

CHAPTER 12

SUMMARIES, CONCLUSIONS, AND 2004 INITIATIVES

12.1 Introduction

During 2003, Florida continued to advance the quality of education throughout its juvenile justice system. Beginning in 1998 and each year thereafter, the bar has been raised in what is expected of the state's juvenile justice educational programs. Nonetheless, each year since 1998, the overall quality assurance (QA) scores for the state's juvenile justice educational programs have improved. Clearly, this pattern of overall QA score improvement and annual raising of the expectations for these educational programs, demonstrates that Florida's QA process, together with its ongoing research, corrective action, and increasing technical assistance efforts, are indeed effective. Further, what can be stated conclusively is that the receipt of these increasingly high quality educational services is serving as a positive turning point in the life course of many low- and moderate risk delinquent youths. (These low and moderate risk security youths comprise nearly 73% of the total delinquent population incarcerated in Florida.) While this record of performance is impressive, many major challenges lie ahead in Florida's continuing efforts to advance research-based quality education for its incarcerated and delinquent youths. The 2003 Annual Report has described JJEEP's 2003 activities and results and outlined its plans for the future as Florida's juvenile justice education system continues in its efforts to successfully implement No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

This chapter is comprised of three subsequent sections. Section 12.2 provides summaries of Chapters 2 through 11. Section 12.3 draws several conclusions from Chapters 2 through 11. Section 12.4 closes the chapter with a description of JJEEP's major 2004 initiatives.

12.2 Chapter Summaries

Chapter 2 provided an overview description of the specific NCLB requirements for each state's juvenile justice educational programs. The chapter concludes that Florida has already implemented major components of NCLB related to the use of research-based and scientifically validated practices in its juvenile justice educational system.

Chapter 3 presents the 2003 QA review scores and compares these scores with the previous year's scores. In 2003, as in previous years, and despite the consecutive annual raising of the bar, overall QA scores continued to improve in Florida's juvenile justice educational programs.

Chapter 4 describes and assesses JJEEP's 2003 corrective action and technical assistance activities. While the number of corrective actions declined in 2003, JJEEP's technical

assistance efforts were expanded for low QA performing educational programs. Of particular note was the significant improvement in the low-performing program's indicators in which targeted on-site technical assistance was provided. It is clear from these efforts and results that targeted on-site technical assistance is integral to the continuous quality improvement of lower performing educational programs. The chapter concludes that Florida's system of juvenile justice educational program QA, corrective action, and technical assistance is effective.

Chapter 5 presents the results of JJEPP's assessment of the correlates to educational program quality. Classroom size was a new correlate for the 2003 assessment. The chapter concludes that each of the correlates that were assessed, namely, facility and classroom size, profit status of the program provider, teacher qualifications, strength of contracts, and quality of contract management were all significantly correlated to educational program quality.

Chapter 6 concludes that there is a positive relationship between DJJ's mean QA treatment score and JJEPP's mean QA education score. While the findings are preliminary, they do demonstrate the potential importance of providing incarcerated delinquent youths comprehensive treatment and education services. The chapter closes with discussion of JJEPP's subsequent research plans to identify, categorize, and evaluate the different modalities subsumed under the broad category of treatment.

Chapter 7 provides a review of the literature on life course theory and crime. The chapter describes how continuities as well as turning points in the delinquent to crime life course provide a useful theoretical framework for conceptualizing and interpreting JJEPP's various longitudinal research findings on the relationship between quality education, academic attainment, and community reintegration.

Chapter 8 concludes that high educational opportunity and academic attainment do serve as a positive turning point in the life course of low and moderate risk incarcerated delinquent youth. It is reported that these low and moderate risk youths comprise 73% of Florida's incarcerated delinquent population. Those students with high educational opportunity and academic attainment were significantly more likely to return to school and those youth returning to school were less likely to be arrested. Maximum and high risk incarcerated youths, who are likely more entrenched in their delinquent life course and have a longer history of poor school performance, were not as likely to respond positively to high educational opportunity. The chapter includes discussion of JJEPP's plans to extend the follow-up of its longitudinal analysis to two and three years. The extended follow-up is explained as crucial in the ultimate determination of whether educational opportunity and academic attainment while incarcerated, do, in fact, serve as a true "turning point" or merely a temporary transition in the subsequent life course of released youths.

Chapter 9 reviews some of the research problems related to the lack of a uniform entry and exit academic assessment test for the state's approximately 200 juvenile justice educational programs. The chapter reports that the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) is planning to issue a Request for Proposal for the development of a uniform entry and exit academic assessment test for use in all the state's juvenile justice educational programs. It is

planned that the test will be available for statewide use in 2005, following selection of the instrument.

Chapter 10 reports upon the status of a pilot project to implement QA for Volusia County's two alternative school discipline schools. These early analyses are aimed at identifying the data sources that will be used in the subsequent pre-and-post QA assessments of the two schools. As a result, no meaningful conclusions can be drawn at this point concerning the effectiveness of QA upon the alternative disciplinary schools' program performance or student outcomes. Data collection is continuing and it is anticipated that during the 2004 cycle, JJEEP will have more complete program and student outcome data addressing the potential effectiveness of QA for improving the performance of these two alternative disciplinary schools.

