

# **CHAPTER 15**

## **SUMMARIES, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS, AND 2003 INITIATIVES**

### **15.1 Introduction**

During 2002, the Juvenile Justice Educational Enhancement Program (JJEPP) continued to advance its research, quality assurance (QA), technical assistance, and policy functions. As cited in Chapter 1, our 2002 research continues to demonstrate that quality education does, in fact, serve as a turning point in the delinquent to crime life course of many juvenile justice youths. With regard to QA trends, while JJEPP continues to annually raise the bar in educational program expectations, overall statewide QA educational program performance continues to improve. During 2002, JJEPP and the Florida Department of Education (DOE) substantially expanded technical assistance services through statewide training and follow-up site visits to low performing programs. Moreover, JJEPP's 2002 policy activities were substantially expanded through the QA pilot project for Volusia County's alternative school discipline schools and the development of a proposal and subsequent planning for a Center for Juvenile Justice and Education and Training for university students interested in teaching careers with delinquent and other at-risk youths.

This chapter is comprised of three subsequent sections. Section 15.2 provides summaries of Chapters 2-14. Section 15.3 draws conclusions and recommendations from JJEPP's 2002 activities and findings. Section 15.4 closes the chapter with identification and discussion of particular research, QA, technical assistance, and policy initiatives JJEPP will be addressing during 2003.

### **15.2 Chapter Summaries**

Chapter Two reports upon the 2002 QA findings that show a slight decline in overall statewide mean QA scores for the first time since JJEPP began conducting QA reviews in 1998. The chapter concludes, however, that this modest decline was likely a consequence of the increasing numbers of programs across Florida being designated by the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) as deemed or special deemed rather than a reflection of a downward trend in overall educational program quality. Overall, the 2002 QA scores show that the majority of educational programs are in the satisfactory range with approximately the same proportion of programs in the high and lower ranges. The chapter reports upon an analysis previous years' QA scores for the deemed and special deemed programs and finds that the relationship between DJJ deemed designation and educational program quality are not consistent. Specifically, a number of deemed programs have lower satisfactory performing educational programs that are clearly in need of a full QA review and technical assistance rather than the abbreviated review without scores that they received. These findings resulted

in reconsideration by JJEEP and DOE on how to review deemed programs during the 2003 QA review cycle. It is planned that a more comprehensive QA review with numerical scores will be implemented during the 2003 QA review cycle.

Chapter Three presents 2002 corrective action findings that document the number of corrective actions increased from 197 for 80 programs during 2001 to 220 for 92 programs during 2002. Most of the corrective actions for 2002, as in 2001, were in the area of transition. The second highest number of corrective actions was in the new data management indicator that requires that school districts utilize individual school numbers for reporting student data. In response to habitually low performing programs receiving consecutive corrective actions, JJEEP responded with 42 targeted site visits to provide technical assistance following the end of the 2002 QA cycle.

Chapter Four describes JJEEP's 2002 technical assistance efforts. During 2002, as in previous years, JJEEP provided technical assistance through QA visits, mail and telephone follow-up, conferences, training meetings, and selected site visits. In 2002, however, JJEEP substantially accelerated its technical assistance by conducting 42 follow-up site visits to programs and school districts that requested technical assistance. The majority of these follow-up site visits took place during November, December, and early January. Further, in 2002, a statewide technical assistance survey conducted by JJEEP documented that juvenile justice teachers, program administrators and related school district personnel were in need of additional training in: grant and funding opportunities, vocational curriculum, special curriculum for those students with high school diplomas or equivalents, individual academic plan (IAP) development, individualized curriculum for K-12 students, and best practices in QA educational indicators. During 2003, JJEEP and DOE will respond to these technical assistance needs by offering special training opportunities and technical assistance papers (TAPs) in these identified training need areas. The chapter concludes with mention of JJEEP's new website that was introduced in November. The new web site is designed to provide various forms of technical assistance and is discussed in detail in Chapter 13.

