

CHAPTER 13

www.JJEEP.org: THE JJEEP WEB SITE

13.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the new Juvenile Justice Educational Enhancement Program (JJEEP) web site. In revising the web site, we have attempted to provide visitors with comprehensive coverage of our multiple and interrelated functions and activities. On the web site, visitors can access numerous items of information. Further, we have provided an interactive virtual tour that illustrates the processes and interrelationship between JJEEP's research, quality assurance (QA), technical assistance (TA), and policy functions. The reader can find the web site at www.JJEEP.org.

This chapter is comprised of three subsequent sections. Section 13.2 provides an overview of the web site's components. Section 13.3 provides a description of the virtual tour component of the web site. Section 13.4 concludes the chapter with a summary discussion.

13.2 Overview

The mission of JJEEP, which is identified on the web site, is to ensure that each student assigned to a juvenile justice program in Florida receives high-quality and comprehensive educational services that increase the student's potential for future success. This mission is achieved by performing several functions, including research, QA, TA, and the development of policy recommendations.

By visiting the *Quality Assurance* section of the web site one can find a great deal of information about what takes place during a quality assurance review, such as how long a review usually takes, what data are collected during a review, and how the data are collected. Each review is based upon educational quality assurance standards for detention centers, day treatment programs, and residential commitment programs, as appropriate. Available on the web site are downloadable versions of all the standards, including standards from previous years. Each educational quality assurance standard includes key indicators that help web site visitors understand the expectations for each standard that guide the reviewer during a QA review. Also available are the rating guidelines that allow web site visitors to view the methodology behind the rating system and learn exactly what the ratings mean.

If a program does not perform well during a QA review the *Corrective Action Process* is initiated. The primary intent of developing a corrective action plan (CAP) is to establish a procedure that will ensure that school districts and juvenile justice educational programs assume a proactive role in providing quality educational services to the approximately 10,000 students who are assigned to juvenile justice facilities on any given day in Florida.

The web site details the corrective action process and lists the sanctions and interventions that can occur if a school district and educational program do not successfully implemented a CAP in a timely manner.

Proceeding further into the web site, a component on *Technical Assistance* (TA) is provided. Included in this component are a list of vocational planning resources that may be helpful in assisting students with employment as part of their successful reintegration into community life and a comprehensive program list. Several technical assistance documents are also made available, such as technical assistance papers, Department of Education (DOE) memos, important information on the General Educational Development (GED) Exit Option, and links to other useful technical assistance sites. A Frequently Asked Questions section, discussed below, provides additional TA on important questions that arise often.

Under the heading of *Research and Resources*, visitors can learn about the ongoing research JJEEP conducts that identifies and validates the most promising juvenile justice educational practices. Other ongoing research efforts include analyses of transition and aftercare services youths receive to determine what types of aftercare services work for what type of youth. Additional research efforts include curriculum, special education services, privatization, teacher qualifications and training, education and recidivism, and validating promising practices as best practices. Additionally, JJEEP is gathering data and conducting analyses on program level educational outcomes, funding, facility size, gender issues, and in-depth community reintegration outcomes in relation to educational program quality and youth characteristics.

From this research and related QA and TA activities, JJEEP generates an *Annual Report* for the Florida DOE, which assists in providing specific educational program policy findings and conclusions that address the question, "what works best and for whom" in Florida's juvenile justice education programs. On the web site, one can read or download the current issue of the annual report and reports from previous years. Other publications created from JJEEP's research include, (1) *Data-Driven Juvenile Justice Education*, (2) *Dare to Dream: A Guide to Planning Your Future for Students in the Juvenile Justice System*, and (3) a *Special Issue of Evaluation Review, June 2002*. Further, links are available to the various power point presentations JJEEP has made to local, state, national, and international audiences.

The *Events and News* section of the web site provides visitors with information on new publications that JJEEP has produced and upcoming deadlines, including registration dates for conferences and application dates for the *Teacher of the Year* (TOY) award. Other Teacher of the Year information is available in this section, such as a list of former Teacher of the Year recipients and their pictures, and an online application to nominate a teacher. The winners are awarded with resolutions from the Florida Cabinet and plaques, certificates, and monetary awards from the DOE.

