemic issues that have contributed to low performance.

JJEEP's longitudinal research has identified that, although attending school post release and the attainment of a high school diploma reduce the likelihood of rearrest, many youth do not return to school or drop out before earning their diploma. In addition, educational attainment impacts future employment. Given the emphasis on education's potential to reduce recidivism, JJEEP's longitudinal research will focus on examining different groups of youth during the community reintegration process to better determine the factors that effect particular groups of youth's long-term educational attainment, employment and successful community reintegration. This research will ultimately lead to the identification of what works best and for whom while incarcerated and during community reintegration.

The identification of habitually low performing programs has contributed to the development of new protocols for working with