Chapter Five presents findings on exceptional student education (ESE) students and services in Florida's juvenile justice facilities. The chapter reports that school districts are more effective in identifying ESE students in juvenile justice facilities, in part, because of an increase in staff resources allocated for ESE students. Research conducted by JJEEP during 2002 determined that 44 % of Florida's incarcerated youths were ESE students.<sup>1</sup> The chapter concludes that while the quantity and quality of ESE services vary widely across the state's juvenile justice educational programs, high QA performing programs provide better ESE and individualized services than lower QA performing programs. As a result, providing appropriate ESE services to juvenile justice youths continues to be a challenge for Florida's juvenile justice educational programs. JJEEP and DOE plan to highlight this challenge and

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<sup>1</sup> Total percent of exceptional student education students in Department of Juvenile Justice education programs differs between the Department of Education and the Juvenile Justice Educational Enhancement Program as reported in their respective 2002 Annual Reports. The Juvenile Justice Educational Enhancement Program's method for identifying exceptional student education students covers a different time period and is based upon the students' public school records before commitment to Department of Juvenile Justice facilities.

potential strategies for resolution at the 2003 Juvenile Justice Education Institute and Southern Conference on Corrections.

Chapter Six documents that in 2002 the number and quality of contracts and cooperative agreements submitted to DOE increased over 2001. The majority of school districts, the DJJ and educational programs now appear to have a better understanding of the requirements and necessary content for contracts and cooperative agreements following the extensive technical assistance that was provided during 2002. Nonetheless, some of the lower QA performing programs are still operating with unclear contracts. Further, school districts throughout the state directly manage their own juvenile justice educational programs better than they manage those that they contract with a private provider. As a result, targeted training in this area is needed and planned for 2003.

Chapter Seven reviews the relevant literature and presents findings from a 2002 study completed by JJEEP on the educational deficiencies of Florida's juvenile justice students. The prior literature is found to conclude that delinquent youth suffer numerous educational deficiencies that contribute to their delinquent behavior. The JJEEP study compared populations of Florida juvenile justice students with matched public school students. The juvenile justice students were found to be over represented by males and disproportionately African-American. Further, the juvenile justice students compared to their public school counterparts were disproportionately learning disabled, suffering from behavior disorders and of lower socioeconomic status. Further, juvenile justice students are characterized by higher grade retention and lower grade point averages (GPAs). These results demonstrate that Florida's juvenile justice educators and programs face major challenges in their continuing efforts to provide quality and effective education to juvenile justice youths that is responsive to their disproportionate education deficiencies.

Chapter Eight provides the results of JJEEP's 2002 assessment of the correlates to quality educational programs. The 2002 correlates findings are consistent with the 2001 findings. Publicly operated juvenile justice educational programs continued to perform better in relation to QA scores than did private-operated not-for-profit and for-profit programs. In publicly operated juvenile justice educational programs, 75% of the teachers were professionally certified with only 31% in not-for-profit programs and 33% in for-profit programs. Throughout the state's juvenile justice programs, professionally certified teachers are often teaching outside their area of certification. Further, the state's largest juvenile justice educational programs employ the fewest professionally certified teachers. Clearly what emerges from these findings is that the best predictor of quality juvenile justice educational programs is the quality of teachers providing the program's delivery of educational services. Despite this, the numbers and availability of certified teachers interested in teaching in juvenile justice educational programs remain scarce in Florida and elsewhere throughout the country. It was in response to this problem that JJEEP developed a proposal for the Center for Juvenile Justice Education and Training that would provide special education and training for university students interested in teaching careers with delinquent and other at-risk youths. This policy initiative by JJEEP is discussed in more detail in Chapter 14.

Chapter Nine provides an update on JJEEP's continuing implementation of a QA literacy standard. The chapter presents a literature review that connects the literacy standard with relevant literacy theories on effective reading instruction and describes the methodology being employed to ultimately identify a useful QA literacy standard for juvenile justice educational programs. The chapter concludes with identification and discussion of the steps involved in the pilot testing and subsequent implementation of the literacy standard.

Chapter 10 identifies and discusses the problems JJEEP has encountered in its attempt to implement a uniform pre and post juvenile justice student assessment methodology. Florida has approved 32 different assessment tests for the state's approximately 200 juvenile justice educational programs. These tests use different approaches in assessing student progress, and their results are reported differently to DOE. This has made program comparisons impractical and resulted in JJEEP implementing an alternative pupil progression methodology. The methodology is focused upon academic credits earned, GPA, advancement to the next grade level, and diplomas and certificates earned. These various items of individual student gain data will be used to calculate average academic gains and pupil progression rates for each of the approximate 200 educational programs. This alternative methodology will be employed until a uniform academic assessment test and administering system can be implemented in the state's various juvenile justice educational programs.