The web site also provides information on *JJEEP staff members*. JJEEP's personnel consist of an array of multitalented individuals with diverse educational experiences and backgrounds. The web site provides a description of what each individual does at JJEEP, brief bio, curriculum vita, as well as a way to contact each person, including mailing and e-

mail addresses. In addition to the contact information provided for each of the staff members, it is possible to get in touch with JJEEP using our online contact form.

Finally, a *Frequently Asked Questions* (FAQ) section is provided. By going to this section visitors can learn answers to common questions about quality assurance, technical assistance, research and resources, and other questions about JJEEP. Some examples include, “What geographical area does JJEEP serve?” “What is the process and time line for completion of the QA report?” and “What criteria are used to determine if IEP and IAP goals and objectives are specific and individualized?”

13.3 Virtual Tour

The virtual tour enables web site visitors to learn and experience the activities of JJEEP through the use of photographs, audio recordings, and textual descriptions. In addition, there are several question and answer scenarios throughout the tour that provide visitors with an interactive experience. The virtual tour focuses upon providing information about the four major functions of JJEEP: research, quality assurance, technical assistance, and policy formulation. The tour is divided into several segments: an Overview, JJEEP’s History and Philosophy, Research, Quality Assurance, Corrective Action Process, Technical Assistance, and Policy and Initiatives, which are listed in a menu below the main window of each tour page. Clicking on any segment heading will move you to that segment so that you can begin viewing the pages from that point. Visitors will find it useful that an index to all of the pages in the tour is available, allowing the visitor to enter the tour at any point. Also useful, is the ability to move back and forth among tour pages.

As visitors progress through the segments of the tour, a number of highlights are provided. Under the heading of *Overview*, one can read the reasons why the web site was created and JJEEP’s mission and vision statement. Also available is a welcome statement from JJEEP’s Principal Investigator, Dr. Thomas G. Blomberg, which can be heard using the audio feature of the web site.

The history available in the virtual tour is extensive, starting from the federal class action suit filed by a student known as Bobby M. and three others who claimed that they had experienced inhuman treatment while housed in three separate, high security Florida training schools in 1983. The *History and Philosophy* segment continues through different legislation culminating in JJEEP’s conception, such as the Juvenile Justice Act of 1990, which completely revamped Florida’s juvenile justice system, the creation of the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), and the Juvenile Justice Reform Act in 1994 that required that quality assurance reviews be conducted. Finally, in 1998, the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Florida State University and DOE began a project, which became known as the Juvenile Justice Educational Enhancement Program (or JJEEP). A year later, important and unique legislation was enacted that truly distinguished Florida’s approach to juvenile justice education. House Bill 349 specified that the annual quality assurance reviews of each of the state’s approximate 200 juvenile justice educational programs and technical assistance to these programs were to be guided by ongoing “best educational practices” research. This legislation means that as our research knowledge of

what constitutes best practices in juvenile justice educational programs develops, so should our quality assurance standards and technical assistance. This has resulted in an “annual raising of the bar” that ensures Florida’s juvenile justice youths are receiving continuously improving quality education.

Moving through the tour, visitors can learn about JJEEP *Research*. Much of the research has focused on what constitutes effective educational practices and effective educational programs for youths being served in juvenile justice facilities. Promising educational practices have been identified and their presence has been linked to quality educational programs in Florida’s juvenile facilities. The next step in identifying program effectiveness is to identify whether these “promising” programs provide a long-lasting positive impact on students after release. In an effort to identify these effects, it is imperative to consider outcome variables for students released from these programs throughout the state. Therefore, JJEEP has developed a research design to examine program effectiveness by measuring community reintegration variables for youths released from programs in Florida, including family, school, employment, and subsequent crime.

It is important to understand how JJEEP’s research guides its various activities and functions. The quality assurance standards, technical assistance and policy initiatives are adjusted annually in relation to the educational best practices research findings. This raising of the bar means that what is expected of quality educational programs in Florida’s juvenile justice facilities is subject to annual changes in standards and key indicators as dictated by best education practice research.