Chapter 11 describes various changes to JJEEP's QA and technical assistance efforts for 2004 that respond to NCLB requirements. In sum, as JJEEP moves into full implementation of NCLB, increasing efforts will be centered upon research-based technical assistance both on site and through training and the use of demonstration sites.

12.3 Conclusions

Following six years of continuous effort, JJEEP can conclude that Florida has substantially improved the overall quality of its juvenile justice educational system. Further, the receipt of quality education and associated academic attainment have resulted in higher rates of return to school upon release, and returning to and staying in school substantially reduces the likelihood of re-arrest. Other conclusions include:

- The completion of such academic core courses as math, English, social studies, and science is integral to whether youths return to and stay in school following release from juvenile justice facilities.
- Youths whose course work is largely concentrated in vocational and elective courses are less likely to return to and stay in school and are, therefore, more likely to be re-arrested.
- Overall, youths who receive high school diplomas while incarcerated are less likely to be re-arrested within twelve months of release than those students who did not receive high school diplomas or return to school upon release.
- Youths who earned General Educational Development (GED) diplomas while incarcerated were slightly more likely to be re-arrested than those earning standard high school diplomas. In part, this conclusion reflects that in Florida as well as in a number of other states, it is possible for 16 and 17 year olds to get a GED.
- Youths in maximum and high-risk programs are not as likely to return to school and stay in school and are, therefore, more likely to be re-arrested.

- Florida's aftercare services have been subject to decline, resulting in uneven and fragmented aftercare services statewide. Limited and nonexistent aftercare services contribute to post release difficulties, including a greater likelihood of re-arrest.

With the mandates of NCLB, it can be concluded that Florida and all other states must continue to advance quality education in juvenile justice. It can also be expected that there will be impediments for Florida and other states as they attempt to implement NCLB. As a result, it will be necessary to carefully plan and monitor each step in the implementation of NCLB to ensure appropriate and effective implementation of this major education reform movement.

12.4 2004 Initiatives

During JJEEP's 2004 QA cycle, a series of initiatives will be undertaken to continue JJEEP's efforts to systematically implement the various juvenile justice education requirements of NCLB. Prominent among these initiatives will be the use of educational program self-reports in which each educational program provides responses to a series of questions related to program practices and resources just before the program's QA review. During the QA review, reviewers will validate the program's various self-report data. It is anticipated that these program self-reports will become a major component of future program quality and accountability efforts. As this occurs, it is expected that JJEEP's QA reviewers will increasingly focus their time and efforts upon targeted technical assistance.

In their efforts to expand and improve technical assistance, JJEEP and FLDOE will select several demonstration educational programs in 2004. The criteria for demonstration program selection include consistently high QA scores over the past six years (1998 - 2003) and the results of comprehensive case studies of these high QA performing programs. The case studies will be focused upon program processes and relationships in which each program will be conceptualized in terms of its program inputs, activities, immediate results, and outcomes. The case studies are aimed at identifying and describing specific program input and activity relationships that produce specific and desired results and outcomes. The underlying goal of each case study will be to describe the program as comprehensively as possible in order to identify various program inputs and activities that are associated with desired educational program results and outcomes. The case studies can be understood as ex post facto studies in which JJEEP will be re-tracing educational program outcomes, results, activities, and inputs. These case study results will enable JJEEP to describe, explain, and predict the particular juvenile justice educational program input characteristics and activities that lead to particular student results and outcomes. Specific demonstration program protocols will be developed to structure visits to the programs and to increase the technical assistance benefits of these visits.

JJEEP will continue its interrelated program and longitudinal research. Of particular interest will be an expansion in the study of the characteristics of youths in high security programs, their education and vocational experiences, and their subsequent community reintegration outcomes. Our previous research has indicated that these high-risk youths are not benefiting as much from high quality educational services as are low- and moderate risk youths. More

in-depth study should explain this finding more fully and guide more appropriate education and/or vocational programming for these maximum/high risk youths. Further, JJEPP plans to assess if these high-risk youths are completing the GED diploma option more often than are youths in low- to moderate risk programs. If this is found to be the case, alternative policies could be developed and implemented if completion of the GED diploma option is found to result in negative or unintended consequences.

JJEPP has experienced a number of methodological problems in attempting to employ the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP) data in its longitudinal study of employment during community reintegration. Ways to overcome the methodological problems with this database and/or alternative measures of employment during community reintegration will be explored, as this outcome measure is required by NCLB.

In response to the NCLB requirement to employ scientifically validated (peer-reviewed) juvenile justice education practices, JJEPP will seek peer review of its major program and longitudinal research findings and conclusions. Finally, JJEPP will continue to collaborate with the U.S. DOE in its nationwide effort to familiarize every state with the juvenile justice education requirements of NCLB and strategies for successfully implementing these requirements.