Chapter 11 presents a series of longitudinal research findings addressing the relationship between educational program quality and community reintegration. Very importantly, the findings demonstrate that quality educational programs are, in fact, facilitating the successful community reintegration of juvenile justice youths. High quality educational programs compared to average and below average quality educational programs have a larger proportion of their graduating youths returning to school and not recidivating by return to another DJJ program. Further, the majority of these youths are employed. These findings demonstrate the capacity of quality education to alter the delinquent to adult crime life course of countless numbers of Florida's juvenile justice youths.

Chapter 12 reports Florida's juvenile justice findings from JJEEP's self-report study of community reintegration outcomes. While limitations are acknowledged in the self-report methodology, several important findings are noted. First, many parents and guardians of those youths who were released from juvenile justice facilities with high QA performing educational programs reported that the youth's educational performance improved over their pre-incarceration educational performance. Further, youths released from high QA performing educational programs versus lower QA performing programs more frequently reported receiving high school diplomas and that their education was important to them. These self-report findings are supportive of our longitudinal findings reported in Chapter 11 that show the capacity of high quality educational programs to provide a positive turning point in the delinquent to adult crime life course.

Chapter 13 describes JJEEP's new web site. The chapter points out that the new website is designed to provide site visitors comprehensive information on JJEEP and various forms of technical assistance. A major feature of the new web site is an interactive "virtual tour" that

describes and illustrates JJEEP's interrelated research, QA, technical assistance, and policy functions.

Chapter 14 describes two major policy initiatives addressed by JJEEP during 2002. The first initiative involves implementing a research driven QA system for Volusia County's alternative school discipline schools. The research and subsequent development of QA standards for education and behavior are documented and the forthcoming 2003 activities are described. It is anticipated that when the QA process is implemented and specific education and behavior best practices are identified and validated these practices can be replicated throughout Florida's alternative school discipline programs. The second initiative involves the development of a proposal for a University Center for Juvenile Justice Education and Training. The purpose of the Center will be the education and training of certified teachers interested in teaching careers in juvenile justice or with other at-risk students in public schools. Clearly there is a need for additional certified teachers, and JJEEP envisions working closely with the Center to share our research and best practices knowledge of juvenile justice education for the Center's curriculum development. The problem is that while a clear best practice in juvenile justice education is high quality certified teachers teaching in their areas of certification, the demand for such teachers far exceeds supply. The Center should be responsive to the problem of certified teacher scarcity.

## **15.3 Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **Conclusions**

- ❑ The 16,000 delinquent youth who annually enter a Florida juvenile justice commitment facility suffer disproportionate educational deficiencies and behavior problems.
- ❑ Since 1998, Florida has incrementally implemented a juvenile justice education policy that ensures continuous quality improvement through a best practices research-driven quality assurance and technical assistance system.
- ❑ Each year, the bar is raised in the requirements and expectations for juvenile justice education programs in their delivery of educational services in relation to ongoing research findings validating best practices.
- ❑ Each year, as the requirements and expectations have increased, the overall quality of juvenile justice education programs has improved.
- ❑ As a result of these efforts, it has been determined that on average 35% of the youth released annually from a juvenile justice commitment facility return to school, 56% become employed and only 10% recidivate by recommitment to a Department of Juvenile Justice facility.
- ❑ Those juvenile justice youth who exit the highest quality juvenile justice education programs have the highest percent of return to school, namely 39% compared to 35% for average quality and 29% for below average quality and the lowest percent of

recommitment with 5% for high quality, 9% for average quality, and 15% for below average quality.

- ❑ In 2001, Florida was identified and promoted as the leading state in the nation for its method and delivery of effective juvenile justice education by the United States Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the American Correctional Association.
- ❑ Florida's unique and decentralized system of research driven quality assurance and technical assistance to local school districts that are responsible for the juvenile justice educational programs located in their districts has proven that research driven and accountable "education in the hands of educators" is a cost-effective model worthy of replication throughout the nation and beyond.
- ❑ In fact, a number of other states are implementing components of Florida's juvenile justice education model and, in addition, France has requested assistance from Florida in their countrywide effort to implement quality education in their juvenile institutions.