JJEEP is committed to disseminating information about its research activities and initiatives. In addition to the annual report to the Florida DOE and the Florida Legislature, JJEEP staff also produce publications such as monographs, journal articles, and manuals. These publications help aid practitioners in their efforts to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of educational programs for youths in juvenile justice facilities.

Next on the tour is a section on *Quality Assurance*. Quality assurance reviews are site visits that annually evaluate and monitor educational processes of every juvenile justice educational program in Florida. Process-driven educational standards, which are based on current law and educational best practices, are used to guide each quality assurance reviewer through the on-site evaluation process. Reviews usually take place over three days, but may take up to five days for larger programs or when extenuating circumstances require.

While on site, the reviewers review documents, observe classrooms, treatment team meetings, exit transition meetings, and interview teachers, students and other personnel. At the end of the second day, the reviewer discusses preliminary findings with the principal and/or the lead educator and confirms the exit time with all parties involved. On the last day of the review, the reviewer conducts a final wrap-up to identify any areas that need further examination. This may include additional document reviews, observations, or interviews. When the reviewer has completed gathering data, he or she finishes the program’s preliminary ratings and recommendations to be discussed during the exit meeting. Normally

prior to but, if necessary, during the exit meeting, the program may supply the reviewer with additional information that may support a change in a finding.

A corrective action process begins if one or more of the priority indicators receives a rating of three or below during a quality assurance review. The primary intent of developing a corrective action process is to establish a procedure that will ensure that school districts and juvenile justice programs do, in fact, provide quality educational services to the students who are assigned to juvenile justice facilities on any given day in Florida.

The next component of the tour is an area for which JJEPP has found an overwhelming need, namely, *Technical Assistance*. Technical assistance is guided by research in current best practices and is integrated into all of JJEPP's activities, including the quality assurance review site visit. The educational quality assurance reviewers provide the majority of technical assistance on-site during their quality assurance review visits and through written recommendations in their final review reports. Additionally, DOE and JJEPP make site visits, network lower-rated programs with higher-performing programs, sponsor conferences and hold workshops to determine school district and program recommendations for the annual revision of the educational quality assurance standards. JJEPP also facilitates meetings and training sessions, including annual regional meetings, to provide (1) updates on new quality assurance and legislative requirements, (2) clarification of the educational quality assurance standards, and (3) inservice training that targets statewide areas of deficiencies. Finally, this web site www.jjeep.org, was designed and developed primarily for the purpose of providing technical assistance to all parties concerned with the education of juvenile justice youth.

The final component of the virtual tour is *Policy and Initiatives*. This component argues that what must guide Florida's future juvenile justice educational policy efforts are focused research results. JJEPP makes policy recommendations based primarily on the quality assurance reviews, technical assistance, and research initiatives that it conducts annually, and that are aimed at ensuring the successful transition of youths back into their community, home, school, and work settings. Several policy initiatives currently that JJEPP currently implements are reviewed. For example, JJEPP is working toward the testing of a literacy standard that may eventually lead to standards in mathematics, science, and other core areas of the academic curriculum. JJEPP is also working to develop a research-driven quality assurance system for school discipline programs.

Finally, JJEPP's web site will be updated continuously to reflect JJEPP's current activities, finding, and new initiatives. The reader is encouraged to save the web site address (www.jjeep.org) and go to it frequently in order to see the latest updates. Reader comments and suggestions on ways to improve the web site are greatly encouraged and appreciated.

13.4 Summary Discussion

Since 1998 JJEPP has been carrying out its multiple research, QA, technical assistance, and policy functions. What has become clear from these interrelated functions is that the receipt of quality education can make a positive difference in the lives of delinquent youths. Yet,

while Florida has made significant strides in advancing quality juvenile justice education, the majority of programs remain average or below. The role of technical assistance, therefore, is fundamental if these average and below programs are to be significantly improved. The new JJEEP web site is one important component to JJEEP and DOE's continuing effort to target and accelerate effective technical assistance to Florida's juvenile justice educational programs.