## **Recommendations**

- ❑ The Department of Education should target and intensify its research, quality assurance and technical assistance activities to improve the quality of the average and below average juvenile justice education programs because of the documented and disproportionate positive community reintegration outcomes associated with the highest quality juvenile justice education programs.
- ❑ The Department of Education should propose specific requirements for school districts on the use of certified teachers for academic core subjects and special education in all juvenile justice education programs because the use of certified teachers teaching in their area of professional certification has been established as a proven best practice in juvenile justice education.
- ❑ The Department of Education should continue to pursue and support innovative initiatives aimed at increasing the number of certified teachers interested in teaching careers with juvenile justice students and other at risk students in public schools because of the increasing state and national scarcity of certified teachers.
- ❑ The Department of Education should recommend that the Florida legislature reconsider Florida's move toward larger juvenile justice commitment facilities because of the documented poor community reintegration outcomes of these larger facilities.

## **15.4 2003 Initiatives**

During 2003, JJEPP will undertake a series of initiatives within each of its ongoing research, QA, technical assistance, and policy functions. With regard to continuing longitudinal research, particular attention will be given to identifying specific aftercare, mentoring,

advocacy or other services required to facilitate, sustain or strengthen the turning of juvenile justice youth away from delinquency during their reintegration back into the community. Conversely, JJEEP will be attempting to identify those community reintegration contingencies or experiences that contribute to a return to delinquency. This research initiative is aimed at providing specific conclusions on aftercare and follow-up services that are required to sustain positive behavior during both the predictably difficult early transition from incarceration to community reintegration and the longer term as well. In addition, JJEEP will be extending its program data collection to include select variables on facility treatment. This expanding data collection will enable us to specify the specific education and behavior treatment support services that constitute best practices in relation to successful community reintegration of juvenile justice youths.

During the 2003 QA cycle, JJEEP will implement a more comprehensive QA review of deemed and special deemed educational programs. The 2002 QA review of deemed and special deemed programs involved one day reviews without numerical scores. Further, the number of deemed and special deemed programs has been increasing from 40 in 2001, to 47 in 2002, and with an estimated total of 60 programs during 2003. Based upon an analysis (see Chapter 2) of the last QA scores received by the programs before they were designated deemed and special deemed, the majority of the programs scored in the mid to low satisfactory range. As a result, JJEEP and DOE have decided that many of these programs would clearly benefit from a more complete QA review and follow-up technical assistance. Moreover, since DJJ initiates the deemed and special deemed designations based primarily upon their respective QA review for custody and treatment, many of the state's most outstanding educational programs are not designated deemed or special deemed.

During 2003 continued emphasis will be given to technical assistance. A particular initiative in technical assistance, and in conjunction with JJEEP's more comprehensive review of deemed and special deemed programs, will be the identification of exemplary or demonstration programs. The intent of this initiative is to identify some of the most outstanding juvenile justice educational programs operating in Florida. The identification will be determined by multiple indicators. A review team of JJEEP, DOE, district, and local educational program providers will determine the final designation. A protocol for visitors to the program will be developed and tested. Ultimately, it is anticipated that the various designated "demonstration programs" will provide other district and educational program providers excellent technical assistance opportunities with visits targeted to begin in November 2003.

JJEEP's policy initiatives for 2003 will include continuation of its research and QA for Volusia County's alternative school discipline schools. It is anticipated that several presentations will be made at the 2003 Juvenile Justice Education Institute and Southern Conference on Corrections on the status of this demonstration project. JJEEP will also continue to work on the implementation of a Center for Juvenile Justice Education and Training that could be located at Florida A&M University and work in collaboration with Florida State University. At the international level, France has requested assistance from JJEEP in their efforts to develop quality education for all of their juvenile institutions. JJEEP will work directly with Lille University in Northern France to assist in the country's

development of quality education. At the state level, JJEEP will be providing legislators with copies of our Executive Summary of the 2002 Annual Report that focuses upon (1) Florida's success, to date, in providing quality education that is serving as a positive turning point in the delinquent to crime life course for many of the state's juvenile justice youths and (2) the need to increase the rate of success by improving the quality of the state's average and below average juvenile justice education programs.

In conclusion, currently in Florida and throughout the country, the focus of educational reform is upon kindergarten through third grade (K-3) literacy or what the federal government has termed, *No Child Left Behind*. Florida has adopted the *Just Read, Florida!* initiative that is focused upon K-3 literacy instruction. Clearly, this is a needed and important educational reform effort; however, it is essential that this new reform focus not result in any decline in Florida's excellent record of educational reform throughout its K-12 system and in particular its juvenile justice education efforts. All of Florida's K-12 public school and juvenile justice students need and can substantially benefit from increasing educational quality in literacy and other academic core subjects.

Quality and effective education can make a positive difference in the lives of all Florida's children!